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WorkSafe Wa’s Commissioner Nina Lyhne: a balancing act

Information, education and enforcement are the three pillars of Nina Lyhne’s life as Commissioner for the WorkSafe division of the Department of Commerce.

The recovery from Black Saturday

With a quarter of Victorian Department of Primary Industries’ (DPI) 2,500 staff responding to the Black Saturday fires, DPI knew it would need to pave a road to recovery.

Model OHS laws: an eye on the top

With a more obvious potential for jail and steep financial penalties for decision makers due under the new Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act, OHS must move up the corporate agenda.

Sick OHS needs health reforms

Does occupational health begin and end at work’s front door? Legally it may, but according to renowned workplace health expert, Professor Niki Ellis, OHS professionals that view it this way risk becoming irrelevant.

Hardline drug policies aren’t optimal

Is taking a hardline approach to drug use at work an optimal risks management strategy? Health and wellbeing advisor, Chris Parker shares his insights into a complex problem with the Safety Institute of Australia.

CONTENTS
What is research and where is the funding?

The term research is casually bandied about in everyday conversation. We research before buying our new car. Survey companies report the results of research about satisfaction with politicians or even our OHS regulators.

In our professional circles the term is also used variously. People talk about the research they did on the internet to find examples of the best policy and procedure for contractor safety. They also refer to the research they undertook that involved talking to colleagues about their experiences and workers about their opinions.

At the recent meeting organised by the Safety Institute of Australia (SIA) Academy of University OHS Education and Research, Associate Professor Tony LaMontagne offered a series of dictionary definitions of research, none of which really represented what most of the fifty researchers present would consider constituted research in their domain.

So what should it be for our profession - a profession that can have a direct impact on an area of health that costs Australia $25 billion a year?

Research in an academic context, according to Tony, is quite specific. It begins with the construction of a hypothesis; it employs specified methods; it is conducted systematically; it leads to conclusions based on findings; it acknowledges its strengths and weaknesses; and it is replicable.

Much research originates in a question based on our real-world activity and experience and Tony suggested that research is clear, feasible, novel and relevant. Relevancy is essential and, in this context, refers to research into the prevention of injuries and disease.

The meeting and the subsequent research day at the Safety In Action Conference clearly demonstrated the commitment of academics and students to undertake clear, novel and relevant research that would contribute to the prevention of injury and disease. However, there was general agreement that there is not enough research underway.

The amount and nature of research that is undertaken is not limited by capacity. It is limited by the lack of funding. This shortfall not only limits the amount of research but it also makes the field unattractive to young researchers who move to other greener fields.

The consequence is that we are now faced with an ageing population of academics and succession plans that cannot be implemented. The universities offer little support. It was clear from the many discussions at the meeting that most academics are facing institutional austerity measures that would even turn heads in Greece. As we analyse the implications of the May budget, it is clear that funds have gone to skills development rather than higher education and thus the future does not look any brighter.

Today the very meagre funds available are rarely provided for researcher-driven research. That is research to pursue hypotheses that have been developed by the researcher to answer questions that they know are novel and relevant. Instead, much of the funding is allocated to contract research that addresses the needs of specific agency-developed priorities.

Academics are under pressure from their institutions to apply for The Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding. These are of greater value to the university as a whole. However, there is not even a discipline code for OHS within the ARC application forms and so applicants have to choose from the closest code that might easily misrepresent the application or result in it being reviewed by people with no knowledge of our discipline. The NHMRC schemes focus very much on medical related issues rather than work-related safety problems.

Industry partners often pursue academic institutions with an interest in collaboration. A natural source of funding for such collaborative work is an ARC Linkage grant. However, depending on when one enters the cycle, an application can take 18-24 months from inception to notification of funding. Then the 2 or 3 years of research begin. Industry partners do not want to wait this long; they have real-world problems that need real-world solutions in realistic time frames.

So why is the funding so limited? The late Eric Wigglesworth argued very clearly for the establishment of sustainable funding for research in Australia, based on simple economics.
In 2001 Eric argued that, based on the total costs of occupational injuries at that time, estimated to be $25 billion per annum, the Federal government should allocate a fund of about $250 million each year for support to be on a par with other areas of health. However, more realistically a fund representing just one tenth of the target of $25 million could be allocated and that would dramatically improve the current situation.

