



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Latest ASCC Meeting Outcomes

1 December 2006

The Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) met for the fourth time in Sydney yesterday, at what was described by Bill Scales, the Chair of the ASCC, as a very successful meeting.

Members from all states and territories, the Commonwealth, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Australian Council of Trade Unions were in attendance.

The ASCC Chairman, Mr Bill Scales, said he was very pleased to see the national reduction in work-related traumatic fatalities and that Australian workplaces are ahead of the target set in the National OHS Strategy.

"Preliminary data indicates there has been a 10% reduction in the incidence rate for work-related fatalities and that, while Australia remains at seventh place internationally, the gap is reducing," he said.

"The data has highlighted however, that despite a 5% improvement against the target for workplace injury, progress is still well below the rate needed to achieve Australia's injury and musculoskeletal target of at least a 40% improvement by 2012. However, the members of the ASCC recommitted themselves to the achievement of this target."

The Notified Fatalities Report 2004-05, which will be published on the ASCC website, provides details and analysis of the 139 fatalities notified to state and territory OHS authorities under their legislation during the 2004-05 financial year.

Notably, 29% of these fatalities occurred at a workplace associated with agriculture, forestry and fishing; 15% occurred at a workplace associated with transport and storage; and 14% at a construction site. Nearly one quarter (24%) of all fatalities were aged 55 years or older.

In other outcomes from the meeting, the ASCC agreed to declare the National Code of Practice for Prevention of Falls in General Construction.

"This code of practice represents a benchmark for the general construction industry to reduce the incidence of falls with a height threshold for fall protection set at two metres nationally," Mr Scales said.

The ASCC expects to finalise a National Code of Practice for Manual Tasks and a National Code of Practice for General Induction in early 2007.

"National standards and codes of practice developed by the ASCC contribute to a nationally consistent framework," said Mr Scales. "This enables Australian governments to coordinate efforts to strive for best practice in OHS. Consistent OHS regulation will reduce the legal complexities for regulators, businesses and workers. The ASCC is committed to promoting national consistency in OHS and workers' compensation schemes.

The National Code of Practice for Labelling Workplace Hazardous Chemicals and the National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Safety Data Sheets have been released for public comment and are open until 1 March 2007. The Workplace Chemical Standard has also been extended to 1 March 2007.

These and other related documents will be available from the ASCC website at www.ascc.gov.au.

Source: ASCC

ADVERTISING

A limited amount of advertising has been approved by the Safety Institute of Australia.

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A cleaner, healthier, smoke-free Canberra is coming

November 29 2006

Canberra would be a cleaner, healthier, smoke-free city from 1 December 2006, ACT Minister for Health, Katy Gallagher, said today.

"From that date all enclosed public places will be smoke-free", Ms Katy Gallagher said.

"An enclosed public place is anywhere that is enclosed, that is a building that is not sufficiently open to allow natural ventilation, and the public are permitted, such as a pub, nightclub or club.

"There is strong community support for the change from the current partially smoke-free areas to entirely smoke-free in public places."

"It follows the implementation of the ban on vending machines, ensuring all sales of tobacco products are subject to verification of the purchaser's age from 1 September 2006."

Ms Gallagher said tobacco was the single largest preventable cause of premature death in Australia, resulting in more than 19,000 lives lost annually to tobacco-related illnesses.

"Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke can lead to lung cancer, throat cancer, heart disease and other conditions," she said.

"Making enclosed public places smoke-free will significantly reduce the level of the public's exposure to environmental tobacco smoke."

Source:ACT Minister for Health

New Smoking Bans Proving Effective For Health And Business

November 29 2006

An estimated 14,000 Queensland smokers may have kicked the habit as a direct result of the Beattie Government's ban on smoking inside pubs and clubs.

Health Minister Stephen Robertson said today an independent survey conducted for Queensland Health in September shows Queenslanders have embraced the new smoking laws which came into force from 1 July 2006.

The statewide survey of 500 Queenslanders - including 22% who are current smokers - investigated the level of awareness about the new laws and their impact on the community and business.

