



Sydney Theatre Company

MEAA continues to pursue safety concerns at STC

After two violent incidents and abuse towards MEAA members at Sydney Theatre Company (STC) there have been some positive outcomes since conciliation at the Fair Work Commission (FWC), but some serious issues remain unresolved. MEAA reported the following to the FWC Thursday, February 18:

Positive outcomes since the FWC conciliation are:

- MEAA and STC met on February 11, and discussed the issues raised at the conciliation. The parties also met separately with both the victims involved in the two incidents of assault.
- STC held a meeting with staff on February 8, to discuss the issues that have arisen as a result of these two violent episodes. All meetings were productive and I understand that the staff meeting was particularly successful as the staff felt quite able to ask multiple questions and provide their opinions. Unfortunately, the promised minutes are still outstanding.
- The documents requested as a consequence of the first incident, have been provided after MEAA consented to a written undertaking that the paperwork would remain confidential. The only outstanding documents are the complaint made by the patron and the House Services Report that arose as a result of the second incident.
- The serving of alcohol now ceases five minutes before a performance commences.

The following issues have either still not been settled or reached a situation where the parties can consult further:

- Written processes to be adopted in the event of violence against staff in the workplace. (the first incident occurred on December 14, 2015, when it was immediately obvious that there was no procedure to follow in the event of a violent episode)
- Improved incident reporting
- Appropriate signage at venues
- Appropriate announcements in the theatre before the performance
- Reviewing the adequacy of STC radio communications systems
- Evacuation procedure in the event of fire/violent incident or city lockdown
- Procedures on staff counselling and welfare
- Training for staff in handling difficult patrons and RSA (I understand that dates are currently being organised)

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Other issues:

- Second incident still not finalised
- Statement by STC on its stance on violence in the workplace
- Suspension of the perpetrator of the assault in first incident
- STC statement to first victim informing her she has no case to answer. Apologies for the long delay in finalising the investigation and regrets for any distress the process may have caused (or words to that effect). MEAA also expects a similar statement to be provided to the victim of the second incident when the investigation is finalised.

The most important issue in this dispute is the safety of the employees. Quite a few of the items listed can be improved or resolved quite quickly. For example, finalisation of the second incident, replacing appropriate signage, making appropriate announcements, providing the STC's stance on violence in the workplace and provision of a STC statement to the first victim.

STC members met February 19, to discuss the slow progress that has been made. The meeting resolved to:

- Continue the listing with the FWC,
- Union prepare a response to the sanitised STC minutes taken of Town Hall meeting February 8 that discussed violence in the workplace and action STC management need to take to improve workplace safety.
- MEAA write to STC management request a draft of the proposed policies regarding violent incidents, incident reporting, responsible service of alcohol, adequacy of communications systems and fit for purpose, evacuation procedures, staff counselling and welfare, training and appropriate signage.

Furthermore, that MEAA develop a campaign to encourage entertainment venues to zero tolerance to violence and abuse in the workplace.

MEAA will report back to STC members on March 4, or sooner if progress has been made.