Perhaps the time is now right to present an argument along these lines. The Academy of University OHS Education and Research meeting represents a significant milestone in the history of health and safety research in Australia and the force of the large numbers speaking with one voice may be able to carry the message to those who can influence the allocation of funds.

The meeting agreed on action required, including the development of a national research strategy; securing of sustainable funding, ideally from workers compensation funds; in the short term, improving access by OHS researchers to existing funding which will involve the ARC and NHMRC including OHS as a category of research and; establishment of a research network to foster national and international co-ordination and collaboration.

Successful action in these areas will make an immense difference to the research landscape in Australia and make a major contribution to the development of the knowledge and evidence on which our professional practice based.

Dr Steve Cowley, FSA, ISA National Publications, Editor

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“The amount and nature of research that is undertaken is not limited by capacity. It is limited by the lack of funding.”

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The top cause of workplace fatalities

I write to express my serious concern about the article “Falls dominate worker deaths in Australia” (Issue 24, 18 May 2010, OHS Professional e-newsletter).

You reported that falls from heights accounted for 14 of the 71 reported worker fatalities, and claimed this was ahead of vehicle accidents and being hit by an object.

This heading is misleading at best and quite incorrect in fact. There is no justification for ignoring bystanders for the sake of a heading. Tragically, motor vehicles are recorded here as the cause of more deaths than any other means in Australia.

The Work Safe Australia report clearly identifies: several jurisdictions do not include work-related deaths caused by vehicle accidents on public roads in their notification systems. These fatalities are instead notified to and investigated by the police.

Aircraft crash fatalities are not notified to some OHS jurisdictions. These fatalities are instead notified to the relevant transport authority. So the data also represents an underreporting of deaths.

The reality is that transport and storage is the most dangerous industry in Australia, in terms of the number of deaths. There were 68 deaths in transport and storage during 2007-08, according to the Work Safe Compendium. Furthermore motor vehicles were the cause of another 30 deaths in other industry sectors. I consider it quite unprofessional to hide these figures.

The SIA should express its outrage about such horrendous loss of life and be challenging governments and industry that motor vehicle safety in the workplace is a national disgrace.

This issue should be number one on the SIA agenda and the top of every newsletter, not hidden in the eighth article.

Assoc. Professor Brett Hughes
Director C-MARC
Curtin Monash Accident Research Centre
OHS: an accidental education

A number of articles in the March 2010 OHS Professional struck a chord with me.

The Editorial (written by Dr Steve Cowley), where your view that the root cause of the insulation tragedy was overlooked in favour of a political beat-up was spot-on.

Also the article regarding the closure of UNSW’s Risk & Safety School resonated real world truth with me: our current system ensures that workers, supervisors and managers have virtually no OHS knowledge or skills until they find out what they need to know. Many find out about safety by accident!

“Defence harnessing the ‘Can Do’ Attitude” showed that this attitude is evident in many operations including at my place of work, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

A great emphasis is placed on research and the Holy Grail is gaining additional funding from private enterprise.

One of the main root causes of the country’s poor OHS performance is the failure of higher education to adequately prepare graduates for their roles as managers, engineers, architects and all the other design professions, through the exclusion of OHS content in management and design course units.

The law places specific OHS obligations and duties of care on persons in control, designers, manufactures and installers. So when and where do managers, supervisor, designers, manufacturers and installers gain this knowledge and develop associated skills?

A quick look through the unit outlines in four Design Disciplines and two Business Management offerings (Degree and Masters) at QUT alone reveals not one mention of OHS obligations and little about design safety except for a few specifics on Ergonomics.

The only way to resolve this problem is to provide incentives for our institutes of higher learning to ensure the basics of OHS management obligations, design safety and risk management are included in curriculums of all relevant undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

SIA member, Jim Buldo

Perspective and practical advice

When I get a S.I.A. publication I quickly scan it for any practical information that will help me in my work and often the publication gets the bin.

I have three university qualifications and have been exposed to a lot of theory. I have developed for approaches that do not lead to practical outcomes: theory is only as good as its practical implementation.

A lot of academic papers are short on practice and make far-reaching conclusions based on only small sample sizes. Self-promotion by the authors is also a problem.

