Father of Australian safety dies

Pioneering OHS professional, Dr Eric Wigglesworth AM, died on the weekend leaving a powerful legacy but days short of calling for systemic change to the profession he helped found.

Dr Wigglesworth was due to present a paper to the Safety In Action Conference on April 1 calling for greater research into workplace health.

In his conference abstract, Dr Wigglesworth said he intended to show... “how health research in the 20th century has benefited Australians in all aspects of their life – except at work – where it has been neglected.”

“Australian health research has provided the evidence-based foundation for health improvements. Hear how OHS research findings could provide a similar firm basis for evidence-based countermeasures that could be taught in tertiary courses.”

In fact, says Dr Geoff Dell, Dean of the Safety Institute of Australia College of Fellows, Dr Wigglesworth himself was a driving force behind formal education for safety professionals.

“Eric was the doyen of the Australian safety profession, a former President of the Safety Engineering Society (now the Safety Institute) and former executive director of the Menzies Foundation,” Dr Dell said.

“He led the push in the mid 1960s to get the first formal safety education curriculum in Australia in place and was also pivotal in getting the first tertiary program started in Australia in the late 1970s – a Graduate Diploma at the Ballarat College of Advanced Education (now the University of Ballarat). The Ballarat program now produces significant numbers of graduates who are making a real difference across industry, both in Australia and overseas.”

“Back in the 1960s, Eric and another founding father of our profession, the late Harold Greenwood Thomas, felt there was a need for a body of professionals with expert knowledge of injury prevention. There are many people, myself included, who owe much of their professional standing to Eric’s vision and the tenacious way he made the vision a reality.”

Continued on page 2
Throughout the last 60 years, Eric has been at the fore of strategic thinking in applied accident prevention. While he had many, many interests, his work on railway level crossing accidents was his passion throughout much of his professional life. Reading the recent Victorian Government Report into level crossing accidents, you could be forgiven for thinking Eric was the only one to have input to the inquiry, given how often his opinions and ideas are quoted. It is yet another testament to how highly he was respected.

“Doubtless, the strongest tenet of his career was his often-voiced belief in the need for applied, researcher-driven safety research to underpin decision-making by industry and government, and to provide the basis for effective safety education.

“Australia has lost a lateral thinker and the safety profession a mentor. His legacy literally is the Australian safety profession.”

Dr Dell will present Dr Wigglesworth’s paper, Using Injury Research to Underpin Safety Education on day two of the Safety In Action Conference, which runs from March 31-April 2, at Melbourne Convention Centre. Visit www.siaconference.com.au

Source: Safety Institute of Australia (Victoria Division)

Circular Saw Injury

20 March 2009

A man in his sixties suffered a partial amputation to his left hand while using a circular saw at his workplace at Dalrymple Bay this afternoon. The incident was reported about 2.30pm and the man was taken by paramedics to the Mackay Base Hospital in a stable condition.

Source: Q’ld Dept of Emergency Services

WorkSafe Drives Home Road Freight Transport Safety Message

23 March 2009

The road freight transport industry has joined WorkSafe Victoria to help develop a strategy and action plan to improve workplace health and safety.

“As part of our continued focus on road freight transport, we are telling the industry to take responsibility for its actions,” WorkSafe’s Manufacturing Logistics and Agriculture Program Director, Ross Pilkington said. “We want to work closely to support them through the process, but a higher level of engagement is needed.”

Research undertaken to help understand ‘barriers to safety’ is being used by WorkSafe and the newly formed Transport Industry Alliance.

The Alliance will build on the work already done by the Transport Industry Safety Group, which develops industry programs and resources identified by coronial enquiries.

“Road freight transport is one of Australia’s highest-risk industries with around 1200 workplace injury claims, in Victoria alone, every year.

Falls from trucks and being hit by moving objects are the major causes of injury,” Mr Pilkington said.

“What concerns us most is that despite the work we have done with the industry over the past five years, there has been little improvement in the number of injuries occurring.”

There have also been a number of fatalities over the past two years, including:

• A truck driver who died after swallowing diesel he was syphoning after his truck ran out of fuel;
• A truck driver run over by his truck on a construction site
• A man crushed while doing maintenance work on a street sweeper
• A truck driver who died from head injuries. He was found near the passenger side of his prime mover
• A crane truck driver crushed while removing steel coil from a semi-trailer

“Just before Christmas, two people died when they were run over by trucks at work. One of them was a 17-year-old apprentice.”

