



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Bad Apples to be Bounced from Security Industry

May 13, 2005

Around 250 people convicted of serious criminal offences will be booted out of the private security industry under tough new laws set to come into force in July this year, Police & Emergency Services Minister Tim Holding said today.

Mr Holding said a further 300 security guards and crowd controllers would be investigated by police to determine whether they should continue working in the industry.

"This is about weeding out security guards, crowd controllers and others in private security whose criminal past would make them unsuitable to protect Victorians," Mr Holding said.

"We want to run out those renegades and rogues who are a threat to the public and who give the industry a bad name."

Under reforms to come into force on July 1:

- Previously unregulated sectors of the industry, such as security equipment installers and security consultants will need to be registered;
- Bodyguards will need to be licensed. (Security guards, crowd controllers, private investigators and security firms all currently require licenses.);
- People with a serious criminal history will be banned from working in the industry.

Under the new laws, people working 'high-risk' security areas – such as crowd controllers, security guards, bodyguards and private investigators – will have to be specially trained.

Training requirements will be consistent with those agreed between police ministers across other Australian jurisdictions.

The Chief Commissioner of Police will have responsibility for the licensing and the registration of people, and for supervising and overseeing training standards.

Mr Holding said Victoria Police would next week write to around 250 security guards and crowd controllers convicted of a 'disqualifying offence' under the terms of the new Private Security Act.

People convicted of a disqualifying offence – which includes drug trafficking and cultivation and serious assault – will be excluded from the industry as of July 1.

Police will also write to 300 people guilty of other offences – including theft, fraud, deception and burglary – asking them to show why they should remain in the industry.

"The new laws reflect the higher expectations the community now has of the private security industry – without threatening jobs or the economic viability of the industry," Mr Holding said.

"This is about public safety, and the need to be assured proper checks are in place to protect Victorians."

Source: Minister For Police & Emergency Services

Woman in intensive care after fall at racetrack

May 17 2005

A 30-year-old woman is in intensive care in a Brisbane hospital after falling from a horse during trackwork at Roma, in south-west Queensland.

The woman, a licensed rider, was airlifted to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH) following the fall this morning.

The woman was admitted to the intensive care unit but a hospital spokeswoman later said the woman was listed in a critical condition today.

Queensland Racing officials were investigating the accident in conjunction with Workplace Health and Safety officers. AAP

Truck drivers breach hours, caught with drugs

May 18 2005

A police crackdown has found many truck drivers driving while over-tired or in possession of drugs.

As part of the nationwide Operation Austrans, Victoria Police intercepted 881 vehicles in the past two weeks.

They issued 35 penalties to drivers who exceeded driving hours, four for possession of illicit drugs including methyl amphetamines (speed) and cannabis, 19 for speeding and two for drink driving.

Road Safety Taskforce Acting Inspector Jeff Millar said the results were disappointing.

"The results for truck drivers are getting worse. Last week one driver was detected and processed for possession of drugs and this week we have another four," Acting Insp Millar said.

"This result is in spite of all the awareness campaigns and notice within the transport industry that this special operation was being conducted.

"There is no justification for the use or possession of illicit drugs, especially when you are in command of a heavy vehicle.

"The message is clear and simple: 'If you're tired, pull over and sleep'."

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Police issued 90 penalty notices for logbook offences, 19 for failing to wear seatbelts and four for load restraint offences.

Operation Austrans will continue for two weeks. AAP

New Safety Guidelines for Sex Industry

May 18 2005

Canberra's brothels, other businesses in the sex industry and sex workers will have new safety guidelines this week, as the revised Occupational Health and Safety Code of Practice for the Sexual Services Industry in the ACT is formally released on 17 May. The new Code replaces the former 1998 Code.

The Sexual Services Industry Code of Practice provides practical guidance to principal contractors, employers, employees and sex workers on how to meet the safety requirements of the ACT Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989 when undertaking work in the sex industry in the ACT.

"The revised Code was developed in close consultation with the sex industry, takes a risk management approach and includes information on how to deal with fatigue, particular hazards associated with sexual activity and physical safety," ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

There is an amended section on education and training which now includes information on communication procedures between management and employees. Guidance notes on the working environment, drug and alcohol policy and first aid have also been expanded and updated.

