

Welcome!

Welcome to the April edition of Presbyterian People.



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

This edition includes more information on Trial Periods and the Employment Relations (Breaks, Infant Feeding, and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2008. However first up we look at due diligence for building and maintenance work around parishes.

Juliette

Building (including Extensions) and Maintenance Work

Right now a number of parishes nationwide are either planning or are in the midst of building new buildings or extensions or doing maintenance work on existing buildings. Cost has always been an important factor for parishes when it comes to this type of work and this is even more so now that we are in a recession.

However, parishes need to be mindful when planning this type of work that they do not cut back on the necessities. In particular parishes need to know that **building work undertaken by volunteer labour is not covered by insurance.**

The 'must-haves' of any build or maintenance work include ensuring that:

- The contractors doing the work are competent, which may include being formally licensed for certain types of work such as electrical, plumbing etc;
- The project complies with local council regulations and that all necessary permits have been obtained BEFORE work begins (NB the Church Property Trustees may need to authorise documentation on behalf of the parish);
- The people carrying out the work do so in a safe manner and that the parish gives adequate notice to any users of the church buildings to ensure they are also kept safe;
- All work performed, but especially structural work, is of an insurable standard.

By covering the basics you will ensure the safety of the people in your parish and/or community as well as the people actually performing the work not to mention you will have a building that will remain safe for years to come.

Plus you will have avoided the costly delays that can result from having to either re-do work that is not compliant or have a future insurance claim declined due to short-cuts taken now.

If your parish is thinking about building an extension, a new building or undertaking maintenance work please check with AON first—their details are in your Yearbook.

90-Day Trial Period

The Department of Labour has now added a clause for trial periods to their agreement builder which is found in the employment relations service section of their website. If you are offering a trial period to a new employee please refer to the following link: www.ers.govt.nz/relationships/builder and follow the steps to build an agreement.

Please remember that you need to include a note that a trial period has been offered in the employment advice notice at the beginning of the agreement. If the employee is unaware that they are on trial or have not had the opportunity to seek advice on what this means for them, the provisions of the amendment may be unenforceable.

Tea Breaks and Infant Feeding in the Workplace

Recently there have been statements in the media from some employers and industry associations citing difficulties with providing rest and meal breaks as required by the **Employment Relations (Breaks, Infant Feeding, and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2008** which came into effect at the beginning of April.

While I am not in a position to comment on how other industries arrange their break times I must stress that the Act does allow employers and employees some room to negotiate the timing and location of rest breaks. The majority of parish employees already take the required rest and meal breaks now and for the small minority who do not, their managers need to discuss the Act's requirements with them and come to an agreement on when breaks will be taken. Just a reminder, employees are entitled to the following number of breaks each working day or shift:

- 1x 10 minute rest break if working 4 hours or less (paid)
- 1x 10 minute rest break (paid) and 1x 30 minute meal break (unpaid) if working 4-6 hours
- 2x 10 minute rest breaks (paid) and 1x 30 minute meal break (unpaid) if working 6-8 hours
- Where an employee works more than 8 hours the schedule begins again

An employer may offer more breaks or pay the employee for unpaid breaks. The Act allows employers and employees to negotiate on the timing and location of the rest breaks. Where they do not agree they can refer the matter to mediation.

The Department of Labour is currently working on a Code of Compliance due for release in July 2009.

For queries relating to ministry or employment matters please contact the Personnel Team on (04) 801-6000 or by email: juliette@presbyterian.org.nz and clare@presbyterian.org.nz.