The changing demographic composition of the Australian population is having some extraordinary impacts – in the most unexpected quarters.

Take for instance the increasing incidence of obesity. According to one of the world’s leading fire engineers, the expanding number of obese Australians means that designers of high-rise buildings must now embrace the use of lifts, once rejected as a most unwise way out, in combination with stairs, during emergency evacuations.

In a presentation hosted by Fire Protection Association Australia in Perth, Peter Johnson, of consulting firm Arup, also cited the nation’s aging population and the ever-rising heights of commercial and residential towers as factors driving fire engineers to reassess the longstanding belief that stairways provide the only safe evacuation routes.

The use of lifts to complement stairs in evacuations has been shown to reduce the evacuation time of a standard 60–80 storey building by around 40%. Well-designed lifts can also provide good access for firefighters.

“Structural provisions for designing lifts for evacuation – such as redundant power supplies, lobby requirements, floors sloping away from lift openings and protection of lift controls – are well documented,” Johnson says. “Several buildings around the world, including Melbourne’s Eureka Tower, have already been designed with fire-resistant lifts.”

The challenge, Johnson contends, is not the technical expertise required for this new approach to building design, but the need for a complete re-education of building designers and occupants alike.

“For more than thirty years, we have been told that we should not use lifts when a fire alarm sounds,” he says. “Now we have to change people’s attitudes so they think of both lifts and stairs as being suitable for evacuation. New evacuation systems will only work if people are willing to follow the recommended emergency procedures.”

To help building designers predict this behaviour, Arup fire engineer Emma Heyes and the University of Canterbury’s Michael Spearpoint have been researching the psychology of evacuees, and have found that building occupants are more likely to consider evacuating via lifts the higher they are off the ground. Their work has also revealed key concerns that people have about using lifts for evacuation, all which...
will be vital for designers of evacuation systems.

Johnson has also called for an examination of minimum stair widths as part of a “paradigm shift” in the safe design of high-rise buildings.

Studies into the evacuation of the World Trade Center on September 11 have revealed that descent speeds and flows on exit stairs were only about half of what is predicted in fire safety handbooks.

“It’s not yet clear how much of this was related to the height descended by evacuees, their physical capabilities, stairway width, congestion and counterflow caused by firefighters ascending the same stairs,” says Johnson, “but it does indicate that we need to reassess evacuation strategies based on the changing nature of both our population and our buildings.

“How do we respond to the major changes happening in Australian society to obtain safety benefits for all? To answer this, we need to recognize the value of multidisciplinary collaboration in building design.”

Source: ARUP

Don’t Let Christmas Shopping Make You Sick

19 December 2008

With Christmas shopping in full swing and post Christmas sales to follow, SafeWork SA is reminding the public and retail industry employers to think of not only their own welfare but that of those behind the counter.

While extended trading hours and higher stock turnover can be a boom time for the retail sector at Christmas, there’s also extra pressure on retailers and their employees. Retailers and their workers can be so busy that often they will work long hours without so much as a visit to the toilet, a drink or meal break, or even a chance to sit down for a quick rest. (Last minute shoppers can sometimes do the same.)

“A retailer or retail worker who is near exhaustion is more likely to make mistakes and less likely to provide good service,” says SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson. “But more importantly, this situation places shoppers, retailers and their workers at greater risk of dehydration and illness.

“At this time of year especially, we don’t want anyone going home to their loved ones tired, exhausted and possibly ill,” Ms. Patterson says.

The message for shoppers, shop owners and shop assistants is the same:

- Drink sufficient water
- Don’t put off going to the toilet when you need to
- Take the weight off your feet whenever you can
- Take a break to eat.

Retail employers in particular are reminded that under the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986 they are required to provide their employees with:

- fresh drinking water
- access to proper toilet facilities
- reasonable access to seating in the workplace
- a safe system of work (e.g. ensuring enough staff are rostered on, or relief staff are provided to enable meal and rest breaks).

The Retail Award also entitles any retail employee who works in excess of five hours to a meal and rest break.

Retail workers rostered on alone should also be provided with a number to call their employer in case they experience problems and need assistance.

“SafeWork SA has a telephone help service where both employers and employees can check on what OHSW requirements, rates of pay and conditions apply in their relevant Award.

