



Equal Opportunity Tasmania

Podcast Title:

CORONAVIRUS – Vulnerable employees identified knowing your legal responsibilities as an employer 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, it is an opportunity to be reminded that the Anti-Discrimination Act protects people from being discriminated against, whether it is intentional or not.

The Coronavirus doesn’t discriminate so it’s important to make sure that employers do not discriminate when it comes to dealing with their employees.

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.

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.

Being identified as a member of a ‘Vulnerable Group’ may cause employees a deeper sense of anxiety and uncertainty in keeping connected with, and valued within, their workplace.

The majority of employers will be doing the right thing by their employees and making sure they are protected and safe.

As an employer, prior to the Coronavirus you may not have been aware of an employee’s vulnerability or chronic health condition as it hadn’t stopped them from doing their job. However, now they have disclosed personal information about their health you have a legal responsibility to assist the employee.

Negotiating with your employee in relation to working from home should be a respectful conversation on how best this arrangement will work.

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

You should discuss how things will be monitored to ensure that the employee remains included in the overall business of your workplace that is relevant to them. Such as, staff meetings, other relevant meetings, supervision, reviewing of work arrangements to name a few.

Remembering, the overall aim is to make sure your employees are kept safe and can continue to undertake the job/duties they are employed to do.

If you would like more information on your responsibilities as an employer or you would like to find out about education and training sessions we offer 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.