

Smokers vs. Centrelink

Dear Member,

Late last year, Southern Cross Care banned smoking for staff across all facilities. This has resulted in some staff giving up smoking, which of course is really positive for those who could or wanted to.

For the remaining members that continue to smoke this has led to them being allocated an area across the road to smoke during their breaks. This area is the Centrelink footpath. Since sharing the area members have had constant issues trying to be good neighbours. Despite local SCC management and our members' efforts, Centrelink have been less than accommodating.

HSU members are advised that they do not work for Centrelink and should not be picking up cigarette butts from Centrelink users. Nor should they be directed to by Centrelink staff. If any of the following happens to you, report it to SCC management first. If it continues to be an issue, contact your local HSU organiser at kirk.rostock@hsu.asn.au.

1. If members smoke in area across the road, take a receptacle to collect and dispose of your own butts. Do not dispose of butts on the curb or road.
2. If directed to pick up butts that are not yours, politely decline. Remember you are in uniform and either on paid or unpaid breaks, so the SCC code of conduct applies. But you are not required to pick up others' mess.
3. If you are photographed, report it immediately to your manager.
4. If a Centrelink staff member engages with you, politely ask for their name and report the name and details of the conversation to your manager. You should also write down what was said, remembering to record the time, place, content of conversation, as well as any witnesses to the encounter.
5. If you are called into a meeting regarding smoking across the road, contact the HSU on 1300 478 679 for advice and support.

Members did not make this decision. However, members have had to deal with the consequences of the decision. One would imagine that Centrelink staff have bigger problems to deal with than harassing aged care workers trying to take a break. However, according to member reports, Centrelink appear to be unhappy over this issue.

If you are not already an HSU member, there is no time like the present to join. Only HSU members are given individual support for issues like this and others. You can join online at www.hsu.asn.au/join or call 1300 478 679.

In unity,



Gerard Hayes
Secretary, HSU NSW/ACT/QLD