

Multicultural Workers Collective- Unions WA Feedback on the WA DAMA Curriculum and Information Guide

Unions WA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the WA DAMA Employment Sessions curriculum and accompanying Information Guide. We strongly support the intent of the program and commend the emphasis on prevention, cultural safety, plain English, and trauma-informed delivery. The curriculum is well aligned with the objectives of the WA DAMA, Fair Work and Work Health and Safety frameworks, and contemporary best practice in supporting migrant and sponsored workers.

At this stage, our feedback focuses on substantive issues relating to accuracy, risk, clarity, and alignment with current policy, practice, and service delivery. We have also provided broader, cross-cutting observations where relevant.

General Feedback

Overall, the curriculum provides a strong foundation for empowering migrant workers to understand their rights, recognise risks early, and access support safely. Across all sections, Unions WA recommends:

- Continued reinforcement that workplace rights apply regardless of visa status, contract type, or length of residence in Australia.
- Clear and consistent messaging that seeking information, advice, or support — including from unions — does not affect visa status and is lawful.
- Stronger emphasis on power imbalance, particularly in sponsored and regional employment contexts, to avoid workers internalising responsibility for unlawful practices.
- Ongoing clarification of the distinction between general information and legal or migration advice, with consistent signposting to authorised services.

Section-Specific Feedback

The Australian Workplace – Your Rights and Obligations (p.43)

This section is accurate and clearly presented. We recommend strengthening language to emphasise that minimum standards cannot be reduced by agreement and that employer responsibilities are heightened where power imbalance exists, including under sponsorship arrangements.

Australia's National Employment Standards (NES) (p.47)

The NES content is accurate and appropriate. We suggest reinforcing that NES applies to *all* workers, including casuals, sponsored workers, and migrants on temporary visas, and that no contract can lawfully undercut these standards.

Awards, Agreements and Employment Contracts (p.50)

The explanation of the employment framework hierarchy is clear. We recommend adding explicit warnings about over-reliance on written contracts, particularly where workers may feel pressured to accept unlawful terms.

Warning Signs for Exploitation (p.54)

This is a strong and necessary section. We recommend expanding examples of visa-linked coercion (e.g. threats relating to sponsorship or reporting to authorities) and reinforcing that exploitation is never the worker's fault.

Payslips, Tax, and Superannuation (p.58)

This section is practical and well aligned with union practice. We recommend explicitly stating that missing superannuation is a form of wage theft and reinforcing that cash-in-hand arrangements without payslips are unlawful.

Modern Slavery (p.63)

The section is appropriately framed and sensitive. We recommend strengthening links between early warning signs of exploitation and more serious forms of harm, and further emphasising that confidential, non-police support options are available.

Industrial Relations and Unions (p.67)

This section is accurate and well aligned with current industrial relations frameworks. We recommend reinforcing the role of unions as a preventative, early-intervention support and clarifying that union involvement often resolves issues before escalation.

Unions – Your Rights and Protections (p.70)

The legal right to join a union is clearly explained. We suggest strengthening reassurance that employers cannot ask about union membership and that union contact is confidential and protected by law.

Union Right-of-Entry and How to Get Union Help (p.73)

The content is accurate. We recommend clearer differentiation between a worker privately contacting a union and formal right-of-entry processes, to avoid confusion or unnecessary fear.

Work Health and Safety (WHS) (p.76)

This section is a strength of the curriculum. We recommend reinforcing that fatigue, excessive hours, and psychosocial hazards are WHS issues, not personal shortcomings, and including examples relevant to regional and sponsored work.

Workers' Compensation (p.84)

The information is accurate and accessible. We recommend reinforcing that workers' compensation rights apply regardless of visa status and that workers are legally protected from retaliation when making a claim.

Directory – Workplace Rights & Exploitation Support (p.130)

The directory is comprehensive and useful. We recommend ensuring unions are clearly visible as a first-point, preventative support option and highlighting access pathways for regional workers.

Conclusion

Unions WA supports the WA DAMA Employment Sessions curriculum as a strong, best-practice framework for protecting migrant workers and supporting ethical employment in Western Australia. With minor refinements to strengthen clarity around power imbalance, visa-related risks, and safe help-seeking pathways, the curriculum will provide even stronger protection and practical value for participants.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this work and would welcome ongoing engagement as the program is finalised and implemented.