

## *A dismal record*

**I**n a groundbreaking case, a lesbian police officer has won the right for her partner to be admitted as a dependant to the Police Medical Aid scheme (POLMED).

Unfortunately, Jolanda Langemaat's case was won without the support of the two police unions - POPCRU and SAPU. She was supported by the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality and the Gay and Lesbian Police Network.

How many lesbian and gay workers are in a position to set up their own network? What are the unions doing about gay and lesbian rights?

### **COSATU**

The Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), a COSATU affiliate, is the only union known to refer to homophobia in its constitution. The clause in the aims and objectives of the union was reworded in August 1995 to read "We are committed to build and maintain a democratic worker-controlled union based on the principles of non-racism, non-sexism and non-homophobia".

But TGWU's commitment ends there. There is no official education programme concerning lesbian and gay equality at the workplace.

COSATU's general policy statements also commit the federation to equality and the rights of lesbian and gay people. However, the federation is not known to

*by Mazibuko Jara*

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have done any concerted work on the issues lesbian and gay workers face at work.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is the largest COSATU affiliate, with close to 380 000 members. The union has a significant number of gay men as its members. Gay miners have formed support groups in a number of provinces. None of these groups has been able to raise, in any systematic way, questions related to their interests and demands within the NUM. They have succeeded, however, in creating an environment of tolerance and acceptance. The Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Gold Fields raises most of its funds through soccer tournaments between its members and other mineworkers.

### **NACTU**

Information about what NACTU and its affiliates are doing or not doing on this issue is not available.

### **FEDUSA**

Members of FEDUSA have started an Equity Forum to discuss affirmative action and employment equity issues. This Forum has discussed lesbian and gay equality at the workplace, but the discussion has not

been taken to other FEDUSA forums where policy decisions could be taken.

After the Langemaat judgement, many employers and benefit providers have consulted their legal advisors. They are asking labour relations experts and gay and lesbian activists to guide them in removing discrimination against lesbian and gay employees.

It is interesting to note that very few trade unions have done anything since the judgement. Lesbian and gay workers will be watching the unions to see what they will do when another case of workplace discrimination against a lesbian or gay employee comes up.

## Seminar

The Gay and Lesbian Coalition continues to engage labour, government and employers on issues of sexual orientation and the workplace. At a recent workshop on Sexual Orientation and the Workplace, participants discussed the Coalition's Policy Proposals for a Code of Good Employment Practice. The Policy Proposals offer all stakeholders an opportunity to understand sexual orientation as a workplace issue. ★

*Mazibuko Jara is the co-ordinator of the Equal Rights Project at the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality. He writes in his personal capacity.*

# The TULEC Manual for Trade Union Organisers

This manual is a must for all union organisers. It offers a substantial collection of material that has been drawn from a wide range of sources within the labour movement. Topics covered by the manual include:

- ☛ Summaries of the main labour laws and advice on using these laws
- ☛ Chapters on model agreements, organisational skills and codes of conduct
- ☛ Articles on challenges facing unions today, such as casualisation and workplace restructuring
- ☛ Information on NEDLAC, the ILO and the CCMA
- ☛ A list of useful contracts and references

The manual comes in a file format and regular updates will be sent out annually.

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