“If they believe the situation warrants, an employee can also report any suspected breaches which will be followed up by a SafeWork SA inspector,” Ms. Patterson says.
Letters to the Editor

If you have any safety issues to discuss, or concerns about SafetyWeek itself, please consider communicating with the editor at jonesk99@gmail.com

SafetyWeek PLUS

Please don’t forget there is a special members-only edition, SafetyWeek PLUS, available only as a download at the SIA website at http://sia.org.au/member-s-members-newsletter/members-safetyweek-plus-bulletins.html

The latest edition includes article entitled

QLD Man pleads guilty to Torres Strait nurse rape

NSW “Deliberate and calculated deceit” by fake Qantas engineer

NSW Ex-police officer can sue over horrific work trauma

QLD Building cleared after mass evacuation

QLD Police ring in New Year with Tasers

SA Adelaide’s V8 circuit changed after Cooper death

FED Shift-working parents little impact on teenage kids: study

NSW Reporting procedures put safety at risk for years: Experts

VIC Death leads to calls for workplace safety

EU EU lawmakers reject plan to allow longer working week

QLD Mining safety figures show improvement, more needed: Wilson

Continued from page 2

“You can call SafeWork SA’s telephone Help Centre on 1300 365 255.” 

Source: SafeWork SA

Minister: more must be done to make mines safer

Mines and Energy Minister Geoff Wilson will tell mining industry chiefs they must do more to lift safety standards in mines across Queensland, especially for workers using heavy machinery.

Minister Wilson today released Queensland’s latest annual mine safety figures - the first report to be published after sweeping changes were made to the way in which statistics were recorded in the past.

“Concerns were raised that some figures in previous reports didn’t accurately reflect what was really happening on the ground,” Mr Wilson said.

The Minister said the Queensland Mines and Quarries Safety Performance and Health Report 2007-08 showed a general improvement in safety and health in the state’s mines and quarries.

“The most sombre statistic is on page 14 of the report. It’s a tragedy that shouldn’t have happened,” he said.

A 50-year old miner was killed when he was crushed between the back of a light vehicle and a tool carrier while working underground at a lead zinc mine south of Mount Isa.

“It was a tragedy that touched the lives of everyone in the community.”

“Industry needs to redouble its efforts in making mines safer for workers who handle heavy machinery because nothing is more important than the safety and health of the men and women who work in Queensland’s mines,” he said.

Minister Wilson said while the mining industry was coming to grips with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, safety was still the main game.

“What we saw this week was the human face of a global economic crisis, with many workers around Queensland and the world facing an uncertain future,” he said.

“But Queensland’s mining industry and its workers are resilient. I’m confident that by working together - mining companies, unions and government - we will ride out this storm.”

“Safety cannot take second place, not for an instant, not even at a time like this,” Mr Wilson said.

Last year, Minister Wilson called in two highly-respected health and safety experts to run the ruler over the annual safety statistics.

“They produced a warts-and-all report with a number of recommendations. While it shines a light on what’s being done right, it also hangs a lantern on some of the problems in the mining industry.

“We’ve been tackling those recommendations one by one and I commend the mining unions and the Queensland Resources Council for recognising the importance of the task before them. As a result, we now have a much more comprehensive report with new statistics to help industry further
improvesafetyandhealthstandardsinminesandquarriesinQueensland,”MrWilson said.

“Forinstance,therearenowstatisticsontheseverityofinjurieswitharecordofhow
manydaysaninjuredworkerwasoffthejob.Thatitselfreflectsthesignificanceofan
injuryratherthanhowmanyinjuriesweresustained.

“You’vgottohavethefullfacts.You’vgottoknowwhat’sreallyhappeningatthecoal
face.That’sthelwaytotobringaboutrealchange,”hesaid.

“Wehaveoneofthebestsafetyrecordsintheworldandit’sineveryone’sbest
interests tokeeperthatis way. Safety must be the highest priority oneveryshiftatevery
mine,”MrWilsonsaid.

TheMinistersaidtherecommendationswouldbeintroducedinthreestagesoverthenexttwo
years.

TheQueenslandMinesandQuarriesSafetyPerformanceandHealthReport2007-08
isavailableontheDepartmentofMinesandEnergy’swebsiteatwww.dme.qld.gov.au

Source:Q’ldMinisterforMinesandEnergy

Young workers need to focus on safety

16 December 2008

WorkCoverNSWtodayissuedasafetywarningtothethousandsofyoungeople
enteringtheworkforceforthefirsttimethisholidayseason.

