

People Matters



Issue 23 November 2006

Leave Entitlements

Australian workers are stockpiling annual leave at an alarming rate - with more than 70 million days of annual leave owing to workers - equal to 14.8 million working weeks or \$11 billion in wages - and increasing (AC Nielsen research).

Small business owners in particular can feel that their pivotal role in so many aspects of the business means things will not be done if they are not present.

Accrual of large amounts of leave (annual or long service) has some downsides which can disproportionately effect small businesses.

Firstly - leave accrued will become owing to the employee as a sum upon their termination - a significant financial liability.

Secondly - annual leave provides an opportunity for physical and emotional rest and rejuvenation. Some people may feel that they are able to withstand significant periods without a break, but taking a regular holiday avoids burn out later on.

A way to reduce the risk to your business is to define roles and performance criteria, and to document standard procedures - particularly for urgent or frequent items. This allows others to fill in when someone is absent.



The Silly Season



With Christmas just around the corner, now is a good time to start planning for end-of-year events. This includes addressing some of the more serious sides to the silly season.

Hosting a party for clients or staff can bring with it the risk of harassment or injury claims.

Review your policies and conduct a 'refresher' session to ensure that all staff are familiar with them - including the consequences of inappropriate conduct. All members of staff need to exercise responsible behaviour at work-related functions to ensure the safety of all attendees.

The employer will be liable if an injury is sustained at a function they have organised. Several court cases also show they will be liable for an occurrence at an event relating to work. To avoid a harassment or injury claim, make sure social functions are kept under control and address any inappropriate behaviour immediately. If alcohol is to be served, ensure that there are also a variety of non-alcoholic beverages offered and that plenty of food is available.

Refresher Courses

Carolyn and Laura offer a range of refresher courses to help deal with some of the grey areas of harassment policies. The courses are designed for small to medium groups - special rates are available to clients requiring 3+ sessions on the same day.

Do you have a question you would like answered? Let us know - your suggestions for topics are welcome.

If someone else in your business would be interested in People Matters let us know and we will forward a copy to them.

T 03 9533 0923