

Alcohol And Other Drugs Policy

Carried by ACTU Executive at its February 1992 meeting

1. Preamble

1.1 Congress recognises there is widespread concern with the issue of alcohol and drug use and dependency at the workplace. The concern arises both from the aspect of the health and well-being of the affected worker and the safety of other workers who may be put at risk by a person whose performance has been impaired by alcohol or other drugs.

1.2 Congress acknowledges that use of alcohol or other drugs may be a symptom of other problems. There are a number of work factors over which the individual employee has little control which will contribute to alcohol or other drug use. These factors include:

- hazardous work;
- poor work environment;
- unrealistic deadlines;
- lack of job satisfaction;
- lack of participation and control;
- inadequate training and supervision;
- work culture;
- shift work.

1.3 It is only when drugs and alcohol are misused to the extent that the user cannot properly and safely carry out regular duties that a need arises for control and prevention measures. In any consideration of the appropriate response in particular workplaces there must firstly be involvement of union representatives and secondly examination of the broad environmental factors such as those listed above.

1.4 Alcohol and drugs in the workplace must be seen in the context of the broad responsibility of an employer in regard to providing a safe and healthy workplace. Employers who demonstrate a disregard for their responsibilities in this area should not expect co-operation from the union movement should they seek to focus on the narrow issue of alcohol and drug use. Any activity in this area must be part of a broadly based occupational health and safety program which is jointly developed by both employers and unions representing employees.

2. General Principles

2.1 There must be joint development by unions and employers of comprehensive workplace occupational health and safety programs designed to identify, assess and control workplace hazards.

2.2 Should alcohol or other drug misuse be identified as a workplace issue, there will be joint development of a workplace specific alcohol and other drug program which should:

- be solely related to safety at work;
- have full participation in and joint control by workers and their representatives;
- be applicable to both workers and management;

- address the workplace causes of alcohol or other drug misuse;
- be consultative, educative and rehabilitative not punitive;
- maintain confidentiality at all levels.

2.3 Rehabilitative action should be undertaken during working hours or through schemes which include paid leave.