WorkCoverNSWCEOJonBlackwellsaidatthistimeofyearmanyschool
leavers
commencethehirworkinglifeandinductionprograms,supervisionandsafetytraining
fornewandyoungerworkersformsanessentialpartofasafe workplace.

“Becauseoftheirinexperience,youngworkersareatahigher riskofbeinginjuredon
thejobthanmostotheragegroups,”MrBlackwellsaid.

“About14percentofallemploymentinjuriesandoccupationaldiseasesinNewSouth
WalesoccuramongtheState’s551,000youngworkers.

“Startinganewjobcanbeanexcitingexperienceforyoungeopleenteringthe
workforceoranewworkplace,buthanotherofyournewandyoung
workersappearto
be,appropriatelevelsoftrainingandsupervisionmustbeprovided.

“Safebusinessisgoodbusiness,andmanynewandyoung workersarekeentoinpress
theiremployers,soitisessentialthattheseworkersunderstandtheyneedtocomply
withallsafetypoliciesandprocedures,”hesaid.

MrBlackwellsaidemployersshouldalsopayparticularattentiontohigh-riskareassuch
asworkingathights,usingelectricalequipment,plantandmachineryandworkingwith
chemicalsanddangerousgoods.

Employers,incollaborationwiththeirworkersshould:

• provideadequate trainingandsupervisioninalltasks
• provideacombined induction
• identifysafetyrisksandput
• encourageopencommunicationabout safetyissues.

In2006/07almost5800youngworkerslodgedcompensationclaimsforinjuries
receivedonthejobandalthoughinjuriesamongtheState’syoungworkersare
decreasing,eachdayinNewSouthWales16youngworkersareinjuredonthejob.

“Itisimportantthatemployersandworkersworktogethertoestablishacultureof
safety and young people need to ask fellowworkers about hazards, follow all safety
proceduresand findouthowtoreportaninjuryorsafetyrisk,”MrBlackwellssaid.

“Employers shouldencourageacultureintheirworkplacesthathelpsyoungworkers
to feel comfortable about seeking assistanceabout how to work safely.

“AlthoughtWorkplaceinjuriesinNewSouthWalesareatatheirlowestlevelsin20years
thereisstillmoretobedone.

“Mostworkplaceinjuriesanddeathspreventableandwewanttoseeyeworker
inNSWreturnhome safetoytheirfamiliesandfriendsattheendoftheday,”hesaid.
The WorkCover guide, Protecting young workers form workplace hazards, provides employers and workers with useful information on assisting, training and protecting young workers.

Further information for young workers and employers is available from the Young Workers website http://www.youngworkers.com.au/ or by calling 13 10 50.

Source: WorkCover NSW

Summer sun warning for outdoor workers

16 December 2008

WorkCover NSW is reminding employers and workers who work outdoors to protect themselves from the sun this summer.

“Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world and this harsh statistic is a reminder to those who work outdoors about the importance of complying with their occupational health and safety obligations,” Mr Blackwell said.

“Outdoor workers can be exposed to UV radiation, both by direct sunlight and by reflection from surrounding surfaces, such as concrete, glass, metal, sand and large bodies of water.

“Under workplace safety laws, employers are required to maintain a safe and healthy workplace and it is important they take steps to protect workers from UV radiation in sunlight and reduce hazards associated with working in a hot and sunny environment,” he said.

“Workers who work outside also have an obligation to cooperate with their employers in reducing the risk to their health from exposure to the sun.

Mr Blackwell said that even when working in the shade or under cover it is important for outdoor workers to continue to wear sun protection in the shade to avoid the risk of sun damage through UV radiation.

Employers can help reduce exposure to UV radiation by:

• providing and maintaining equipment and shelter to protect workers from the sun
• designing systems of work to reduce the amount of time workers spend in the sun
• providing information, instruction, training and supervision needed by workers
• rotating tasks to lessen exposure time and changing work times by scheduling work to cooler times of the day.

Workers can also help protect themselves from the sun by:

• making use of shade over the work area or wear a broad brimmed hat
• covering up and wearing closely-woven, loose shirts with long sleeves, collars and long trousers or skirts
• wearing sunglasses which meet Australian Standards and applying broad spectrum sun screen (SPF 15+ or 30+)
• keeping hydrated.


Gas bottle explosion prosecution sparks safety warning

15 December 2008

WorkCover CEO Jon Blackwell today issued a safety warning on the handling of faulty domestic sized LP gas cylinders following the prosecution of a leading hardware company in the NSW Industrial Court.

