

Welcome to your new job.



We trust that by now you will have received sufficient orientation to get you familiar with your workplace and ready to start work. Over the next few weeks, you will meet new colleagues; you will become friends, not just for now but into your future. You will also start delivering care to patients either directly or indirectly in the role that you perform.

There is much enjoyment to be gained from working in health, not only from the camaraderie of colleagues but also the care of patients. You will also receive the benefits of working as an employee, and it is this that we wish to focus on, just for a minute.

No doubt during your orientation you will have been shown the tea room and you may have been provided with a uniform. You've undoubtedly filled in endless paperwork, including providing your employers with your bank account so you can be paid, tax forms so that PAYE can be deducted, and hopefully you will have received a copy of your employment agreement detailing your core terms and conditions of employment. Hopefully some time earlier, you will also have received your roster.

While very exciting and reasonably well organised so far, this is the point at which we ask you to stop for a minute and think of the many provisions you have been made aware of, and where they came from.

From that free tea and coffee that the employer will supply to you during your meal breaks and at morning and afternoon tea, through to that roster which hopefully has been given to you in sufficient time to enable you to know what you are doing and plan your life outside of work, and of course to the pay that will be deposited into your bank account... All this and more is provided as a result of the collective work of your colleagues, past and present.

What I hear you say; the tea and coffee?

YES – the provision of tea and coffee, milk, sugar, even hot water is not required of the employer. That they are supplied to you in the workplace, is because there is a provision in our Employment Agreement requiring them to be, a provision negotiated, amongst all the others, by your colleagues through your union.

In many instances, the very uniform you wear has been negotiated between the union and the employer, or alternatively, an allowance to compensate you for buying parts of the uniform, cleaning your own clothes in the absence of a uniform and the like.

The pay you receive has been negotiated; and the level it is now set at, is because of that ongoing work.

Shortly you will also be required to undertake continuing professional development and, for many, maintain your Annual Practising Certificate. Again, the reimbursement of APCs and provisions to assist you with maintaining CPD are issues that through your colleagues, the union has worked to secure.

The legislation does provide for some terms and conditions, but invariably your employment agreement will provide for better than these minimum provisions: for instance access to 10 days sick leave a year whereas the legislation only provides for 5.

The very roster you are provided with has been a result of your colleagues' activities through the union; that your roster must be notified to you in advance so that you can organise your life around your duties; that the employer cannot unilaterally change your roster or your ordinary hours of work; and that you have rights with respect to patterns of work and what they should be, all come back to your union's activities.

The point we hope we are making is that a large proportion of the conditions under which you work, the very conditions that make work more pleasant, more enjoyable, only exist because your colleagues have taken the time to ensure that they exist. We need to continue to protect and enhance those terms and conditions: the employment relationship is a moving feast, times change, and items need to be renegotiated; salaries need to maintain their value; CPD needs to reflect what is happening in our industry now, not 10 years ago; provisions need to reflect current vital attitudes towards work life

balance, not that which was considered normal 10 or 20 years ago. Imagine for a minute, if your colleagues had done nothing to improve terms and conditions of employment for the past 10 years. Maybe as you sit having morning tea with colleagues, you should ask the older ones what it was like 10 or 20 years ago and what their terms and conditions of employment were then?

We would also encourage you to think about what you want your workplace to look like in another 10 years. What do you want to leave to those who are going to come after you?

Of course the union is not just about your employment agreement; it is about the support provided for individuals when they need it, a delegate to ask questions of and advocates to assist when (as happens) things "go wrong". We watch out for issues that could affect you and lobby the system to advance your interests amongst so many that exist: our health system is not just about doctors and nurses!

The union is simply colleagues, coming together to form a collective to better advance your interests in the workplace. The union is its members; membership of the union is a matter of choice. We would encourage you to think about what your colleagues have achieved for not only you but everyone you work with, and we would encourage you to join. As you step into your first day of employment, all that you enjoy has not happened by chance; it is because people like you have chosen to make it happen.

We welcome you to the workplace and look forward to welcoming you into the union.