

NOTICES TO MEMBERS:

Caution advised on Facebook

NZNO MEMBERS are generally entitled to free speech when debating issues on NZNO Facebook pages and groups, but this freedom does have some limits.

NZNO's employment lawyer, Jock Lawrie, said members needed to exercise caution when posting or commenting on the unofficial NZNO Facebook site, to ensure they weren't running a risk of breaching the Employment Relations Act (ERA), thus putting themselves and NZNO at potential legal risk.

NZNO's official Facebook page (titled "New Zealand Nurses Organisation") is moderated by NZNO staff who control the posts and check that comments don't raise potential legal issues. However, the unofficial NZNO Facebook group ("NZNO members group") is not formally moderated in this way.

"The issue raises the difficult problem of striking the correct balance between a member's freedom of expression and a member's obligations under the relevant employment agreement and statute," Lawrie said.

The ERA allows union members to freely discuss and share "reasonably held" opinions on their employers' business. However the ERA also requires "good faith" behaviour by unions, employers and employees.

Lawrie said risks may arise should any posting on the unofficial NZNO site be seen as a breach of good faith, such as making statements or claims that might be construed as misleading or deceptive by a reasonable observer.

Further, as the ERA also requires good faith behaviour in the context of collective bargaining, it is equally important to ensure no posts or comments are made that either challenge the role of the employer's bargaining representative or that may operate to effectively undermine the bargaining.

Lawrie said employers may use any posts, comments or photos on the unofficial NZNO site as evidence to support any claim of a breach of good faith or other statutory duty on the part of members of NZNO. •

Support centre to close at 5pm

THE NZNO Member Support Centre (MSC) has now been in operation for five years, and is constantly evolving to ensure it is providing the best possible service to members. The current operating hours are 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

Following a review and internal assessment of operating hours over the last two years, it is evident the period 5pm to 6pm is very under-used by members. The decision has, therefore, been made to reduce operating hours to an earlier closure of 5pm, beginning Monday, July 31, 2017. This will allow a higher concentration of call advisers to take calls during the busier periods of the day. If you have any concerns, please email nurses@nzno.org.nz

– Lead adviser MSC Jo Stokker



Rebekah Kelsey



Christine Gardiner

Bullying stories draw 'overwhelming' response

TWO NURSES who shared their stories of being bullied in the June issue of *Kai Tiaki Nursing New Zealand* have received a massive supportive response on Facebook.

Rebekah Kelsey wrote about being bullied while working at an Auckland hospital, while Christine Gardiner recounted being bullied as a nursing student. Posts on Facebook about these articles drew hundreds of supportive comments and were shared many times.

Kelsey said she was "overwhelmed" by the response and felt encouraged and supported by it. "I feel like I have been able to give voice to the feelings of many who have also had to go through, or are going through, workplace bullying."

Many people had sent her private messages, recounting their own stories and asking questions about hers. Responses had come not only from nurses but also consultant doctors and speech therapists.

She had encouraged people to stand up to bullying and had directed them to NZNO's resources on bullying and the organisation CultureSafe.

Fears allayed by support

Gardiner said she was "a little nervous" about the article coming out but her fears were allayed by the tremendous support she received online and in person. She would like to see a new compulsory module on bullying in nursing education and in hospitals, and an impartial support service not made up of DHB staff.

NZNO president Grant Brookes was unsurprised by the massive reaction to the bullying stories. "It gels with what I hear all the time, when I meet NZNO members in the workplace."

He said nursing had a hierarchical past, and there had sometimes been an element of regimentation and bullying from senior nurses seeking to pass on high professional standards.

However, he believed the current epidemic of bullying was a new phenomenon. Standards of practice were under pressure from an under-resourced system, and senior staff had "less and less time for the laborious and time-consuming, but ultimately necessary and rewarding, work of supporting junior colleagues. As a result, when mistakes are made, the tendency now is to blame, target and bully individuals."

Brookes said NZNO was targetting bullying through education, advocating for stronger policies and law, and supporting senior nurse roles. Better health funding was also essential. •