"The survey results are extremely positive and clearly demonstrate the significant impact our smoking bans are having on people," Mr Robertson said. "Not only do they demonstrate the majority of people are embracing the new smoking bans but thousands of Queenslanders are actually giving up the habit. Most Queenslanders are well informed about the new smoking laws with 93% of those surveyed aware it is illegal to smoke inside pubs, clubs and at outdoor eating and drinking establishments."

The survey revealed:

Two (2) percent of smokers polled report they have successfully quit as a result of the new tobacco laws. This equates to an estimated 14,000 smokers when the survey results are applied across the Queensland population.

22% of smokers report that they have attempted to quit as a result of the new laws. This equates to approximately 123,000 Queensland smokers.

A further 27% of ex-smokers report the new smoking laws have helped them remain non-smokers.

Mr Robertson said the survey also revealed the new smoking laws were having a positive impact on business for liquor licensed premises and outdoor eating and drinking establishments.

"21% of those polled said they are visiting Queensland pubs and clubs more often because of the smoking bans; compared to 10% who said they have reduced their visits. 30% also reported they are visiting outdoor eating and drinking establishments more often as a result; compared to the 9% who said they were visiting

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Asia Report

Bingo

By Melody Kemp MSIA A.JA

It might seem incredible to those who see the region to Australia's north as teeming seas of brown bodies, but parts of Asia are feeling like they are running on the boards in workforce terms.

Last week, the Bangkok Post quoted a labour sociologist as saying that she advocated the extension of the mandatory age of retirement to 65 from its current 60, in order to retain skilled workers. This at the same time as CSR Asia in liaison with Goldman Sachs are to run a two days event later this month in Hong Kong on the CSR issues involved in an ageing workforce.

Now those who have been to Asia and got past the girlie bars, beer stalls and air-con glitz of the shopping malls, will know that Asian oldies just keep going like Omega watches. Stick thin old boys in singlets, thongs and Art Deco period flappy shorts, can be seen pushing heavy handcarts, tilling the fields, or oiling a tractor, while old ladies in Chinese jim-jams continue to sweep, pull carts full of flattened cartons or empty bottles, or preside over brothels. Retirement is not on the cards for the unskilled working class.

Many of those old workers have good muscle tone, sturdy joints and good reflexes necessitated by dodging cars and police. They are often relatively relaxed in a way that comes with fatalistic detachment from other than daily survival. They are not the average office wallah.

But as I sit here in my Mekong office, watching the monks wander by, I cannot help but remember when this was an issue in Australia and the government was exhorting Australian workers to hang in for longer. Many had to as they had one of those

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less often. This confirms the feedback we have been getting that people are finding smoke-free pubs and clubs more comfortable environments.”

Mr Robertson the survey results provided clear evidence that creating smoke-free environments helps people to quit, and may even prevent them from taking up smoking in the first place.

“This is a great outcome for all Queenslanders because the benefits of quitting are immense. Within a year of being smoke-free, your risk of dying from heart disease has halved. Within 10 years, your risk of lung cancer is more than halved and continues to decline over time. With over 3,400 Queenslanders dying from smoking related diseases each year, it is vital that we continue to encourage people not to smoke,” Mr Robertson said.

Queenslanders are encouraged to report possible breaches of the new laws to the Tobacco Hotline 1800 005 998 or via the Queensland Health website - www.health.qld.gov.au.

Source: Queensland Minister for Health

Judge reserves decision in ambulance trauma case

November 30 2006

A Queensland Supreme Court justice has reserved her decision on a claim by an ambulance officer that he developed post-traumatic stress disorder because of his harrowing work.

Robert William Hegarty, who was an ambulance officer from 1984 to 1999, is suing the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) alleging breach of statutory duty and, alternatively, breach of contract.

Mr Hegarty served at Emerald in central Queensland, Ayr in north Queensland, and Gayndah and Bundaberg in the state's south-east.

During a lengthy civil trial, Mr Hegarty said he suffered nightmares over numerous incidents such as suicides, car crashes and child drownings, some of which still triggered disturbing flashbacks.

He said there was little or no debriefing following each incident, apart from an informal gathering around a carton of beer at the ambulance station.

It's alleged the QAS did not have an adequate program to support the mental health of ambulance officers until 1993 and, even then, it did not allow employees with problems to be channelled to psychologists.