The revised Code provides practical guidance on cleanliness, disposal of sharps, amenities, personal protective equipment, examination of clients by sex workers, fire and electrical safety and a range of other work safety issues.

"The new Code should be followed unless there is an alternative course of action which achieves the same or better standard of health and safety in the workplace," Mr Janssen said.

Codes of Practice should be used in conjunction with the OH&S Act and associated regulations and provide evidence during legal proceedings of the minimum standard of safety that an employer is required to achieve.

"The Code is being sent to all ACT brothels and ACT WorkCover encourages sex workers and their employers to review their work practices to bring them in line with the Code's safety guidelines," Mr Janssen said.

Source: ACT Workcover

Hangar Prosecution Decision

May 13 2005

Construction Control ACT Pty Ltd, the company contracted to build the aircraft hangar at RAAF Fairburn, which collapsed during construction on 7 May 2003, has been found not guilty in the Canberra Magistrates Court after defending a charge under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989 (the Act).

"Today's decision was the first hangar collapse prosecution to be unsuccessful, with 6 other cases already run securing convictions or guilty pleas and a further two prosecution cases not being contested by the defendant companies likely to lead to a conviction", ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

Construction Control, as the company in control of the workplace, had been charged with failing to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the workplace was safe and without risk to health.

"This decision was disappointing and demonstrates the difficulty in securing Occupational Health and Safety prosecutions in complex contested matters", Mr Janssen said.

ACT WorkCover has asked the Director of Public Prosecutions to closely review today's decision to determine if there are grounds for an appeal.

"As the regulatory body for occupational health and safety, ACT WorkCover has an obligation to bring the evidence in relation to major incidents before the court for adjudication", Mr Janssen said.

Legal proceedings against two other companies in relation to the hangar collapse are still underway as well as against a former Managing Director and an engineer of one of the firms – both of whom have pleaded guilty.

"Construction Control is also facing a number of additional OHS charges in separate legal proceedings regarding the hangar collapse that have yet to be finalised", Mr Janssen said.

The prosecutions to date have highlighted the need for those in control of workplaces to conduct regular risk assessments.

"Risk assessments, particularly on construction sites where hazards can change on a daily basis, are essential to avoid incidents such as the hangar collapse", Mr Janssen said.

Source: ACT Workcover

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Nominations Sought For OH&S Awards

May 18 2005

ACT WorkCover is seeking nominations for the 15th annual Occupational Health and Safety Awards which is a celebration of industry advances and achievements in workplace health and safety in the ACT.

"The annual awards encourage business, industry, unions and employees to participate in and drive activities that reduce injuries in the workplace," ACT Minister for Industrial Relations Katy Gallagher said.

The major objectives of the awards are to encourage public and private sector workplaces to develop and implement initiatives that result in a safer and healthier workplace, to share learning and ideas, and publicly acknowledge significant achievements in effective workplace health and safety.

Nominations for the ACT WorkCover Occupational Health and Safety Awards will close on Monday 1 August. Information on the awards, including conditions of entry, category criteria and nomination forms are available on the ACT WorkCover website www.workcover.act.gov.au or by telephoning 02 6205 0200. Source: ACT Minister for Industrial Relations

OPAL Reactor Peer Review Report Published

17 May 2005

The report by the international Peer Review Team that reviewed the OPAL Research Reactor operating licence application in Sydney over two weeks in March has been published on ARPANSA's web site.

Agency CEO Dr John Loy said, "In February I invited a team of nuclear safety experts through the International Atomic Energy Agency from Belgium, Hungary, the Netherlands and South Africa to examine the OPAL Reactor operating licence application and to provide comment on the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation's (ANSTO's) proposed arrangements for operating the nuclear facility and the detailed commissioning documentation.

I urge anyone with an interest in this reactor to read the Peer Review Team Report now available at this web address: http://www.arpansa.gov.au/rrrp_operating.htm. The team made a number of recommendations about mandatory operating safety conditions, reactor staffing arrangements and documentation supporting the licence application. I will take their recommendations and comments into

account in my decision-making on the licence application."

