

# HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

## NEWSLETTER #709 (26 Oct 2009)

At the Health Professionals Consultative Committee meeting held on Thursday 22 October 2009, the HSU Negotiating Team reported that at the meeting held on 21 October with the Public Sector Employee Relations (PSWR—Department of Premier and Cabinet) the HSU continued to **push** for a separate enterprise agreement for Health Professionals. We argue for a new classification structure and conditions of employment that recognises and support a sustainable Health Professional work force as an integral part of the health system in South Australia.

The meeting also discussed the possibility that health professionals may be **forced** to implement bans or take industrial actions in order to achieve the outcome we desire. Health Professionals need to **start preparing** for this eventuality. Each profession will need to develop work bans suitable for their department and work units. There are different strategies and different levels of work bans you may follow. Just **remember that our claim won't just be handed over to you by the South Australian Government, we will NEED to fight for it.** We must not be caught unprepared.

Here are some ideas:

### Be organised

The first step in acting together on an issue is to organise yourselves. You will achieve next to nothing if you do not speak with one clear voice. Supporting your Workplace Reps is a good beginning. Figure out who is in the HSU and who isn't. Aim for 100% support. Work out what you can do to support the campaign. The HSU is here to help you get there.

### Pick an option

What options we choose depends on the circumstances and may include one or more of the following:

#### ◇ Attention Grabbers

This is as simple as all participants wearing the same colour of shirts, clothing or ribbons. You get the idea? We can also make badges to wear. Distribute fliers around your workplace. For example **"The government doesn't care, Health Professionals do"** and outline why they don't care.

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Maybe organise a “**special day**”, say “Over Worked & Under Valued Day” or “The Government Under Value My Work Day”. Why not have everyone dress up or bring a plate to share. Just because we have problem to solve doesn't mean we can't have fun in the campaign!

### ◇ **Start Work**

The idea is that all of you meet about 10 minutes before you start work. You march into work together, preferably in a public, noisy sort of way! A Start Work is also a good opportunity to meet and update each other on the campaign. If you like, make up simple placards, get some cheap whistles, make some noise going in!

### ◇ **Work to your Contract**

It is every employee's duty to work to their contract of employment. The actual duties you should do in your position are part of your contract and are written in your Job Description.

Working to your contract means: Work strictly to your Job Description. Read and understand your letter of appointment and Job Description and only perform the duties in it. You should ask for written instructions for each and every other duty you are requested to perform.

### ◇ **Require notice of change**

Require a month notice for any change. Also require negotiations of any change.

### ◇ **Stop all unpaid work**

Stop working for nothing—by stopping all the **unpaid work** outside of your normal rostered hours unless your employer directs you in **writing** to do overtime for which you will be paid for.

### ◇ **Only respond to written instructions**

You can seek **written** clarification of any lawful management instruction.

### ◇ **Withdraw from committees**

Participation in most committees is voluntary, for example, Laboratory accreditation, building projects, OH&S committees etc.

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### ◇ Work to rule

This is the next step from working to your contract. In effect it is applying bans of some sort, like no over time. It is important to ensure that a **work to rule** ban will have some real effect, otherwise you may need to consider applying work bans. The effectiveness of work to rule is also determined by how **many people** take part.

### ◇ Work bans

Pick a task that everybody will ban. Excessive workload falls into this category. It may be that it is the task that is the source of the problem and you make your point that way. It may be a ban on management reports. The choice would be to inconvenience management. We would recommend avoiding inconveniencing patients, but **anything** that inconvenienced management would be a **fair game**.

It may well be the case that creating a short term crisis will be **better for your patients** in the long run as you may get **extra** resources.

### ◇ Stop Work Meetings

A stop work meeting is usually the final step before more serious industrial action. A **well attended** Stop Work Meeting is a **clear signal** to your employer that you mean **business**.

### ◇ Strikes

A scary and serious word! A strike is a stoppage usually half a day or longer. It is the ultimate weapon in the arsenal, and should be used sparingly. You will all need to be angry enough and committed enough for a strike to succeed. Again it is important to signal your employer that you intend to strike so that there is time for **negotiations**. If these **fail** you must be prepared to strike, and your employer must know you are serious. As with Stop Work meetings you need to weigh up what you will potentially gain against what you will lose.

### You can:

Make a start on getting your workplace organised by supporting your staff representatives and the HSU. For advice or information contact your local HSU representative or Jorge Navas on 0419 036 615 or email [hsusa@bigpond.net.au](mailto:hsusa@bigpond.net.au)

The next meeting with PSWR will be on either the 9th or 16th November. We will keep you informed.

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