



DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING: DEVELOPMENTS AND EMERGING ISSUES

At AMMA's recent Drug and Alcohol Testing Forum, a panel of industry experts canvassed emerging challenges and trends impacting resource employers in this often contentious yet critical area. From adopting a 'zero tolerance' approach to choosing the most effective testing method, here AMMA highlights the top five issues raised during the forum.

1. What does 'zero tolerance' mean and is it right for your business?

'Zero tolerance' means no second chances for breaching the company drug and alcohol policy. You should consider whether a strict 'single strike' approach to breaches of the policy is right for you. Consider whether there are situations where individual circumstances should be considered as part of a fair and just disciplinary process.

2. What are you testing for?

Rapid changes in drug technology including the introduction of synthetic drugs and masking agents make testing for prohibited substances increasingly challenging. Your policy empowers the business to test for particular substances, therefore if the policy is silent or only anticipates testing according to the relevant Australian Standard, there could be gaps in your ability to test for, or take action, in relation to certain drugs.

3. What types of testing methods are you using?

The panel discussed seven testing methods that are recommended for all drug and alcohol policies:

- Pre-employment
- For cause
- Blanket
- Random
- Post incident
- Confirmatory
- Return to work

Your policy should allow sufficient flexibility to use all (or some) of the above testing methods from time to time. Failing to identify all possible testing methods may be costly and restrict your ability to address issues as they arise.

4. Is an 'amnesty' period appropriate for your business?

When introducing a new drug and alcohol policy or testing regime it may be appropriate for your business to consider an introductory amnesty period. This may encourage employees to self-report and seek assistance for drug and/or alcohol dependency, without fear of disciplinary action.

5. Client vs contractor – whose policy applies?

The resource sector's unique project structure often creates challenges with overlapping policies and procedures. Consider whether your policy covers situations where a third party's policy or procedure may be more onerous and your employees may be held to different standards or testing methods.