Since the 2006 rockfall at Beaconsfield Mine in Tasmania, the public has received limited information. There have been books about the rescue of two workers and the Coroner’s inquest into the death of Larry Knight. Greg Mellick undertook an investigation into the rockfall and found that no one was to blame for the rockfall.

Many workplace disasters have generated royal commissions in Australia. The rockfall did not. However, industry specialists, OHS professionals and others have established an expectation that investigations and reports into industrial disasters are publicly accessible.

The expectation is not unreasonable given that the OHS profession, legal profession, engineers and others operate within a belief that the analysis of disasters can provide ways of avoiding a recurrence. Apparently the Tasmanian Government does not understand the significance of information in improving the safety of workers and the public in its State, even though its OHS and mine safety legislation is structured around prevention.

The Tasmanian Coroner released his findings into the death of Larry Knight. The findings quoted extensively from the 400+ page OHS report from Professor Michael Quinlan that was part of Greg Mellick’s investigation process. But the report itself is yet to be released. Nor has the larger report undertaken by Greg Mellick.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has chosen not to lay charges over the rockfall. The mine is back at full operation.

The survivors of the rockfall are rebuilding their lives.

Only a couple of weeks ago, the Legislative Council Select Committee on Mining Industry Regulation released its report into the State’s mining legislation. The terms of reference have evolved from the findings of various investigations including Quinlan’s.

The committee was required to investigate:

1. Regulation and workplace standards within the mining and related industries in Tasmania.
2. Safety performance of the Tasmanian mining industry compared to other primary industries in the State and the mining industry nationally.
3. The role of Workplace Standards Tasmania in the regulation of the mining and associated industries.
4. The efficacy and limitations of the co-regulatory model within the mining industry in Tasmania; and
5. Any other matters incidental thereto.

On 2 April 2009 at the Safety In Action Conference in Melbourne, Professor Michael Quinlan expressed bewilderment at the decision to not release his investigation report.

SafetyAtWorkBlog contacted the OHS regulator in Tasmania asking for the Quinlan report. We were advised that it was likely that the only way to obtain a copy was...
through Freedom of Information with the Department of Premier & Cabinet (DPAC). A representative of DPAC will contact us about the report’s status.

DPAC has a copy of the Mellick report. The Australian Workers Union has a copy of the Mellick report. SafetyAtWorkBlog believes there are leaked copies of the report in existence but, for reasons unknown at this time, the public is not permitted to see the report.

The Queensland government has available four reports into mining disasters in the Moura area with one report going back to 1972!!

In the years after the ESSO-Longford gas explosion, Professor Andrew Hopkins published “Lessons From Longford”. It was for a long time the publisher’s best-selling book. It is quoted extensively in the OHS and management professions. Some of Andrew’s terminologies and concepts of safety culture have become ingrained in the psyche of OHS professionals in Australia.

It is hard to see any reason in April 2009 for the Mellick and Quinlan reports not to be publicly available. Indeed there are many important professional and community reasons for the reports to be seen.

What is the professional legacy of the Tasmanian government’s investigations into the Beaconsfield Mine rockfall in 2004?

What will the government say when the next rockfall occurs in an underground mine? What will the Premier or the Minister say to the next generation of widows or to the carers of the crippled miners? Certainly David Bartlett or David Llewellyn cannot say that they did all they could to make workplaces safe.

[Since this article first appeared SafetyAtWorkBlog has been advised by a representative of the Tasmanian Government that correspondence has been drafted for the Premier, David Bartlett, concerning the release of the Mellick Report. The releases of the report is expected by the end of April 2009.]

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An earlier version of this article appeared at http://safetyatworkblog.wordpress.com

Nanotech Poses Possible Health And Safety Risk To Workers And Needs Regulation

The rapidly growing nanotechnology market in Australia requires urgent regulation to protect the health and safety of workers and consumers, say unions.

Nanotechnology is hailed as having enormous potential in the creation of new products and devices and is now used in over 800 everyday items including some sunscreens, cosmetics, bed sheets, building materials and paints.

Unions are concerned that there is mounting evidence showing some nanomaterials are potentially hazardous yet the industry is growing without adequate worker protections. The nanotechnology industry is projected to grow from US$32 billion to US$2.6 trillion over the next decade.