The prosecution followed the serious injury of a worker at Bunnings Hardware,
Tuggerah, on the Central Coast, in December 2005 when the worker was venting gas from a faulty 9kg gas cylinder into the atmosphere and the gas was ignited, engulfing him in a fireball.

“The process of emptying or filling a gas cylinder should always be undertaken in a secure, well-ventilated area away from any possible sources of ignition—and never in a confined space,” he said.

“Escaping gas from a faulty cylinder can be ignited from a wide range of sources, including static electricity, motor vehicle exhaust, high powered radio transmitters, hot surface and friction,” said Mr Blackwell.

“LP gas is heavier than air, and when released from a cylinder it falls to ground level and expands. If this occurs in a confined space, the cloud of gas may come into contact with an ignition source.

“The tragic incident which led to this prosecution could have been avoided if the employer had maintained a safe system of work for its employees,” said Mr Blackwell.

WorkCover evidence described the area where the venting of gas bottles was performed as being enclosed on three sides by walls and occupied by 15 gas bottles of up to 144kg, a workbench, barbeque, shopping trolleys and rolls of tubing.

A customer who witnessed the explosion reported seeing a 10m x 6m orange fireball.

The injured worker suffered 38 percent burns to his body, was hospitalised for four weeks, followed by extensive treatment and monitoring of his burns, and was only able to return to part-time sedentary office duties three months later.

His Honour Justice Marks fined Bunnings Group Ltd $130,000 and ordered costs to be paid to WorkCover NSW.

Secure construction sites can prevent tragedy 12 December 2008
WorkCover NSW has issued a reminder today to controllers of construction sites to ensure that sites are adequately secured during the summer holiday period.

WorkCover NSW CEO, Jon Blackwell, said it is important that construction sites are fenced off to prevent unauthorised access during the Christmas and New Year shut down.

“Site controllers need to address the risks that unsecured construction sites can pose to the members of the public and especially children,” Mr Blackwell said.

“New South Wales Occupational Health and Safety laws require construction sites to have adequate site security, which includes appropriate fencing.

“Building sites in an around residential areas pose a heightened risk, particularly as there are more children in the vicinity due to school holidays.

“It is essential not to overlook excavation areas that can fill with water and pose a potential drowning risk, such as pits, trenches and pier holes by ensuring these areas are securely covered,” he said.

In August, a 39-year-old man fell into a pier hole and drowned after gaining

Human Rights Information for Women
In a new Human Rights publication, Australian Human Rights Commission, Elizabeth Broderick, says

“I want to live in a world where all women, mothers, sisters, daughters and granddaughters feel safe, have an adequate standard of living and a decent home, where they are not disadvantaged in the workplace because of their gender and where violence has no place. This is about respecting everyone, every day, everywhere.”

The Human Rights newsletter released in December 2008 should be read by OHS professionals in relation to their obligations to their workplaces and clients.


Mt Gravatt – chemical incident 21 December 2008
Tests conducted by Queensland Fire and Rescue Service scientific officers at a Mt Gravatt club which was evacuated this afternoon, have come back clear. The source of the smell is not known at this time and samples were taken for further testing. Staff and patrons were allowed back into the building about 2.30pm.

Firefighters and paramedics were originally called to the club on Mt Gravatt-Capalaba Road, about 11.50am. Two people were taken to

Continued from page 5

Request for Public Comment on Dangerous Substances
In mid-December the Workplace Standards of Tasmania released draft regulations on the safe handling of dangerous substances. Comments are welcomed up to 28 February 2009. All the relevant information is available at http://www.wst.tas.gov.au/safety_comply/dang_subs/dangerous_substances/public_consultation_-_draft_dangerous_substances_regulations_2008

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hospital with nausea after people complained of a strong smell inside the club. About 150 people were evacuated.

Source: Qld Department of Emergency Services

South Australian Workcover Scheme
According to the WorkCover website:
“In June 2008, the South Australian Parliament passed some significant legislative amendments to the WorkCover Scheme. The next round of changes starts on 1 January 2009.“

More information on the changes is available at http://www.workcover.com/Aboutus/WorkCoverSA/JanuarychangestotheWorkCoverScheme.aspx

New Guide to improve safety in housing construction industry
11 December 2008

WorkCover NSW today released a new guide to assist small businesses working in the residential construction sector meet their workplace safety responsibilities.

