

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2005

MEDIATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Conflicts and disputes are a normal part of personal, social and community life. In the work environment, organisations are increasingly using mediation as an approach to resolving conflict in the workplace.

The mediation process involves facilitation of a meeting/s between people in conflict, in the presence of a mediator who is a qualified and independent person. The intent of the mediation process is to resolve conflict at its early stages with a cooperative approach, before the issue escalates and cannot be resolved at a local level.

During the mediation process, the role of the mediator is to guide discussion between the parties in a structured manner, with the aim of reaching an agreed outcome between both parties. An agreed outcome has a greater likelihood of sustained success. Compared to a decision imposed from the outside, a negotiated agreement is also considered to be more likely to reflect the needs of the individuals involved and to gain their commitment. This agreement is then documented and signed by the parties.

Mediation can be an early intervention to address an emerging conflict or issues associated with personality clashes which occur commonly in many workplaces. As the mediator is independent of the situation, the organisation, and has no vested interest in the outcome, the mediation process assists supervisors and line managers who may have a conflict of interest in dealing with the issue or dispute. When a conflict situation arises, it is understandably difficult for the supervisor/manager to remain impartial and objective.

Clients that have utilised our mediation services in the early stages of conflict have benefited from increased productivity, a more harmonious work environment and avoidance of costs that can be incurred when a dispute escalates and requires resolution via formal external bodies.

MJSP has qualified mediators with a record of success in resolving workplace mediations who are available to assist in any type of conflict that may arise within your organisation.

For further information about mediation or if you have any questions about conflict in the workplace, please contact Mark Smith at mark@mjsp.com.au or on (07) 3839 1233.