Source: Q’ld Dept of Emergency Services
Exclusive Workshop Podcast
Sally Bennett was recently interviewed by Kevin Jones on the topic of behavioural-based safety and how it can fit into the Australian context.
The podcast can be downloaded at www.siaconference.com.au

Queensland Safety Conference - Call for Papers
16-18 June 2009 Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre
The Queensland Safety Conference, presented by the Safety Institute of Australia (QLD & NT Division), will return to the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre on 16-18 June 2009.
The conference aims to advance the science of safety and provide practical solutions for delegates to implement immediately in their workplace.
More information is available at www.sia.org.au

Research-based engagement:
WorkSafe commissioned research to help it better understand key OHS issues in road freight transport in 2008,
“The idea was to carry out social research, involving not just management and industry stakeholders, but the drivers themselves and even their wives and partners,” Mr Pilkington said. “We wanted to identify the root causes of unsafe work practices and what stopped companies and workers complying with OHS laws.
The research found there was consensus about the industry’s unique nature, in that the workplace was mobile and the very nature of the work meant people might encounter many different ‘workplaces’ each day.
“Other factors, such as other vehicles on the road and the quality of delivery depots were among the main reasons given as to why the risk of injury was considered to be high,” the report said. “This poses significant challenges for the upholding of industry-wide OHS standards because safety cannot be as easily monitored or enforced by an employer as it can be in most other jobs.”
WorkSafe has also produced a DVD focusing on the issues raised in the research, as seen through the eyes of three men working in road freight transport.
The link to this short film, as well as other information on workplace safety and the road freight transport industry, can be found at worksafe.vic.gov.au/roadtransport

Trapeze Artist Injured In Fall
18 March 2009
A trapeze artist performing in a circus at Limestone Park, Ipswich was injured after falling approximately seven metres around 8.45pm. The man, aged in his 30s, was transported to Ipswich Hospital suffering from suspected spinal injuries and a fractured pelvis.
Source: Q’ld Dept of Emergency Services

Safety Checks For SA Hospitality Industry
Friday 20 March 2009
SafeWork SA inspectors and advisory officers will visit cafes and restaurants across South Australia in coming weeks as part of a national safety campaign involving new and young workers in the hospitality industry.
SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson says the campaign is designed to increase the awareness of new hospitality workers and those aged under 25 about their workplace health and safety rights and responsibilities.
In South Australia’s hospitality sector for the 2007-2008 financial year, workers in the 15-24 year old age group accounted for 53% of all reported injuries in cafes and restaurants. Being hit by moving objects and slips and trips were the two major causes of injury.
“Often new workers to the industry, although experienced, also face a number of challenges,” Ms. Patterson says. “They may not be familiar with the workplace, or their induction and training may be inadequate.
“As a result both young and new workers may be vulnerable to a higher risk of injury,” Ms. Patterson says. “Inexperience and in some cases a reluctance to speak up or ask questions, can also contribute to their risk of injury.”
“Alongside the audits of 25 SA businesses, hundreds more employers will receive guidance material providing them with practical advice about safety requirements specific to new and young workers,” Ms. Patterson says.

Continued from page 2
Continued on page 4

Source: WorkSafe Victoria
Source: Q’d Dept of Emergency Services
The guidance material will provide practical information on a range of workplace health and safety issues for new and young hospitality workers including:

- maintaining a hazard-free working environment
- providing adequate information, instruction and training
- providing adequate supervision
- consultation and ongoing communication about OHS issues.

Source: SafeWork SA

Flexibility Needed In Tough Economic Times 18 March 2009

The current economic slowdown is complicating the business of creating work life balance according to a leading expert in the field.

The Director of the Centre for Work and Life at the University of South Australia, Professor Barbara Pocock, says major challenges remain in introducing real work life balance in Australian workplaces.

“The economic downturn has seen many employers seeking ways to cut costs, but reducing workplace flexibility will be short-sighted and counterproductive”. Professor Pocock, who will be the keynote speaker at a Western Australian Department of Commerce Seminar in early April, says the same strategies that promote work life balance are those best adapted to managing a business in tough economic times.

‘Retaining experienced, skilled employees by adopting flexible practices that respond to their needs will be important in the downturn. Workplaces that can manage this will meet economic challenges and be in a good position to take advantage of economic opportunities. Australia’s long term challenges of an aging workforce and strong competition for talent are not going away’. More information is available at www.worklife.wa.gov.au

Source: WA Dept of Commerce

Fatality At Waikerie 17 March 2009

SafeWork SA is investigating how a man came to be fatally injured this afternoon while working with a car-carrier at Waikerie in the Riverland.

The incident happened at a car dealership in Ian Oliver Drive at about 1.40pm as the driver was unloading motor vehicles.

During this task, the man released a tie-down strap and cast it clear of the trailer. In doing so, it appears the tie-down strap came into contact with a hydraulic lever which controls the loading ramp. The loading ramp activated and as a result, the driver was caught between the ramp and a vehicle he was unloading.

He sustained serious crush injuries and died a short time later at the Waikerie Hospital. An inspector from SafeWork SA’s Berri office was on site a short time after the incident occurred to begin the investigation.

Source: SafeWork SA

Investigation Into 13 Storey Equipment Fall 17 March 2009

SafeWork SA is investigating an incident in Pirie Street, Adelaide yesterday afternoon in which equipment fell from the 13th storey of a building under construction.