Promised additional information on the operating licence application has also been placed on the ARPANSA web site. Parts D (Operational Limits and Conditions), E (Plans and Arrangements for Hot Commissioning) and the Probabilistic Safety Assessment have all been added in summary form.

A more detailed version of the Safety Analysis Report (Part C of the application) will shortly be sent as a hardcopy to State libraries nationally and to pre-identified environmental groups and other stakeholders with an interest in the reactor project.

As announced previously, the deadline for public submissions on the licence application has been extended until 31 August. Comments should be sent to ARPANSA at 619 Lower Plenty Road, Yallambie Vic 3085 or emailed to this address: operatinglicenceapplication@arpansa.gov.au Source: ARPANSA

Few truck drivers use drugs - company says

19 May 2005

A major transport company says five per cent of truck drivers use drugs to stay awake on long haul journeys.

Toll Holdings has appeared before the New South Wales Stay Safe Committee inquiry into road safety administration. Its spokesman Phillip Crook has rejected claims by the Transport Workers Union that between 80 and 90 per cent of truckies abuse stimulants.

He says his gut feeling is that the percentage of drivers who use stimulants is no better or worse than the general community.

Labor backbencher Paul Gibson -- the committee's chairman -- has questioned the figure, but Mr Crook has stuck to his claim.

He says it's based on 35 years of experience in the trucking industry and factual information from Victoria. AAP

Industry given more time for compensation changes

May 18 2005

Key players will be given more time to implement changes to workers' compensation, Consumer and Employment Protection Minister John Kobelke said today.

Firefighters Face Action over "Hold-up" Prank

May 16 2005

By Kate Lahey - AAP

Four firefighters are under investigation for an alleged "hold-up" prank in a Melbourne bank. The firefighters could face dismissal after several bank customers complained to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) of the "joke" that was far from funny.

MFB deputy chief fire officer Keith Adamson said according to witnesses, one firefighter walked into the St George Bank branch in the city about 11am (AEST) last Thursday wearing his communications radio.

While he was in the bank, a colleague sent a message over the radio, saying words to the effect of "this is a hold-up," Mr Adamson said.

He said the joke upset customers, who described the firefighter in the bank as being embarrassed, replying with, "this isn't funny" and walking out. "There was a bad reaction in the bank. People are very sensitive to those sorts of things in banks. They were angry," Mr Adamson said.

St George Bank spokesman Jeremy Griffith said bank staff initially believed the hold-up was real and the manager had started implementing hold-up procedures by reaching for the safety screen button. Mr Griffith said once it became apparent it was a joke, the bank's security staff reported the incident to the MFB.

He said MFB chief commissioner Peter Ackers immediately telephoned St George's Victorian general manager Peter Lock to say the incident was being taken seriously and an investigation had been launched. Mr Griffith said St George was happy with the way the MFB had handled the incident and was confident the firefighters involved would be dealt with appropriately.

Mr Adamson said there were four firefighters travelling together in a truck and at the time of the alleged incident there was one in the bank, one on the footpath and two in the vehicle. The message could only have come from the truck, he said.

Mr Adamson said the brigade had received complaints from about five customers and an angry phone call from top bank executives but the firefighters had denied the claims and were refusing to talk.

"We consider it a very serious matter. We're doing an investigation which has unfortunately escalated up and will probably become a disciplinary issue because of their refusal to cooperate," Mr Adamson said. "Three out of four people had done nothing wrong until they started not cooperating with the investigation. If it's true, it was a silly prank gone wrong, a bad error of judgment. But with the attitude they've taken it takes it to a whole new dimension," he said.

United Firefighters Union branch secretary Peter Marshall said he was not convinced the incident happened. "Firefighters are highly respected and responsible in the community and I am waiting to see what the investigation brings out," Mr Marshall said.

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New CCH Publication Guide to Managing OHS Risks in the Health Care Industry

Edited by Claire Mayhew and Chris Peterson

OHS is an important consideration in all industries, however, it has often assumed lesser importance in the health care industry, where the needs of clients/patients have often over-ridden protection of the OHS status of the workforce.

Yet, daily, health care workers face a wide range of hazards and risks, including occupational violence, infections, injuries, risks associated with precarious employment, stress, and the particular problems faced in small businesses such as GP surgeries.