Currently there is no mandatory register in Australia of who is importing, manufacturing, supplying or selling nanomaterials and no obligation to label products. But there are moves afoot internationally to introduce regulations.

Nanotechnology involves using materials at the nanoscale (one billionth of a metre), which poses challenges for occupational health and safety regulators. Research has shown that some nanomaterials may act in similar ways to asbestos.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Geoff Fary said, “With animal tests showing some nanomaterials share the same characteristics and reactions as asbestos fibres, governments and business
Fred Catlin

During the Safety In Action Conference dinner, Fred Catlin received an acknowledgment of his 40 years of membership with the Safety Institute of Australia.

I acknowledged Fred’s previous work in the SIA, his time as the President of the Victoria Division, a member of the SIA Federal Council for several terms and as a safety lecturer at the South Melbourne Technical College Certificate Course. While he was lecturing Fred was very supportive of the development of the Post Graduate PG1, hazard management course at the Ballarat College of Advanced Education in.

Perhaps his greatest professional achievement was developing and introducing an educational course for salespersons working in the PPE industry. That important course ran for a few years and was delivered by BCAE.

Fred was a member of the ‘industry group’ known as the Veterans of Safety and is a constant supporter of the SIA every year by manning the stand at the Safety In Action Conference.

You could say that Fred and his wife Alison were very strong supporters of the SIA and attended every social function scheduled for many years.

Fred, pictured below, at the conference dinner deserves our respect and thanks. He has supported the Safety Institute for 40 years, always ready to step in wherever asked and is known for his supportive, friendly and cheerful contributions.

Neville Betts CFSIA

Horse Race Falls

Two jockeys were taken to hospital after separate horse falls in the same race at Callaghan Park, Rockhampton about 1.30pm. One jockey was treated for a suspected spinal injury and lower leg fracture while the second needed treatment for a dislocated shoulder. Both men were taken to Rockhampton Hospital.

Victorian Workcover Prosecution Results Summaries

Dianne Stracey
Summary: A concrete panel came off a flat bed truck on a public roadway when transporting it to the Eastlink construction site.

Transdyer Management Pty
Summary: A concrete panel came off a flat bed truck on a public roadway when transporting it to the Eastlink construction site

John W Stracey
Summary: A concrete panel came off a flat bed truck on a public roadway when transporting it to the Eastlink construction site.

Robert Mascitti
Summary: Fatality, concrete tilt up panels.

Barry Bros. Specialised Services Pty Limited (ACN 065 876 977)
Summary: high pressure water (hydro) jetting cleaning, injury
http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/LSID%20159525

Wootanga Park Pty Ltd A.C.N. 098 512 942
Summary: ATV collision, fatality and serious injury
http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/LSID%20160572

Stephen John Crook
Summary: Bullying

R & M Mascitti Developments Pty Ltd (007 350 521
Summary: Fatality
http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/LSID%20158815

Peter Russell Coulter - Summary: Bullying

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Source: ACTU

Source: Q’ld Dept of Emergency Services

www.sia.org.au
Fatality At SE Potato Farm

10 April 2009

SafeWork SA is investigating the death of a Korean national at a potato farm in the state’s southeast yesterday afternoon.

The 24 year old woman was part of a group of backpackers employed to help with the potato harvest on a property at Glenroy, north of Penola.

She was one of several people standing aboard the harvester sorting debris from the harvest. At about 1.30pm, as the harvester was towed to a waiting semi-trailer to empty its load, it appears the woman fell from the doorway to the ground - a distance of about 2 metres.

She was unable to be revived despite first aid and the attendance of SA Ambulance paramedics.

A notice was issued on the harvester requiring the operator to address issues of safe entry and exit from the machine.

Source: SafeWork SA
SIA - SUPPORTED EVENTS

HFESA Workshop
Ms Stroma Lawson, the HFESA National Professional Development Officer has organised a workshop titled “CHALLENGES FOR ARCHITECTS & ERGONOMISTS IN DESIGNING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF THE FUTURE” which will be held in Perth on 7 May 2009, from 1pm – 4.30pm.

