

# ASU Assist helps underpaid and overworked member

Your union operates ASU Assist, a helpline designed to give you quick advice and information on individual work concerns and queries.

ASU Assist officers are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to support members with individual workplace grievances.

Here is one story of how ASU Assist helped a member working who was being overworked and underpaid.

Over eight months, ASU Assist worked with Stephanie\* as she battled with an extremely hostile employer.

Underpaid and stressed out, Stephanie contacted ASU Assist to find out how she could recover the overtime wages that her employer was refusing to pay.

Working for a small business in outer Melbourne, Stephanie had agreed to fulfill two roles following the unexpected death of one of her colleagues.

However after working a 58-hour week for some time with no overtime penalties and some dubious work payments, Stephanie became increasingly concerned.

Her situation was further complicated when she sustained a back injury due to heavy lifting at work.

ASU Assist officer Sharon Sanchez said she was pleased Stephanie had the strength to speak up and contact the union.

"This employer was particularly aggressive towards Stephanie," she said.

"In one instance the employer refused to grant Stephanie's sick leave despite the fact that she had a medical certificate.

"To make matters worse, when Stephanie was at home on sick leave because of her back injury she received repeated calls from her employer enquiring about when she would return to work and other work matters.

"The whole matter took a terrible toll on Stephanie's health."

"It was one of the worst cases I have seen in all my years working at the ASU," Sharon said.

Sharon said ASU Assist helped Stephanie lodge a successful WorkCover claim and recover the under-payment of wages and her entitlements for holiday pay and sick leave.

ASU Legal Services (a joint initiative of the ASU and Slater & Gordon Lawyers) also assisted Stephanie in resolving a discrimination complaint arising from the way Stephanie was treated by her employer following her injury.

Stephanie, with the help of ASU Legal Services, is now in the process of pursuing a lump sum claim through WorkCover due to the permanent injury she has sustained.

Stephanie said she was grateful for the assistance she has received.

"I don't know what I would have done otherwise. I probably would have kept working until my back got so bad that I wouldn't have been able to get out of bed," she said.

"I could not have done it without the assistance of Sharon and ASU Legal Services. After I contacted ASU Assist I received advice and information every step of the way.

"The best thing I did when I started working there was joining the ASU."

ASU Assist can help other members with individual workplace matters.

Your rights at work are worth fighting for. If you need union advice contact ASU Assist on 9320 6700 without delay.

*\*Stephanie's real name cannot be used due to confidentiality obligations.*



Sharon Sanchez (pictured above) is one of the union's ASU Assist officers. ASU Assist is a helpline that ensures members are able to readily access advice and information about their specific concerns at work.

## ASU Assist can give you industrial advice and general information on:

- Grievance handling
- Award, contract and agreement enquiries
- Workplace bullying and harassment
- WorkCover
- Unfair dismissal
- Union membership enquiries and
- Union membership benefits and services.

If you need union help contact ASU Assist by phone on (03) 9320 6700 or submit a query online at [www.asuvc.org](http://www.asuvc.org). In any conflict at work the best thing you can do for yourself is to know your rights, procedures, policies and all possible outcomes.

By working together and contacting us before negotiations commence, we can give you advice on your best alternatives to resolve the situation.