This book is a practical guide to help OHS professionals in related industries, as well as managers and supervisors in hospitals, clinics and community health organisations, to reduce the hazards and risks faced by health care workers, and to improve their OHS status.

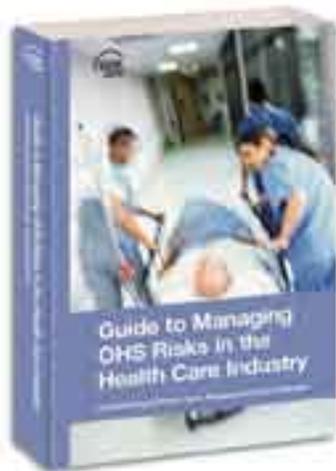
Written by expert health care professionals, this guide

- identifies the major hazards and risks to which diverse groups of workers are exposed;
- recommends policies and strategies to enhance preventive interventions; and
- provides guidance on effective risk management strategies for the range of hazards and risks in different environments.

Topics covered include

- occupational hygiene
- infectious disease
- musculoskeletal injuries
- occupational violence
- psychosocial risks associated with shiftwork and stress
- latex allergy control
- risk management to prevent spread of respiratory infections in general practice
- bioterrorism.

Go to www.cch.com.au for more information



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The second stage of the Workers' Compensation Reform Act 2004, which Mr Kobelke said would improve dispute resolution and injury management processes, will now take effect in November, instead of July.

"Stakeholders have recently told me they need more time to familiarise themselves with the changes and make the necessary adjustments in their businesses," the Minister said.

"The new system covers a lot of very important, complex areas of workers' compensation in order to improve dispute resolution, simplify common law access and make injury management processes more effective.

"It is important that there be a smooth transition to the new program, so I have decided to defer commencement of the remaining changes until November this year."

Mr Kobelke said a factor in the decision to set a new date was the availability of the new Commissioner for Dispute Resolution, who would be a District Court judge.

"I am confident that the new commissioner will be appointed in plenty of time to carry out all of their administrative requirements and ensure that the new dispute resolution process is fully operational from the new implementation date of November 14," he said.

The Minister said the chairman of WorkCover WA, Greg Joyce, had welcomed the later date.

"Mr Joyce says the new date will provide certainty for stakeholders, giving them more time to ensure systems can be updated, staff can be trained and stakeholders can be educated on the far-reaching changes," he said.

Mr Kobelke said the first stage of the reforms, which took effect in January, had immediately improved the weekly benefits system for injured workers.

"In total, \$130million worth of additional benefits will go to injured workers in the first year of the new system," he said.

"Despite concerns from some employer groups about the cost of these reforms, WorkCover WA's recommended premium rates will increase by only 2.9 per cent on average in 2005-2006."

Source: WA Department of Consumer and Employment Protection

Minister Launches ArmySAFE Initiative

20 May 2005

The Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, De-Anne Kelly, today launched a new Army initiative to minimise workplace injuries and illnesses.

ArmySAFE – an enhanced Occupational Health and Safety system - aims to reduce workplace accidents and keep soldiers operationally fit.

Mrs Kelly said ArmySAFE focuses on the welfare of the soldier and will be implemented across the Army.

"The safety of our people is essential if we are to perform effectively in a military capacity," Mrs Kelly said.

"The objective of ArmySAFE is to minimise preventable injuries and work related illness through systematic risk management, early rehabilitation, continuous improvement, and compliance to legislation, Australian standards and organisational requirements."

The Minister launched the initiative at a function hosted by Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra.

General Leahy said the Army's ability to perform at full capability depended on its people.

"The nature of Army training and activities means that safety is a priority if we are to continue to meet the demands of a changing global security and warfighting environment," General Leahy said.

"ArmySAFE underscores the value of the individual and reflects our belief that every officer and soldier plays an important role in ensuring the success of our operations."

