

Blacktown Advocate

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Picture: Justin Sanson

Top of the pyramid

Cheerleaders from The Hills Sports High School are national champions for the second year in a row.

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Drug testing: Union seeks council policy 'equity'

ALL NEED TO BE CLEAN

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BLACKTOWN Council will drug- and alcohol-test its employees for cocaine, cannabis and ice but Mayor Stephen Bali insists it is standard practice for modern workplaces.

Cr Bali said while he had complete faith in council employees,

workplace health and safety was paramount and everyone had the right to work in a safe place.

But the United Services Union, which represents Blacktown Council workers, said it was concerned the drug tests could unfairly target employees and that it

would not support any new drug policy until the council negotiated with the union to ensure equity.

Cr Bali said all employees would be randomly tested, from the mayor and the general manager to contractors and volunteers.

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Asleigh Engelmann at top, with Chloe O'hare, Krissy McCarthy and Hannah Elliott, and (front) Ellenor Koch, Breanna Purnell and Tamara Gray. Picture: Justin Sanson

CHEERLEADERS TWICE CHAMPS

Azal Khan

"EAT, sleep, cheer, repeat" must have been the catchcry of The Hills Sports High School cheerleading squad, which has taken out first place in the national championships for the second year running.

The squad is made up of 14 girls across years 7 to 12, some of whom have been on the squad for six years together.

Inferno Cheer and Dance school in Prospect coached the girls and its principal Emma Squire is "elated" with the result.

"Many come from gymnastics and dance backgrounds, with some having prior cheerleading experience, and others, this being their first year of competitive

cheerleading and dance," Ms Squire said. The squad trains twice a week covering disciplines of both all-star cheerleading and cheer dance, or pom - as it is called.

The squad placed fourth in an "extremely competitive" level one scholastic cheer division of the Australian All Star Cheerleading Federation (AASCF) scholastic national championships and placed first in their scholastic pom division, which makes them the scholastic national champions for two years running.

"They also backed up the following day at the AASCF Spring Carnival competition with a near flawless cheer routine, to place first and take out overall scholastic grand champions," Ms Squire said.

BLACKTOWN

Drug testing in a 'modern workplace'

Mayor defends council plans as tenders issued

Angela Ranke

MAYOR Stephen Bali has defended Blacktown Council's new drug and alcohol testing as a normal part of modern-day workplaces.

The *Daily Telegraph* last week reported the council was hiring a team of drug specialists to randomly test its employees for alcohol and drugs including cocaine, MDMA, methamphetamine and cannabis.

The United Services Union, which represents the workers, says while it supports drug testing, the procedure needs to be done in the right way.

Cr Bali said drug testing was standard procedure in many organisations, including local government.

"There would be very few modern workplaces that don't have a formal drug testing policy," he said.

"What we want to do is move to a policy that treats workers humanely, with equity across the board."

He said drug testing was new for the council, but the policy and the procedure had been previously negotiated with the union and NSW local government representatives.

"I have complete faith in our employees, but workplace health and safety is paramount," Cr Bali said.

"We all have the right to work in a safe workplace."

He said the council would spend the next six months consulting with staff before drug testing began on



United Services Union general secretary Graeme Kelly.

July 1. The details of the new drug tests are contained in tender documents, which encourage veteran drug testers to apply for a three-year contract, with an option to extend for a further two years.

"(The contractor must provide) a mobile facility suitable to conduct the testing for circumstances where a suitable on-site venue is not available," the tender documents state. "Drug testing is to be conducted in accordance with (the Australian Standard), which details the levels of unacceptable risk for 'drugs of abuse'."

According to the tender documents, a random selection of 20 employees will be tested for trace levels of drugs at two council locations: council chambers at Flushcombe Rd and the depot at Rooty Hill.

The council will also breath-test workers for alcohol, using the same tolerance levels drivers must obey on the roads, with peo-

ple who work directly with children or who drive 13.9 tonne vehicles permitted to only have a blood-alcohol level of 0.02 rather than 0.05.

A spokeswoman for Local Government Minister Paul Toole said the health and safety of all council employees was paramount and the minister supported any council implementing policies supporting this principle.

USU general secretary Graeme Kelly said abuse of alcohol and drugs was not acceptable, but the union was concerned that Blacktown Council's drug testing could unfairly target rank-and-file workers.

"Blacktown Council is not the first council to have a drugs and alcohol policy introduced, but the way it is done and the policy itself needs to be negotiated between the council and the union on behalf of the workers," Mr Kelly said.

"We need to ensure there is no targeting of individuals, as opposed to targeting the whole organisation."

"Until there is clarification of random testing in the council policy, we won't be accepting the introduction of it."

Cr Bali said anyone working for the council could be tested, from the mayor and general manager to a sub-contractor or volunteer.

He said the council would offer support and rehabilitation to those experiencing substance abuse issues.

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