WorkCover CEO, Jon Blackwell, said the guide provides practical advice for employers regarding consultation and communication with workers about occupational health and safety issues as well as hazard identification and risk assessment and control.

“The pack highlights some common safety requirements within the residential building sector and is designed to deliver safety outcomes that are comparable to other sectors of the construction industry,” Mr Blackwell said. “As well as providing a framework for improving safety outcomes for the residential building industry, the guide also provides information on how to manage a situation where a worker is injured.

“In 2006-07 there were more than 3,200 workplace injuries across the construction industry in New South Wales.

“The pack will assist small businesses and sub-contractors working on residential construction sites reduce injuries and meet their workplace safety obligations,” he said.

The pack includes easy to use tools including a:
• Site specific risk assessment form
• Safe work method statement form
• Record of tool box talk form
• Risk table
• Employee training register
• Plant and equipment, hazardous substances and electrical equipment register
• Incident and injury report form

The guide was developed by WorkCover’s Construction Team in consultation with representatives from the Housing Industry Consultative Committee, Master Builders Association and the NSW Housing Industry Association.

“The guide is another example of how WorkCover is working in partnership with industry to prevent workplace injuries and continually develop safety solutions,” Mr Blackwell said.

“With workplace injuries and fatalities in New South Wales at their lowest levels in 20 years, WorkCover will continue to work closely with employers and workers to maintain safety standards,” he said.

The Housing Industry Site Safety Pack is available to download at (http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/Publications/Industry/Construction/Pages/HousingIndustrySiteSafetyPack.aspx)

Source: WorkCover NSW

Continued from page 6
A new DVD resource launched today will help educate Tasmanian fishermen, fish farmers and other commercial vessel operators about safety on the water.

Officially launching the Safety at Sea DVD in Hobart today, Labor Member for Franklin, Ross Butler, said that Seafood Training Tasmania and Rosny College had developed the DVD, which covers everything from abandoning the vessel to eventual rescue.

"Earning a living from and on the sea can be a dangerous occupation. Coupled with the attractive aspects of working outdoors, clean air and blue skies, there is always the ever-present risk of capsize and drowning," Mr Butler said.

"We know that not everyone has completed appropriate occupational health and safety training. Even if training has been undertaken, it may have been so long ago that it may have been forgotten or its relevance questionable. "That's why this new resource is so important."

Mr Butler said that the DVD includes details on launching a life raft, bedding down for a long rescue, use of safety equipment, rations and signalling for help.

"The production was a collaborative effort between Seafood Training Tasmania, Rosny College and industry," Mr Butler said.

"The DVD will be distributed free to Tasmanian commercial vessel operators over the next 12 months to view in their homes and wheelhouses. "We hope that it will become an essential part of crew induction complementing the current training offered by Seafood Training Tasmania."

[The DVD will be available in January 2009 and will be free to all commercial vessel users. Further information may be gained from calling 03 6233 6442. Ed.]

Source: Labor Member for Franklin

Report proposes major overhaul of Australia’s biosecurity system

The growing threats of climate change, globalisation and agri-terrorism mean Australia needs to overhaul its biosecurity system, according to a major new report.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke today released the detailed report by an expert panel chaired by Roger Beale AO, One Biosecurity: A Working Partnership. It delivers on another key Rudd Government election commitment.

The report makes 84 recommendations which represent the biggest reforms to our biosecurity system in more than a century.

Key recommendations include:

- Establish a new national authority which brings together the major functions of Biosecurity Australia; the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and parts of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Establish a new biosecurity standards commission to assess the biosecurity risk of imports, with greater emphasis on risks to human health and the environment
- Develop new biosecurity legislation to replace the Quarantine Act which is a century old
- Appoint an Inspector-General of Biosecurity with broad powers to audit and investigate the Authority’s work
- Establish a new council of experts to advise government
- States, territories, industry and the Commonwealth must coordinate better to monitor biosecurity after goods and people enter the country, not just at the border

The panel also recommends an increase in funding and substantial information technology upgrades.

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I held 170 meetings with domestic and international stakeholders and received more than 200 submissions.

Mr Burke said the Rudd Government had accepted all 84 recommendations in-principle, but more consultation was needed on how to implement the findings and fund the reforms.

Interim administrative arrangements will take effect from 1 July 2009.

“The Rudd Government is determined to recognise the risks of the future and act now to ensure Australia is better prepared,” Mr Burke said.