Programmes included in the ArmySAFE initiative include:

- An Improved Preventive Medicine Capability to identify and screen potential threats, and assist commanders to manage risks from noise, radiation, hazardous substances, toxins, disease bearing animals, ergonomics or exposure to heat or cold.
- Early intervention and improved rehabilitation to reduce the time soldiers are unfit for duty following injury or illness.
- An Occupational Health and Safety Guide for commanders to provide an initial point of reference for all OHS matters and help units do their job better.
- A Training Continuum for all officers and NCOs and additional specialist training, appropriate to appointment, to prepare personnel posted to specialist OHS positions.
- Recognition and Awards for contributions at unit, formation, command and

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Mob of Youths Attacks Fireman

By Jamie Duncan

May 17 2005

A volunteer firefighter has been beaten by a mob as he tried to fight a fire in the central Victorian town of Benalla.

Benalla Country Fire Authority brigade captain Bill "Pollie" Polwarth was set upon by a mob of up to 30 youths as he tried to clear them away from a suspicious fire that engulfed a garage and car in Nunn Street about 2am (AEST) Sunday.

CFA regional operations manager Stewart Kretzschheim said Mr Polwarth, a volunteer with the brigade for 35 years and aged in his early 50s, was kicked and punched to the ground as he tried to move the group away from the fire.

"He's got a badly broken rib and bruising on his shoulders and back," Mr Kretzschheim said. "He was one of the first on the scene. Some of them were running up and down the driveway and the garage was well alight. He tried to get them away and they turned on him. We're treating it as a one-off. I've never seen anything like it before and I hope I don't see it again."

Detective Sergeant Rod Smith of Benalla CIU said the attack had shocked the town of 9,000 people. "The fact that he's a volunteer is the really bad thing," Det Sgt Smith said. "His not paid to do this. He does it for other people and it's terrible that this has happened while he's doing his job. It's a disgrace, and people should be phoning us up to assist us because somebody knows who did this and if people don't want to tolerate this, they should tell us."

Det Sgt Smith said the crowd came from a combined birthday party for two youths held nearby.

It was not clear if anyone from the mob lit the fires, or were drawn to the flames as fire crews arrived, he said.

Police have interviewed one youth and expect to lay charges in the coming days, he said. A relative, who did not wish to be named, said Mr Polwarth, a plumber, would need at least two weeks off work.

AAP

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Army levels are being developed as a powerful tool for improving safety outcomes.

Source: Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence

Reminder That Seeding Season Can Be Hazardous

May 20, 2005

Now that seeding has begun in regional areas, WorkSafe has issued a reminder to the farming community on potential hazards and the safe operation of machinery.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that the seeding season presented its own unique set of hazards.

"The main areas of concern we have during seeding are fatigue, guarding of machinery and the handling and storage of chemicals," Ms Lyhne said.

"Fatigue is a very serious cause for concern at any time, but seeding season is a particularly busy time of year and farmers need to ensure they get adequate sleep, especially when they are working with hazardous machinery.

"Working long hours and becoming fatigued can result in lapses of concentration which can be particularly dangerous when operating machinery.

"Farmers should also remain aware that all hazardous machinery needs to be adequately guarded to avoid injuries."

Manufacturers of machinery are legally required to make sure dangerous parts are safely guarded so operators are protected from injury, and operators are under an obligation to leave guards in place when machinery is being operated.

Machinery guards should be designed in a practical way that protects the user but allows ready access for operation and maintenance.

Machinery such as augers and tractors that have rotating parts should have adequately guarded power take-offs, as they can catch loose clothing and drag workers into the moving parts.

"We also have concerns about the handling and storage of chemicals at this time of year when the use of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and so on is widespread," Ms Lyhne said.

"Labels and material safety data sheets (MSDSs) should be consulted for information on hazards, personal protective equipment and safe handling, transport, storage and disposal for each chemical.

"Seeding season presents many special and unique hazards, and particular care needs to be taken.

"Long working hours and the use of chemicals and machinery such as augers and tractors can heighten the risk of serious injuries and fatalities.

"I urge everyone in the agricultural sector to look at every activity performed at this time of year and identify the hazards that can cause an injury, illness or even death, then take action to reduce or eliminate those risks."

Further information on safety issues in the agriculture sector can be obtained from the website at www.safetyline.wa.gov.au.

