

# Interview with Health & Safety Rep Support Officers (HSRSO)

Bob Maguire and Janet Marshall – HSRSO, Australian Education Union



## 1 Tell us about the HSR support program

There is international recognition that the best OHS practices and outcomes occur in work-places where there is a two way approach – management commitment and employee involvement. The *Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* recognises and embraces this concept and WorkSafe fund the HSR Support Officer Program through unions for this purpose.

The HSR Support Officer Program enables us (Janet and Bob) to provide on the ground information and advice to workers and workplaces about OHS and employee participation in this process.

Early childhood centres have been specifically identified by WorkSafe as a high priority because:

- High numbers of injuries and workcover claims.
- Low numbers of HSRs – and even lower numbers of trained HSRs.

## 2 What is your role in the program?

We are available to talk to individuals, workplaces, networks, conferences and any other forum about OHS issues and about the benefits of employee consultation and participation. We are available to talk to AEU members and non members – employee and employer groups.

We want to talk to staff about their issues and to seek ideas on how to develop a HSR model that works for early childhood settings.

We will also be ‘spreading the word’ via newsletters and e-news. If you would like to receive the AEU OHS E-News which is published twice a term please send an email with your details to [janet.marshall@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:janet.marshall@aeuvic.asn.au). If you would like to talk to us please ring 9417 2822.

## 3 What support can you provide to workers seeking to improve OHS standards in their workplace?

We can provide telephone and practical advice on accessing information, resources, processes and strategies. We can conduct sessions on the OHS Act, OHS systems and procedures and issues such as stress, bullying and muscular skeletal disorders. We’re happy to do this in your workplace or network/cluster forum.

## 4 What do you see as the most important OHS issues facing the sector?

From our observations:

- Putting the children first. Not wishing to ‘take away’ from resources or programs from the children by attending to OHS issues. In our experience it doesn’t have to be one or the other, it can be both. Also, many OHS solutions are cost effective.
- Leaving OHS to good luck rather than good management. A lack of systems and procedures and awareness of a preventative approach.
- Inadequate reporting of accidents, incidents and near misses. Reporting systems not capturing the ‘hazards’, only the injuries. There is also a lack of understanding about reporting psychological hazards as well as physical hazards.

Bob Maguire and Janet Marshall are HSRSO and can be contacted on 94172822.