Security guards were hired to watch the site overnight, and investigations have resumed today.

It’s understood that sometime after 3.00pm yesterday a worker was using a wheeled device to tip sand from a large bin into a skip on the 13th floor of the building.

During this operation, the device and its bin rolled free and broke through the fall protection barriers in place.

Source: SafeWork SA

Leg Injury 16 March 2009

A male patient has suffered a fractured leg after he fell down a silo compound at Warwick around 9.15am. Firefighters extricated the patient who was trapped between the side of the compound and a ladder. Paramedics stabilised the patient and transported him to Warwick Hospital. He was later transported to Toowoomba Base hospital in a stable condition.

Source: Qld Dept of Emergency Services

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Source: Qld Dept of Emergency Services
Scaffold collapse

This Alert highlights the need for construction sites to have appropriate measures in place to prevent scaffold collapse.

Lift Safety

This is a solution for using a lift safely during a malfunction.

Individual Hearing Outcome Report Form

The Individual Hearing Outcomes Report Form is designed to measure worker satisfaction with their hearing devices and services received. This form and the Client Orientated Scale of Improvement (COSI) should be completed by WorkSafe Approved Contracted Hearing Service Providers and submitted to both the WorkSafe Agent and the WorkSafe Commercial Team (fax 9940 4206) within 3 to 6 months of the hearing device/s being fitted. The COSI, A NAL branded form may be accessed on the WorkSafe website.

Haul truck passenger fatality

This Alert warns mine operators, contractors, truck drivers and other users of the dangers of operating heavy vehicles in close proximity to people.

Timber processing - Stacking timber for drying

This is a solution for stacking timber for air and kiln drying.

Inspection Campaign Begins In East Kimberley

WorkSafe has commenced an inspection campaign in the East Kimberley region to ensure employers are aware of their workplace safety and health obligations. The campaign will see three WorkSafe inspectors visiting farms and other workplaces in the East Kimberley over a two-week period. WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that farmers in the area had been contacted and should be aware of the areas that will be looked at.

Don’t Put Your Head In The Sand

Failing to act on three safety improvement notices has cost a Rochester metal fabrication company three convictions and $11,000 in fines and court costs. Phil Fehring Engineering Pty Ltd pleaded guilty in the Bendigo Magistrates Court to three counts of failing to comply with three Safety Improvement Notices issued in 2006. The company was represented in court by its director, Phil Fehring who said the firm had been incorrectly advised by a consultant.

Electric Shock

Paramedics attended to three men who suffered an electric shock while working on a roof at Sunset Boulevard Road, Eimeo around 11.15am. One of the patients, a 54-year-old male, fell from the roof as a result of the shock. All three patients were transported to Mackay Hospital in a stable condition.

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Letters to the Editor

If you have any safety issues to discuss, or concerns about SafetyWeek itself, please consider communicating with the Editor through natadmin@sia.org.au

Childcare - Designing change table steps for children

This is a solution for eliminating or reducing the risk of musculoskeletal disorders from lifting children onto change tables.

Maintenance of bulk flammable liquids road tankers

This is a solution for maintaining bulk flammable liquids road tankers.

Forklifts are among Victoria's most dangerous machines. Of the 56 forklift-related deaths since 1985, 11 were forklift operators who were crushed by the machine in a tip-over when they were thrown from, or jumped, from their seat. The Australian Standards have required operator restraints on new forklifts since 1995 and WorkSafe has been engaged in a campaign to encourage employers to retrofit seatbelts on all forklifts manufactured before 1995 where reasonably practicable.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt said safety improvement notices were central to the enforcement of Victoria's health and safety laws.

"Particularly in tightening economic times they are an opportunity to protect the business and its employees. While WorkSafe does not issue fines, notices are a formal direction to make safety improvements. "If you are not happy with a notice, there is a no-cost internal review process. If there are still issues once that process is concluded, the matter can be taken to VCAT. "Many people take these options but doing nothing to resolve the identified issues frequently leads to prosecution."

Mr Merritt said WorkSafe prosecutions only proceeded after a comprehensive investigation of the facts and in cases of non-complied notices having given the defendant every opportunity to comply.

WorkSafe has also issued advice on engaging suitably qualified people as health and safety managers and consultants.

The guidance, Employing or engaging suitably qualified persons to provide health and safety advice, is available online or call WorkSafe's advisory service on 1800 136 089.

Mr Merritt said it was important that steps were taken to ensure the person or business engaged had appropriate skills and / or experience as well as the resources to do the job.

"If using an external person, as a consumer it is vital that you check with past clients on the services offered and delivered."

Small businesses can also apply for a free safety consultancy with an independent consultant. Call WorkSafe or major employer groups for details.

A range of WorkSafe safety publications for the can be found online at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Source: WorkSafe Victoria

Continued from page 5

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