



Equal Opportunity Tasmania

Podcast Title:

CORONAVIRUS – Vulnerable employees identified. Knowing your legal rights and responsibilities as an employee under Tasmania's Anti-Discrimination Act.

Podcast Script:

Hello and welcome to an Equal Opportunity Tasmania's Podcast. I am Louise Adams, a Training, Education and Development Officer.

As we all navigate through this time of uncertainty with the Coronavirus, this is an opportunity to be reminded that the Anti-Discrimination Act protects employees, from being discriminated against, whether it is intentional or not.

It is important to make sure that you know your rights as well as your responsibilities when it comes to dealing with your employer, including managers and supervisors.

Leading Health Experts have identified Vulnerable Groups to include; People aged 70 years and over, people aged 65 years and over with chronic medical conditions, people with compromised immune systems, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50, are at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with coronavirus.

Medical experts have strongly advised these identified vulnerable groups of people not to leave their home unless absolutely necessary.

All employees, regardless of their job or level have a responsibility not to discriminate against colleagues or work mates, managers or supervisors, contractors and clients or customers.

As an employee you may identify with one of the 'Vulnerable Groups'. This may cause a new sense of anxiety and uncertainty.

You may have found yourself, for the first time, having to share your medical health condition with your employer in order that you are able to work from home. Conversations between employers and employees around how this can best be facilitated need to be respectful.

There is certainly a need for trust between employees and employers during this time.

Conversations may include; what resources and support you will need or maybe negotiating other work that is more suited to work from home.

Asking how things will be monitored to ensure that you remain included in the overall business of your workplace that is relevant to you. Such as, staff meetings, other relevant meetings, supervision, reviewing of work arrangements to name a few.

The overall aim is for everyone to work together, keeping yourself and others safe so you can continue to undertake the job/duties you are employed to do.

Employers, managers or supervisors need to work with you to ensure that you get through this uncertain time together.

It is important at the other end of all this, that you can walk back into your workplace, having maintained a positive working relationship with your employer, your manager or supervisor.

Most employers will be doing the right thing by their employees, making sure they are protected and safe. We need to recognise and acknowledge this isn't an easy time for anyone, including employers, who maybe juggling employee rights and their livelihood in this time of uncertainty and distress for many.

It is important to be aware that compliance with Anti-Discrimination Laws is not a matter of choice. Employers have a legal obligation under (Section 104 of the *Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*) not to discriminate against their employees, regarding their, age, race and disability which includes various medical conditions. There are 22 protected attributes in total.

If you would like more information on your rights and responsibilities as an employee you can either;

- Phone us on 616 575 15
- Or State-wide local call: 1300 305 062
- You can text to: 0409 401 063
- Or have a look on our website at: www.equalopportunity.tas.gov.au

Thank you for listening.