“This includes building a 21st Century biosecurity system to meet 21st Century challenges.

“We are processing record numbers of visitors and sea cargo and face greater risks from climate change and the threat of agri-terrorism.

“The equine influenza outbreak last year was a stark reminder of the devastating effect of an exotic disease on people's lives and jobs.”

For more information and to obtain the report go to www.daff.gov.au/about/publications

Source: Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Idiots endanger lives

21 December 2008

Minister for Emergency Services Neil Roberts and Queensland Ambulance Service Commissioner David Melville have expressed disbelief and anger after a metal bolt was thrown from a motorway overpass smashing an ambulance windscreen and injuring a paramedic this afternoon.

About 1.50pm an ambulance en route to an emergency was travelling with lights and sirens along the Pacific Motorway. As it travelled under an overpass near Palm Beach Avenue, the windscreen was struck and smashed.

The paramedics, after initially pulling over, continued to the job they had been tasked as it was close by.

A second crew also went to the job and took the patient to hospital.

One of the paramedics has since gone to Gold Coast-Robina hospital with glass lodged in his eye.

“I’m utterly appalled that anyone could endanger lives like this but to do it to an emergency vehicle which was on its way to helping a person in distress is unbelievable,” Mr Roberts said.

“I would ask people to think twice before engaging in such idiocy.”

QAS Commissioner David Melville praised the dedication of the paramedics who continued to on the job to help a person in need.

“Despite the initial shock these paramedics put first the needs of the patient they were on their way to help,” Mr Melville said.

“Paramedics have a difficult job at the best of times, this kind of behaviour is just shocking.”

Mr Melville joined Mr Roberts in urging the public to report any suspicious behaviour on overpasses and to be mindful of such incidents.

Police were notified of the incident.

Source: Q'ld Department of Emergency Services

Company fined after lack of safety measures lead to fall

19 December 2008

The head contractor and subcontractor at a Rhodes construction site have been fined a total of $343,500 in the NSW Industrial Court this week.

The prosecutions followed an incident in March 2003 where a 19-year-old man was severely injured after falling 15 metres from the fourth floor of the Rhodes Corporate Park site.

The worker, who was operating the lifting crane to install curtain wall panels, was not attached to a safety line at the time and spent four days on life support after the fall.

Continued from page 8

A light lunch will be provided.
Please RSVP by the 27th February

NSW Members Breakfast Meeting
7.00am Monday 2 February 2009
Guest Speaker: Michael Tooma
Topic: OH&S NSW
Workplace Reforms – update
More details will follow shortly. In the meantime please mark this important date in your diary

Continued from page 8

NSW

Celebrating sixty years of OHS professional excellence
1949 - 2009

Safety Week

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The worker, who was operating the lifting crane to install curtain wall panels, was not attached to a safety line at the time and spent four days on life support after the fall.
In 2006 the injured worker’s employer Skyrise Installations (contracted) and its director, were fined a total of $154,000 after pleading guilty to a breach of Section 8(1) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 for failing to ensure the health and safety of the worker.

However this week, the principal contractor, Australand Holdings Limited was fined $175,000 and their subcontractor Sassall Glass and Joinery Pty Ltd was fined $168,500 after they were found guilty of breaching section 8(2) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 Act, for failing to ensure persons not in their employment were not exposed to risk.

The Court heard that the contractor and subcontractor did not provide or maintain a safe system of work for installing curtain wall panels and failed to ensure that the weight of the panels did not exceed the Working Load Limit of the crane supporting the panels.

Justice Staunton said that both contractors had not ensured that the employer, Skyrise Installations, was adequately supervising the worker and had not made certain that appropriate fall protection equipment such as a retractable lanyard was in use.

However the Court found that the culpability of Australand and Sassall was less than that of Skyrise Installations. WorkCover NSW CEO, Jon Blackwell, said the incident that lead to this prosecution serves as a reminder of the importance of ensuring that the proper precautions are taken when working at heights.

“Falls from heights pose a high degree of risk on construction sites and as this instance highlights can result in serious injury and in some cases death,” Mr Blackwell said.

“All employers, including those on contracting and sub-contracting arrangements have an obligation under workplace safety laws to ensure that their workers are safe including providing appropriate supervision and safety equipment.

“It is also essential to implement appropriate control measures to deal with weight when operating equipment with heavy loads while working from heights,” he said.

Source: WorkCover NSW