Justice Margaret Wilson has reserved her decision to be given on a date to be fixed. AAP

WorkSafe calls for vigilance in the workplace after deaths

MELBOURNE, November 29 2006

Victoria's peak workplace safety body has called for greater vigilance on the job after two workplace deaths in a week.

A man hit by a 300kg steel tube which fell from a crane he was operating, later died in hospital.

WorkSafe was investigating the accident at a roller door manufacturer in Canterbury Road, Kilsyth, in Melbourne's outer east about 3.20pm (AEDT) yesterday.

The 51-year-old died at Maroondah Hospital a short time later. There were no witnesses to the incident.

His death was the 24th work-related death reported to WorkSafe this year and the third this month. Earlier this week a man died when his tractor rolled on a property at Timbarra in East Gippsland. On November 14 a man died at Bendigo, in central Victoria, when he was run over by a truck he had just parked.

WorkSafe's executive director John Merritt said business operators and workers needed to be more vigilant. “We've had 24 deaths this year and many serious incidents which have left people with serious,

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lousy 'reformed' super packages.

But the safety implications are of interest. Older women for instance are more prone to osteoporosis and despite HRT, and while older workers may not be at greater risk of falls, any fall at the workplace may have greater implications than a bruise and embarrassment. The rate of type 2 diabetes in sedentary workforces also has safety implications, not to mention productivity effects. I know from my own experiences as an aging person, that I take short cuts to avoid strenuous exertion. Sometimes those shortcuts involve risk. Wearing my reading glasses, while preoccupied with what to write for this column, and then going downstairs is like having three Beer Lao too many.

The risk of getting ill with things like cancer rise in direct correlation with aging, and may be masked by occupational stresses or by the need to be seen to be still coping. Similarly occupational illness may be diagnosed as related to age and compensation denied.

Special attention might need to be paid to vision as acuity and disorders such as glaucoma and cataracts are age related. Screen based or fine assembly tasks may require additional ergonomic inputs. Heat exposure may exacerbate or exaggerate underlying difficulties with hypertension and as I have found, the need for a siesta becomes increasingly alluring. In Asia the ravages of infectious disease when young may also effect later health and performance, and, as cardiovascular and so called lifestyle illnesses and accidents overtake traditional infectious disease, more attention needs to be put into worker health education. While cars are seen as symbols of wealth and success, it may be hard to wean older workers back onto Mao style bicycles or expect them

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often permanent, injuries,” Mr Merritt said. “Workplace safety is a shared responsibility which must incorporate regular risk assessments, appropriate training and supervision, workplace design and constant vigilance. Workers and employers have to look out for each other’s interests and not rely on ‘good luck’ or experience to get you through.”

Mr Merritt said 122 work-related deaths had been reported to WorkSafe since the start of 2002. The cost of compensating and rehabilitating more than 158,000 Victorians injured at work in the past five years exceeded \$5 billion, he said. AAP

Company fined over KFC work hours PERTH, November 29 2006

The company behind KFC in Western Australia has been fined \$3,000 for working children too late at night at a Perth store.

Competitive Foods, trading as Kentucky Fried Chicken in WA, was fined in the Industrial Magistrates Court today after pleading guilty to two counts of employing children under 15 after 10pm (WST) at its Mirrabooka store in July.

The charges followed an investigation conducted by the Labour Relations Division of the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection, which identified that Competitive Foods employed two children under the age of 15 years in 9 shifts that finished after 10.00pm during July 2006 at its Mirrabooka outlet.

WA Employment Protection Minister John Bowler says it is the first time an employer has been prosecuted for breaching the Children and Community Services Act.

Under the Children & Community Services Act employers operating restaurants are prohibited from employing children under 15 years of age after 10.00pm.

“Employers have to remember that children have many important aspects to their lives, including attending school and there is no excuse for working children under the age of 15 after 10pm,” Mr Bowler said today. “Children are our future, and employers in this state need to comply with the legal requirement to employ young workers in a manner which protects their wellbeing, as well as their health and safety.”

Mr Bob Horstman, Acting Director of the Labour Relations Division’s Compliance and Education Directorate said, “This prosecution should serve as a timely reminder to all employers that they are obliged to ensure that all their employment arrangements, and particular those relating to children, comply with State industrial laws.”

