

Woolworths Cited for Unethical Workplace Practices

by mod *Wednesday, Oct 29 2014, 10:54pm*

international / prose / post

I was recently supplied a copy of a letter taken from a Woolworths staff noticeboard addressed to Woolworths' Director of HR and circulated to CEO, Grant O'Brien.



The letter (below) raises some very disturbing issues for all working Australians as it appears that Australian ethical workplace standards have been seriously breached or completely disregarded by Woolies' upper management, which has a disproportionate amount of foreigners in critical managerial positions -- which would explain much.

I need not elaborate further as the letter is very clear and precisely targets some very serious concerns for the Woolworths company and staff.

However, I would mention that we have had occasion to write extensively on another foreign MD/CEO, Ian McLeod, whose methods have landed Coles in court on numerous occasions -- Coles is now facing an additional \$5.5 million in fines on top of the \$3 million fine it has already received in a previous case -- of major interest here is that the former CEO, who is directly responsible for ALL Coles' legal problems, is not an Aussie citizen, and like much of Woolworths' upper management is 'fresh' from the UK.

We will follow this case as it develops and hope that a fair outcome is achieved without recourse to law, as the issues raised concern everyone that works for a major corporation in Australia -- corporate ethical standards/practices are now a major focus for all corporations globally.

Where appropriate personal information has been removed:

21 October 2014

David Guise Director Human Resources
Woolworths Ltd
PO Box 8000
Baulkham Hills NSW 2153
email: -----

Dear Sir,

RE: WORKPLACE BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND VICTIMISATION

My name is -----, I am 51 years of age and have been a loyal employee of Woolworths for over 30 years the majority of which time I served at the Woolworths ----- store where I continue to serve today in the capacity of duty manager, please refer to my file for personal details and medical history, which, you will note, limit my physical abilities. I am unable to perform any type of static computer related work or continuous repetitive work e.g. checkout duties etc., however, I am easily able to perform my current duties as duty manager as they are varied and broad in range and rarely aggravate my medical conditions. I would add that I have always performed my varied duties over the years diligently and conscientiously, as contracted, and no superior in the past has ever had occasion to correct or reprimand me in any way whatsoever as I am extremely familiar with 'floor' work, customer service and floor-staff management.

Recently there has been a dramatic change in staff relations and the manner in which store management implement company policy, which I wish to bring to your attention with a view to intervention and conflict resolution, as certain irregular and highly questionable practices currently being utilised by the store manager M----- V----- and his second in charge, R----- B-----, could easily compromise the company and attract media attention for the failure of Woolworths to observe Australian ethical standards in the workplace, notwithstanding breaches of Industrial Law.

Around August of this year Mr B----- requested that I train in various new duties which I am unable to perform for medical reasons, as stated above. My first impression was that Mr B-----, who is new to the job, had failed to review staff files prior to making his requests so I informed him of my medical history and severe limitations and thought that would be the end of the matter. However, Mr B-----, now fully aware of my medical history and physical limitations, began to badger, bully and harass me to perform the duties which he now demanded that I perform, stating that, "you will do tobacco sales and other allotted new duties," the vast majority of which I am clearly unable to perform for reasons stated above!

I understand zealotry, which has no place in any ethical Australian corporation and the need of some types to fulfil company policy at any cost in order to please, but at extremely high risk to the company brand and reputation and with health/safety risks to employees and the associated legal ramifications, definitely not; and that is the reason I am informing you of the current situation, which is in dire need of intervention.

As a result of Mr B-----'s and the store manager's persistent abuse and inconsiderate behaviour -- Mr M----- V----- informed last last week that I 'needn't turn up for next week's work, period,' a callous directive which was clearly made without any consideration for my loyal service over the years and the 'minor' fact that I require a living weekly wage. I would add that Mr V-----, for reasons known only to him, confronted me with this traumatic and demeaning directive while I was on duty attending to and servicing customers, who were all appalled by his behaviour and the fact that he chose those circumstances to compensate for some personality shortcoming.

I was extremely embarrassed and traumatised by the calculated tactic Mr V----- employed and in view of the persistent abuse and inconsideration of his second in charge, have been advised to take immediate action and seek just compensation for all

the abuse, injuries, pain and suffering and other traumas needlessly sustained at the hands of Woolworths management.

However, due to my long service record and loyalty I deemed it preferable at this stage to inform you of the situation and give you the opportunity to intervene and implement immediate remedial action.

I would also ask that you forward this communication to the CEO as the matter has the potential to compromise the entire company and damage Woolworths' reputation in the broader community.

In view of the seriousness of the issues I have raised, I ask you directly:

- a) Do you approve of the pattern of behaviour displayed by Mr V----- and Mr B-----?
- b) Is it now company policy to harass staff into performing duties that they are clearly medically unable to perform (without severe physical and the associated psychological consequences)?
- c) Does Woolworths now consider staff as objects of abuse and expendable commodities?
- d) Is this how Woolworths rewards its long-serving loyal staff, with relentless psychological and physical abuse, as I was forced to do computer work in the pay office and perform checkout duties -- at extreme cost to my health and well being, I would add?
- e) Does Woolworths have positive regard for Australian ethical workplace standards; if not please outline the 'new' ethical standards which have now been adopted by the company?

If you have any questions or require additional information I would be happy to oblige to the best of my ability.

Please note that this communication will be posted on the staff noticeboard and circulated to those parties indicated below.

In view of the seriousness of the issues I have raised and the deleterious effect they are having on my health, a prompt response would be appreciated

Yours faithfully,

From:

CC:

Peter McConnell, Public Relations
email: -----

Tjeerd Jegen, MD of Supermarkets
email: -----

Grant O'Brien, Woolworths CEO
Internal communication

<http://colescomplaints.zapto.org/>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-1327.html>