



PLAIN ENGLISH GUIDE

EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS AND POLICIES

It is important in an employment relationship for both the employer and employee to know what their rights and responsibilities are at the commencement of employment. One of the most convenient ways to achieve this is by means of a written employment contract, and written employment policies. Commins Hendriks' experienced team can assist you with any of your employment needs.

Why do I need an employment contract?

An employment contract is a useful tool to establish the boundaries of employment. If there is no contract, the law imposes many different rules and regulations on the relationship between the employer and employee, and this may or may not be advantageous to you, either as an employee or employer. It is much easier and clearer to have a written contract that contains basic information that everyone needs to know, as well as particular things individual to your business relationship. Basic things that should be included are:

- Rates of pay
- Leave
- Hours of work
- Performance standards

What are workplace policies?

Workplace policies are general standards expected around the workplace. They can cover things from behaviour and safety, to how the job is to be done day-to-day. Workplace policies are a useful tool, as long as they are updated regularly, so that they do not become obsolete. They work well with the contract of employment, and together both the employee and employer know what is expected of them.

Policies should be reviewed regularly, so that employees can provide their input and feedback on how current policies are working, and suggest any changes. The policies should be readily available for all staff at all times, and employees should be made aware of any changes to policies. Workplace policies should be clearly written in plain English so that everyone can understand them easily, and they do not cause confusion.

What should be covered by a workplace policy?

Each business is different and has different needs. However, as a general rule, most places of business should have policies regarding:

- Leave (in particular maternity/ paternity leave)
- Internet and email usage
- Phone usage
- Mobile phone usage
- Drugs and alcohol
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Harassment, discrimination and grievance procedures
- Any specific dress requirements

Commins Hendriks can assist you in tailoring employment contracts to your specific business needs, and we can also provide you with a more "standard" employment contract for use in your work place. We are also able to provide advice on workplace policies.