

## Meal breaks come, then go again

Compelling evidence that the right to a rest and meal break should continue has been ignored, the Council of Trade Unions said.

A government select committee has just published its report on the Rest and Meal Breaks Amendment Bill, and the government is continuing with plans to roll back the rights which had only just come in to force last year.

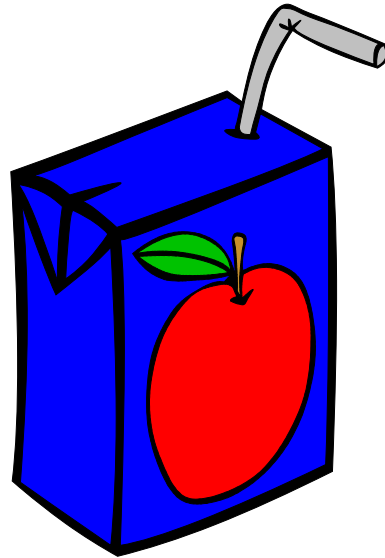
“It is unimaginable what would lead the Government to make this change,” said CTU President Helen Kelly.

“The provisions in the new Bill remove the right to a break and instead allow employers to refuse them.”

While they make some provision for ‘compensatory measures’, no substantive criteria remain in the Bill to describe what the compensation should be based on.

“The Bill also enables employers to require workers to stay in the workplace and even attend to work during an unpaid break.

“This disregards the need workers have to tend to personal matters in breaks,” Helen Kelly said.



### Have you suffered an injury that affects your ability to work? Are you a union member? Do you need help to access ACC?

We can help you to:

- Find the best way to resolve any problem in accessing your ACC entitlement
- Help to prepare for meetings with ACC or an accredited employer
- Support you at meetings or mediation
- Identify other resources available to you

Contact our advocates at [advocacy@nzctu.org.nz](mailto:advocacy@nzctu.org.nz) or call us on 0800 4 UNION (0800 486 466)



# unions talking health and safety

## Update from CTU

We are working with ACC to prioritise our training in high risk industries.

This year these are: Agriculture, Construction, Forestry, Residential Care, Manufacturing (all areas) and Road Freight Transport.

As advised in the last newsletter we have limited funding to train reps outside the 6 high risk industries.

So, since 1 July we have trained 225 H&S reps with the Employers paying – in house.

We are also piloting courses with employers paying for individual H&S reps to attend.

This cost is \$360.00 plus GST per rep for the two days training.

### Sick note - sick joke?

Proposals to allow employers to require a medical certificate for a single day of sick leave or family leave have won a big thumbs down from workers.

The idea that a worker with a stomach bug or a bad cold should pull themselves out of bed to get a medical certificate is plain silly, said the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union.

With an already stretched health system doctors have said they don't want to spend precious time writing medical certificates on demand for employers when all that's needed is a day in bed and a dose of Paracetamol, they said.

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### ABOUT

*Unions Talking Health and Safety* is published every three months by the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi. To be added to the mailing list, visit [www.worksafereps.org.nz](http://www.worksafereps.org.nz) to subscribe.

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## Unique research project initiated by mill workers

Years of careless disposal of the toxic chemicals used for treating timber at Whakatane mills has left a legacy of seriously contaminated soil in the area.

Sawmill Workers Against Poisons (SWAP) are developing a unique and exciting response to the challenge of cleaning up the local environment.

Te Ohu Mo Papatuanuku combines Mātauranga Māori with western science in a land remediation project which uses fungi to clean up toxic soil.

The project has taken soil from the nearby Kopeopeo canal and inoculated it with the fungi to see if they will degrade contamination from dioxin and heavy metals.

Ngati Awa have been a key backer of the project and funding, technical assistance and help in kind have also come from the National Distribution Union, the Whakatane Board Mill, Environment Bay of Plenty, the University of Waikato, and an American scientist.

The project is very much a labour of love for mill worker Rua Williams and technicians Eula Toko and Jean McAuley who voluntarily put in many hours work monitoring and running the practical side of the project which is based in a large shed owned by the mill.

“We couldn’t just carry on pretending that leaving things as they were would be all right. That’s just not good enough,” said Rua.

Trials of the process have just been completed and trees are being planted in some of the soil which was used to see whether contamination can be further reduced.

- *NDU Express, September 2010*



■ FUN GUY. Euala Toko & Rua Williams inspect fungi growing in toxic soil

### Manufacturer Failed to Ensure Worker’s Safety

Manufacturers can’t just install their equipment and walk away without checking the equipment for safety in the workplace, the Department of Labour said.

The comments follow the sentencing in September of an Auckland meat processing systems manufacturer over an accident in which a meat worker had his leg broken.

The Department of Labour said appropriate guarding of machinery has been law for more than a century “but people still ignore it or forget about it”.

“Manufacturers have to give safety for users’ top priority, because unsafe machinery is the cause of a high number of serious harm and fatal injuries,” the Department said.

### ILO sounds the ‘death knell for asbestos’

A statement from a United Nations body confirming its desire to see the end of asbestos use worldwide is the ‘death knell’ for a substance which claims one life every five minutes around the clock, the global union confederation ITUC has said.

ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow said the ILO statement provides welcome support for the global union campaign to see a ban on asbestos worldwide and a just transition to safer, better jobs for displaced asbestos workers.

“ILO has confirmed that it wants to see the elimination of asbestos use worldwide, full stop,” she said.



Hugh McCracken, a Wellington web coordinator is clear why he got involved as health and safety rep.

“Rather than just be a bystander, I wanted to be actively involved in eliminating, isolating or minimising hazards,” Hugh, a member of the Tertiary Education Union, said.

Good health and safety systems were about getting on top of things early, he said. Some repetitive strain injuries that may seem minor can have gradual but irreversible onset, he said, citing the use of everyday workstation equipment like visual display units and keyboards.

“There are simple things you can do to isolate or minimise the impact.”

Hugh encourages others to become health and safety reps.

“You’re doing good by your workmates, and also doing the best thing for your organisation in terms of minimising harm, and through that you’re going to lift productivity.”