Source: WorkSafe WA

Trainee, communications implicated in train shunt accident

May 20 2005

A trainee worker was unable to warn two train drivers of an impending collision because he was standing in the wrong position, an interim report has found.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau has released its interim report following an investigation into the January 19 collision, which involved a Countrylink interstate train with 220 passengers on board.

No-one was injured when the freight train was shunted into the slow moving passenger train during a re-positioning exercise about 8pm (AEST) in a Melbourne train yard.

However, the collision caused two wagons on the freight train to derail. The accident occurred where two rail lines converged, said the interim report which was released today.

"Both trains were travelling at a speed of less than 20kph at the time of the accident," it said. "There was minimal damage to wagons of the freight train and the track infrastructure."

The report found a trainee sent to monitor the distance between the moving trains had misunderstood the request, and he was instead monitoring another point of the movement.

It also found the freight train had passed a rail signal displaying a stop sign.

"The trainee was found to be in a position where the end of the

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propelling movement could not be observed," the report said.

"The trainee had also not realised that the critical issue was to ensure that the wagons did not pass (the) signal."

The interim report highlighted issues surrounding operating procedures at the rail yard, communication between workers, experience of workers, manning and training.

The investigation continues and recommendations will be included in the bureau's final report. AAP

Rollercoaster closed after accident

May 22 2005

A rollercoaster at Melbourne's Luna Park has been shut down following an incident that left five children and one adult stuck 15 metres above the ground for up to two-and-a-half hours.

Firefighters today said one of the trapped children's parents called them at 4pm (AEST) yesterday and said the ride had stopped 90 minutes earlier, but Luna Park had been unable to get the carriages to the ground.

Firefighters freed the six using a hydraulic platform and safety harnesses just before 5pm.

Preliminary investigations indicated the rear left wheel of the first carriage on the Metropolis, which used to be known as the Mad Mouse, had broken and jammed into the track, firefighters said.

Victoria's work safety authority WorkSafe has slapped a prohibition notice on the ride while it investigates how the breakdown occurred and whether charges would be laid.

WorkSafe Vic executive director John Merritt said investigators were on site yesterday until the evening and would also bring in independent engineers to examine the ride.

"Obviously it's a very serious incident," he said.

"The ride won't be allowed to operate until we are satisfied it can be done so safely."

Senior fire station officer at Windsor, Trevor Lynch-Whild, said emergency service workers were "extremely concerned" they were not notified straight away. He said four children aged between 10 and 13 were in the second carriage with no adults present.

"Fortunately they remained fairly calm, but if they had got into a panic situation the results would have been devastating," he said.

"If they were stuck there for more than five minutes they should call us so we can go there and assess the situation."

Mr Lynch-Whild criticised Luna Park's plan to rescue the trapped guests using a "less-than-adequate cherry picker and no safety equipment".

"They were just going to walk the kids from the car onto the cherry picker and down," he said.

"It was totally unacceptable the way it was handled, and the lack of adequate procedures in emergency cases."

Mr Merritt said WorkSafe would also investigate the time lag before emergency services were called, and would consider Luna Park's emergency evacuation procedure, staff training and whether sufficiently senior staff were on site at the time.

Luna Park managing director Jason Todd said the company was carrying out its standard operating procedure and believed they had the technical ability to resolve the situation.

He said staff had given themselves a 90 minute time limit to move the carriages and rescue the guests, and were in the process of calling emergency services when they arrived.

The Luna Park incident follows a 2003 Mad Mouse accident at the Royal Melbourne Show when eight children were injured after two carriages collided.

AAP

New WorkCover inspectors to improve workplace safety

May 21 2005

WorkCover inspectors will be presented with diplomas in Sydney today after completing of a new training program to improve workplace safety.

NSW Commerce Minister John Della Bosca will present 13 new WorkCover inspectors with a nationally-recognised qualification.

"This comprehensive training program, that recognises national competencies for inspectors, was developed by WorkCover in collaboration with work safety experts from other jurisdictions across Australia," Mr Della Bosca said in a statement.

The new graduates would join the biggest and most active workplace inspectorate in Australia, he said.

"The NSW government, in partnership with WorkCover, industry and workers is aiming to reduce the number of workplace fatalities by 20 per cent and lower the workplace injury rate by 40 per cent in the next seven years," Mr Della Bosca said.

AAP