

# Consultation around change: A staff perspective

Rob Sheehy

Area Manager Aged Care

Health Services Union NSW/ACT



# The industrial/legal context

- ▶ Generally Age Care agreements have a responsibility to consult with workers directly and their representatives around ‘major change’ that is likely to have ‘significant effects’.
- ▶ ‘Significant effects’ include changes to composition, operation and size of workforce, hours, skills required, locations, restructures etc.
- ▶ Consultation requirements can involve the need to provide all relevant information in writing and hold discussion on steps taken to avert or mitigate the negative impacts of the change and give due consideration to any issues raised.

# The industrial/legal context cont.

- ▶ Roster changes (changes to regular roster) has specific requirements for consultation, including notification periods etc.
- ▶ Consultation may be required under other clauses/legislation (e.g. Workplace Surveillance Act).



# Worker Perspective: Causes of Angst

## Information

- ▶ No information provided.
- ▶ Insufficient information provided, including background, content and impacts.
- ▶ Not provided to all staff affected.
- ▶ Not provided to their representatives.
- ▶ Not given sufficient time to consider information provided (proportional).

# Worker Perspective: Causes of Angst

## Consultation Process

- ▶ Staff not involved at earlier stage (e.g. problem solving).
- ▶ Not given opportunity to question, respond and/or provide alternatives.
- ▶ Unrealistic Timeframes (proportional to size of change/circumstances).
- ▶ No effort to minimise/avert negative impacts.

# Worker Perspective: Other Issues

- ▶ Ongoing concerns that go unresolved (e.g. interpersonal issues, previous changes unfinished/fulfilled).
- ▶ Poor relationships.
- ▶ Some changes may cause conflict, even with consultation processes in place.

# Consultation: Done Well

- ▶ Clear and relevant information provided to both staff and representatives in writing.
- ▶ Opportunity for feedback clearly outlined.
- ▶ Steps taken to mitigate/avert negative impacts.
- ▶ Timeframes proportional to change.
- ▶ Consideration given for issues raised.
- ▶ Review dates in place and kept.

