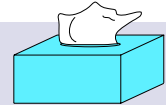


Contact ASU Centre News

Welcome to the first edition of ASU Contact Centre News - the newsletter that reports on the good, the bad and the ugly in the Victorian call centre scene.

In this first edition we have included information on your rights at work relating to sick leave and shift changes, and a general round up of call centres in Victoria.

Your Rights At Work - *Taking Sick Leave*



Every day the ASU gets phone calls from members asking for advice on calling into work due to illness or caring responsibilities. ASU members tell us that if they call into work they are harassed constantly while they are trying to deal with an illness or look after a sick family member. Common concerns are:

The company tells me the leave has to come off my annual leave or personal leave.

When I call in sick, they ask me if I'm well enough to come into work... Why would I be calling if I were?

My boss calls me 5 times during the day asking me for progress on my illness

Management says I need a doctor's certificate to take my sick leave

If I call in sick they ask me the nature of my illness. Do they really need to know?

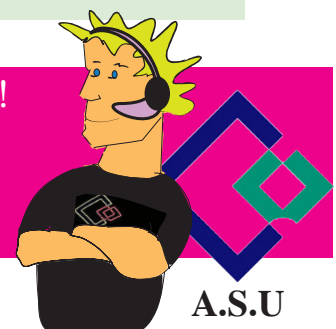
So what are the legal rights of workers when calling into work and advising the workplace that they are ill or required to look after a family member?

Your Legal Rights

1. You do not need to tell your boss the nature of your illness
2. You do not need to report in numerous times during the day with a progress report. If you advise the workplace that you will not be in due to illness or caring responsibilities then you have filled your legal requirements.
3. Your work agreement or contract may allow for a certain amount of leave without a doctor's certificate. If so, you do not need to provide one.
4. You do not need to take sick leave as annual leave.

The A.S.U can help you learn your rights, and fight for them!!

For more information contact ASU assist on 93206700



Shift Changes

Are you given enough notice when there are changes to your work roster? Is management accomodating when you need to change your shift? Lots of workers like the flexibility of contact centre work, but if your roster isn't working for you, you should be aware of your rights:



Your Rights At Work - Shift change Notice

According to the Contract Call Centre Award—the agreement most call centre workers have with their employer—your employer is entitled to draw up rosters and expect you to work those hours, but once you've been given your roster or regular shift:

1. Your employer has to give **at least one week's notice** if they're going to change the roster or your regular hours
2. Your employer has to give you at least **48 hours** notice if they need you to work an **emergency shift** or roster change
3. Your employer may ask to change your hours or shifts at late notice (less than 48 hours), but you are within your rights to say no.
4. You and another worker can exchange shifts or fill-in each other's shifts if your employer agrees, but your employer is not required to make any extra payments

Manpower workers unionise and win

Before workers at *Manpower* defence recruitment called the ASU, they were told they'd have to work through the Melbourne Cup Day holiday without extra pay. But just before the start of the Spring Racing Carnival, Rebecca joined up with a group of Manpower workers.

"It's my nature to stand up" said Rebecca, pictured. "I understand when people can't. I don't understand people who won't".

With a newly unionised workforce, Man-

power management was forced to pay appropriate penalty rates on Cup Day. So the bookies weren't the only ones to win big!

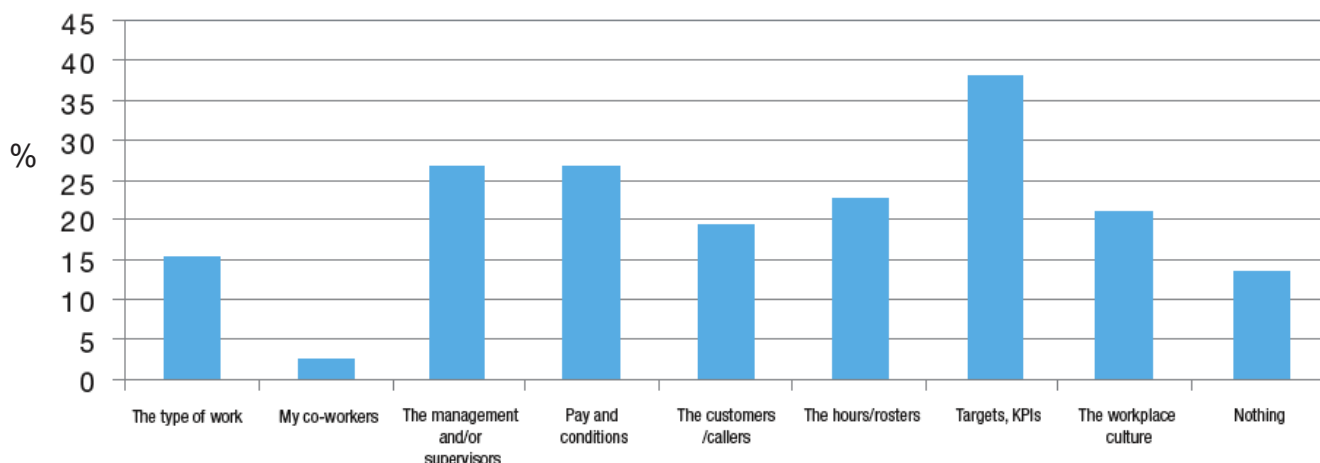
And they're off...

