

CFMEU

CONSTRUCTION

**CFMEU CONSTRUCTION &
GENERAL DIVISION NATIONAL OFFICE**

Level 9, 215-217 Clarence St
Sydney NSW 2000

Box Q235, QVB Post Office
Sydney NSW 1230

Ph 02 8524 5800

Fax 02 8524 5801

ABN: 46 243 168 565

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CFMEU proposal for new impairment policy includes drug and alcohol testing

The CFMEU construction division is today announcing its proposal for an impairment policy in the industry. The policy – which for the first time includes a proposal for drug and alcohol testing – focuses on safety in the workplace.

CFMEU National Construction Secretary Dave Noonan said the union was consulting with the membership about the policy and stressed that testing was just one component of their proposal.

“This is a policy that revolves around the causes of impairment in our industry that include fatigue, physical and mental health, job insecurity, injury and illness and drug and alcohol use,” he said.

“It’s important to remember that the percentage of people using drugs in our industry is no more or less than the general community and this is borne in study after study.

“The union has worked on the ground in this space for over twenty five years raising awareness, offering counselling and assisting people overcome addictions.”

The union is recommending mandatory blanket testing including testing employers and is calling on the MBA to support the union’s proposal.

Mr Noonan said the union was changing its policy due to members’ concerns of the safety risks involved in working with someone who is impaired as a result of addiction or substance abuse.

“And this is the focus of our policy: it’s about impairment and that includes impairment due to other factors as well as drugs and alcohol. Some of these other factors are due to employer failings – that they are reluctant to acknowledge or act on.

“Our proposal is not punitive – it’s about safety and providing support for people to turn their lives around. “We acknowledge that testing already happens in specific circumstances in the industry and accept that our membership is increasingly concerned about the problems associated with people turning up to work impaired and the risks this poses.

The CFMEU is recommending impairment assessors that come from the safety committee made up in equal numbers of employer and employee representatives.

Mr Noonan said that in the twenty-five years that the union has been assisting workers, the evidence is that people can overcome addiction and put it behind them.

“It’s possible for people with substance abuse issues to get help and turn their lives around. It’s not a life sentence.”

For more information please call Jeana Vithoukias on 0416155149