

Labor's re-election is good news for OHS

CAROLYN CLANCY, DEPUTY SECRETARY

Victoria's public sector is seeking to lead the way in preventing occupational violence and promoting mental wellbeing among employees.



Over the past four years, the Victorian public sector unions and government have worked together to make great progress around a "whole of government"

approach to mental health and wellbeing.

A mental health and wellbeing charter has been launched and a 'leading the way' document developed to provide a framework to help the public sector improve its health and safety record. Departments are now able to use an approved dataset to measure their performance against mental health and wellbeing performance indicators.

In addition, an education and training framework has been developed and implementation has begun, providing training for all public sector leaders so they can identify risks to mental health and promote mental wellbeing. The aim is to soon have the training rolled out to all line managers and employees.

A lot of work has gone into developing

opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration to help build leading practice in preventing, managing and responding to occupational violence and aggression (OVA). With the re-election of the Andrews government, this work will now be able to continue and its impact should be felt across the public sector.

AEU OHS Conference

AEU educators from all sectors around Victoria recently attended our 2018 OHS conference. They shared experiences, concerns, strategies and solutions for preventing and responding to OVA in education workplaces. There was a clear commitment from all to provide safety and opportunities for all students, regardless of background and diverse needs. More than that, there was a demonstrated determination to lobby and fight for the government funding and support needed to achieve this.

Participants considered the 10-point plan to end OVA developed by the Australian Nurses and Midwifery Union to prevent injuries in the health sector. Designed to address complex

needs and situations, its steps include hazard identification, systems planning, communication, intervention and response.

Conference participants highlighted that psychological injuries were too often a result of systemic failures to heed warnings and consult with staff to plan and develop safe systems of work. A culture of blaming workers for injuries still exists in many workplaces. Participants welcomed a pilot restorative justice project to provide injured workers with an opportunity to have systematic failures heard and addressed.

A panel of HSRs also highlighted the critical importance of having trained and elected representatives in every workplace, particularly when it comes to reporting OVA incidents. Aware of the shortcomings of the current DET reporting system, they are committed to working towards building systems and supports that will be more appropriately responsive.

The AEU thanks participants for their attendance and the vital work they do every day in making their workplaces safer for colleagues and students.

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