ASU Organiser Gail Drummond said that while the penalty rates for holidays were a great start, Manpower and other workplaces will benefit from more widespread unionisation. "The more workers we represent at a workplace, the better our bargaining position becomes. So we really look forward to organising this workplace during 2011".



New delegate Rebecca Anderson

Number Crunch: What do you dislike about your job?



From "It's your call", the ASU's 2009 survey of call centre workers' working conditions.

News bite: Australia's Contact Centre jobs on the wire

The ASU has renewed its call for a comprehensive industry plan to secure future employment and prevent off-shoring following the loss of 992 contact-centre jobs.

The job losses were due to Telstra's decision not to renew contracts with two of its Australian based contact call centres, Salmat and Vertex. Some of these jobs may be permanently lost from Australian shores; Telstra has indicated that Philippine companies are still being considered for the tender.

Branch Secretary Ingrid Stitt called upon State and Federal Governments to "look to the future of the Australian workforce. Governments must play their part in assisting the ICT industry to build skills and capacity for Australian workers, to save Australian jobs in this highly competitive sector".

The ASU has also stressed the benefits to industry and consumers in retaining call centres in Australia. "The loss in productivity and coordination, issues around data security, and consumer concern over labour market standards; these should all be carefully considered by companies

trying to save a few bucks by sending jobs overseas" warned Ingrid.

Industry research, including the union's own, all indicates that off-shored contact centres are frequently associated with a reduction in service levels and quality.

Consumers are also citing ethical concerns about Australian companies exploiting the lower wages and working conditions experienced by workers in developing countries. (see panel).

The ASU has written to the relevant state Minister, and has been in contact with Vertex and Salmat to negotiate conditions for the workers who were made redundant.

Contact Centre Organiser Gail Drummond reported that Vertex had been quite responsive to ASU's enquiries and was making efforts to minimise redundancies and source new contracts.

For Vertex's workers, the loss of the contracts and the news of redundancies has provided added incentive to organise.

Gail says that while workers are de-

vestated by the news, they're taking the right approach. "We're seeing a lot of new members coming to the ASU to learn about their rights and how the union can act on their behalf."

"They know that they're going to have to work together to keep these jobs in Australia".

The hidden cost of off-shoring

- Over 65% of surveyed consumers indicated they would decrease or discontinue purchasing from a company that off-shores its contact centre operations
- Customers' personal information may not be safe in the countries where jobs are being sent due to lax data security
- Off-shoring inhibits the development of skills in the Australian workforce and makes Australia less competitive

Give a hoot & win!

The information in this newsletter is all available online through our facebook page and website! If you'd like to keep up to date with all the news that's relevant to contact centre workers like you, 'Like' our facebook page *Call centre workers give a hoot*. The link can be found at www.asuvic.org.

Plus, just for showing your support you could **WIN two free tickets** to any movie of your choice at a Hoyts cinema near you!

To enter, just 'Like' the '*Call centre workers give a hoot*' Facebook page and 'Like' or comment on one of our posts before the end of April.

REMEMBER: Facebook's a great way to keep up with the news and share stories with other workers, but please don't mention the name of your workplace or employer online. If you have a specific issue you need help with, contact your union directly:

ASU Assist:

(03) 9320 6700

www.asuvic.org/asu-assist



Your union Working for you!



Pay & Conditions

Union members and union workplaces enjoy better pay and conditions. On average union members earn \$125 more a week than workers who are not in unions.



Representation

Your union can represent you if a dispute arises over workers compensation, unfair dismissal, discrimination, contract negotiations or OH&S. We'll make sure you're treated fairly.



Bargaining voice

The more members we have in a workplace, the stronger our position! Your work mates will thank you for your help, and you'll be able to vote in collective bargaining ballots.



10% off Dell computers

Union members receive a 10% discount on selected Dell products through Unionshopper. Pre-built or build-your-own computer. Discounts available on other brands too!



Special rates on legal advice

ASU members receive special rates, a free first interview on legal matters and a free will service through Slater & Gordon.



Movie tickets

Cinemas including Hoyts, Village and Greater Union are offering up to 30% off the price of movie tickets to ASU members. A Hoyts or Village adult ticket will cost only around \$10!



A better deal on your new car

Just decide on the make and model and call Union Shopper to find the best deal! They've saved ASU members thousands of dollars!



Discounted travel and theme parks

Great discounts on hotels, travel insurance, car rental and more! Plus save 15% on tickets to Dreamworld, Sea World, Movie World, Wet 'n' Wild and others!



Discounted smiles

Unident offers discounted dental services to union members, with no fee for the initial examination. Melbourne City Dental Group offers savings and bulk-billing on medical and dental.

There are so many discounts and special offers available to union members we can't list them all here. You'll also get discounts on electrical and whitegoods, accounting services, financial planning and superannuation, plus a range of restaurants and activities!

Don't forget, union membership is tax deductible and completely safe in Australia. It is against the law for your employer to discourage you from joining or to discriminate against you.

Check our website for more details, or call ASU assist if you have any queries about becoming an ASU member.

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