SIA members can earn ½ a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) point by attending this half-day seminar. For detailed information visit [http://sia.org.au/calendar/event.asp?ContentID=hfesa_challenges_architects_07_may_2009](http://sia.org.au/calendar/event.asp?ContentID=hfesa_challenges_architects_07_may_2009)

Prosafe
You are invited to attend PROSAFE – OPTIMISING PROCESS SAFETY PERFORMANCE, which will be conducted by marcusevans conferences, at the Rendezvous Hotel in Melbourne from 25-26 June 2009 inclusive.

Dr Geoff Dell CFSIA, SIA Dean College of Fellows, has accepted an invitation to provide the opening address and participate in a case study panel discussion.

This conference is supported by the SIA. As such, SIA members will be eligible to receive a 10% discount on registering, as well as earn 1 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) point per day. More information is available at [http://www.sia.org.au/calendar/event.asp?ContentID=prosafe-optimising-process-safety-25-june-09](http://www.sia.org.au/calendar/event.asp?ContentID=prosafe-optimising-process-safety-25-june-09)

Waste Companies Fined Over Driver Injury
Two companies have been jointly convicted and fined by an industrial magistrate today over an incident at the Dublin waste disposal facility, north of Adelaide.

Acquista Investments Pty Ltd and Collex Pty Ltd received their penalties today following a trial last year.

The companies were found guilty of breaching Section 19(1) of the Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986, in failing to ensure an employee was safe from injury, failing to provide and maintain a safe system of work, and failing to provide adequate information, instruction, training and supervision.

SafeWork SA prosecuted after investigating how a truck driver came to be injured during an operation to unload bales of compressed waste from his vehicle, in January 2005.

The court heard that the man was standing inside the trailer to sweep out fallen waste, when he was struck by a bale weighing several hundred kilos, which had fallen from the stacked load still within the trailer.

He sustained serious crush injuries, namely fractures to his pelvis, knee and lower back, with Industrial Magistrate Stephen Lieschke saying, “the risk of injury created by the unsafe work circumstances was potentially of a fatal injury.”

While the worker largely recovered from his injuries, his treatment is ongoing and he has since retired from the workforce.

The two companies were partners in a company called Integrated Waste Services, which operated the facility at Dublin where the incident occurred. In his decision on penalty delivered today, Magistrate Lieschke said “a risk of injury to a driver sweeping the floor of the trailer during the unloading process was foreseeable.”

Collex Pty Ltd was fined $40,000 and Acquista Investments Pty Ltd was fined $37,500.

Both parties have indicated they will appeal against their convictions and penalties.

$30.3 Million For Level Crossings In Victoria
Statement from the Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

Work will start immediately on installing new boom gates and other safety measures at 58 high risk level rail crossings around Victoria.

Funding for these safety projects will come from the Rudd Labor Government’s $150 million Boom Gates for Rail Crossings Program - a key element of our $42 billion Nation Building and Jobs Plan. All up, we’ve allocated $30.3 million to Victoria’s 58 projects.

Tragically, about 100 accidents occur at rail crossings every year. Last year alone there were 28 collisions at level crossings in Victoria, nine resulting in fatalities and five involving serious injuries.

The investment we are making will not only improve road safety but also support local jobs and local businesses during the current global recession.

Never before has the Federal Government had a program dedicated to improving safety and preventing accidents at level crossings.

Nationally, the Boom Gates for Rail Crossings Program will provide $50 million in

Source: WorkSafe Victoria
Source: SafeWork SA
Source: SIA

www.sia.org.au
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

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2008/09 and a further $100 million in 2009/10 for the installation of boom gates and other safety measures at over 250 level crossings.

The projects announced today were identified by the Victorian Government using a model that takes into account factors such as road and rail traffic volumes; crash history; visibility for motorists and train drivers; the number of rail tracks at the crossing; and other public risk factors.

The new boom gates and other safety measures are part of our $26.4 billion Nation Building Program which will deliver and maintain vital road and rail infrastructure in every region of Australia. Of this funding, $4.4 billion will be invested in Victoria - almost double what the previous government spent in the State.

Source: Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

BOOM GATES FOR RAIL CROSSINGS PROGRAM: VIC

ADVERTISING

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

If you want to advertise to over 3,000 safety professionals in Australia, please contact the SIA Secretariat through natadmin@sia.org.au