Competitive Foods was fined \$3,000 and ordered to pay \$825 costs. Comment was being sought from Competitive Foods. AAP & WorkSafe WA

Company charged over employee’s electrocution MELBOURNE, November 30 2006

A Melbourne company has been charged over the death of a 26-year-old man who was electrocuted while changing a light bulb.

The employee of Camden Neon Pty Ltd was changing light bulbs in a display at a car yard in Sydney Road, Coburg, on April 18 when he was electrocuted.

A WorkSafe investigation found the man was working on an elevated platform and changing the globe while the power was still on.

A WorkSafe spokesman said Camden Neon had been charged under sections of the Occupational Health and Safety Act requiring a safe working environment and the provision of training or supervision to help employees work safely.

The maximum penalty is a fine of more than \$900,000.

A hearing is scheduled for the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court on December 15. AAP

Contractors bill passes Senate December 1 2006

The final instalment of the federal government’s controversial workplace relations changes is in place after laws overhauling independent contracting passed parliament.

Nationals senator Barnaby Joyce and Family First’s Steve Fielding have voted with the government to pass the legislation which

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to take up power walking through polluted and overcrowded streets.

Overall the problem is structural and while some older people may enjoy the opportunity to continue to make a contribution, not to mention a wage, it may be difficult to keep them away from cruising the air con malls for toys for the grandkids or a great game of Mah jong.

Melody Kemp is an ex-pat Australia who currently resides in Laos. As well as working on OHS matters throughout the Asian region she is also the author of **Working for Life: Sourcebook on Occupational Health for Women**, an excellent publication available for download at www.amrc.org.hk

If you have a safety-related experience or opinion that you think will benefit your fellow SIA members, please email your article to jonesk@sia.org.au or contact the Editor on 03 9478 9484.

Articles from expats and experienced SIA members are always welcome.





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was opposed by Labor. It aims to override state laws and will make many workers currently treated under workplace law as employees independent contractors. This means they'll be responsible for their own workplace conditions .. and will be unable to take collective action.

AAP

G20 police sought extra safety gear from hardware store

MELBOURNE, December 1 2006

Victoria Police was forced to go to a hardware store to get extra safety equipment during the recent G20 protests in Melbourne, according to a senior officer.

The officer, who wanted to remain anonymous, told Fairfax that after the violent G20 protest outside the Hyatt hotel on November 20, police made a dash to a Bunnings store in Hoppers Crossing, in Melbourne's western suburbs, to get extra safety equipment. He said that there were not enough safety goggles for officers working night duty and the following day at the event.

"About 5pm on the Saturday there was a mad ring-around of Bunnings stores to find one that had 200 pairs of safety goggles in case there was any more trouble," the officer told Fairfax. "They eventually found that Bunnings in Hoppers Crossing had them, so a car was sent straight there. They were paid for over the phone by a superintendent who had an account, and a car was sent straight away to pick them up. The goggles were driven straight to the protest line where they were handed out."

But Victoria Police spokesman Inspector David Wolf said there were ample supplies of safety equipment. "It would have been sourcing extra supplies 'in case' as you would in any time of need," Insp Wolf said.

Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon had described the level of violence at the protests as the worst she has seen in Melbourne since the the ones outside the World Economic Forum at Crown casino in 2000. Ten police were injured in the G20 protests and seven protesters were arrested.

AAP

Changes To Workers Compensation

1 December 2006

Yesterday, Minister for NT WorkSafe, Paul Henderson tabled an amendment to the Work Health Act.

"This amendment will see the Territory joining all the other Australian jurisdictions in implementing cross border provisions for their workers compensation schemes," Minister Henderson said. "All Australian States and Territories have agreed upon a uniform approach to deciding which jurisdiction a worker is connected. Previously, some employers have found it difficult to decide which state or territory they should purchase their workers' compensation insurance in – especially when they have workers who travel a lot. Then from time to time real problems arose for some injured workers, for example a bus driver or truck driver, if they were injured interstate and were not covered by the correct insurance. I look forward to these amendments passing early next year, so that we can offer surety to Australian workers and employers."

Source: NT Minister For Employment, Education And Training

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The CD won't be pretty as it is a burnt copy of the software that Adobe permits us to distribute. It is not allowed to be given to anyone other than the person requesting the CD and all CDs will be checked for viruses before distribution.

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