My suggestion is to have a solutions database in the publications where members write in to talk about the things that have worked. S.I.A. should go to the membership with a needs analysis of what is required in the publications.

By all means let us have a bit of theory but it should have an equal focus on practice.

Regards,
George Robotham C.E.S.I.A.
11,000 Qld patients fall each year

Over 11,000 patients fell over within Queensland Health in the financial year 2007/08, ahead of other harmful incidents such as being given the wrong medication.

Falls and medication accounted for 11,648 and 8,920 incidents respectively, reflecting a large proportion of the total 57,018 reported in its PRIME CI reporting system, QH reported in its 106 page third report on clinical incidents in the Queensland Public Health System.

Just under 4,000 falls resulted in patient harm during the year and accounted for 35 per cent of all harmful events.

QH saw a 21 per cent year on year rise in incidents during that year and there had been a 58 per cent increase since it first began reporting.

But the report’s lead author Dr Jillann Farmer, Medical Director Queensland Health Patient Safety Centre said this was encouraging since the voluntary nature of reporting reflected a “change in culture”.

“It is the single greatest predictor that we will succeed in a goal of minimising preventable patient harm,” she said. “Encouragingly, incidents reported where patients were not harmed formed the bulk of the growth, with “no harm” incidents up by 28%, and a growth of “harm” events of just 1.8.” Hospital activity was up 7 per cent.

**C-MARC: Work road accidents cost $2bn a year**

Director of the Curtin-Monash Accident Research Centre Brett Hughes has called for more and better data on workplace road fatalities, which he estimates costs Australia $2 billion a year.

Hughes criticised the currently fractured approach to collecting data on what he argues is the most costly category of workplace injuries in Australia in terms of lives and money.

“We need a total view of onsite and offsite injuries,” Hughes told OHS Professional. “Let’s ask what is the total cost of motor vehicle safety in the workplace and affecting the workplace… Then we can ask where are the costs, what can be done about it and conduct policy analysis to see what is the best approach.”

One example was Safe Work Australia’s recently released “Notified Fatalities Statistical Report” for July to December 2009, which only included compensated fatalities and excluded many fatalities because “several jurisdictions” do not include deaths on public roads.

The cost of total road fatalities measured by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Economics’s (BITRE) for 2006 was $17.5 billion, but Hughes said current evaluations would put the figure at $30 billion. At six per cent of the total, the cost of work vehicle incidents would be about $2 billion per year, he said.

“In the end business is paying for it via lost earnings, lost production and all time and insurance costs,” said Hughes.

**Sweden eyes recovery link to more accidents**

Sweden’s Occupational Environment Board is investigating whether the nation’s economic recovery is behind an 11 per cent increase in workplace injuries.

Sweden workplace fatalities stood at 19 for the year to May 2010 – an increase on last year which bucked a five year downward trend.

In the first quarter of 2010, 8,399 worker related accidents were reported compared to 7,500 in the same period in 2009, representing an 11 per cent hike.

The Board’s inspection department told one of the country’s leading newspapers, Svenska Dagbladet, the mystery was whether the increase is a reflection of more people working or whether it indicated that workplaces are less safe.

However it does know that in 2009, when its transport manufacturing sector took a steep dive in production there were fewer accidents. With the recovering economy, it said it feared increased pressure to get the job done may mean more businesses were willing to take risks.

**Injury costs Vic timber company $500k**

Timber company Jelfor Treated Timbers has been ordered to pay $500,000 by a LaTrobe Valley Court magistrate over a worker who was seriously injured after being caught in a timber post-peeling machine in 2008.

Jelfor was ordered to pay $230,000 to LaTrobe Valley’s rescue helicopter, Helimed One, and the same amount to the court fund.

Company director Maxwell Jelleff was also personally slugged with an $80,000 fine, to be evenly split between the Royal Children’s Hospital and the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Australia.

Amongst other serious injuries the worker’s arm was amputated after being caught in the post peeler.

“Disappointingly, the post-peeler in which this worker became entangled... could have been safely guarded for about $5,000,” said WorkSafe acting executive director Stan Krpan.
WHO study: weak link to phone-brain cancer

The world’s largest and longest running study on cancer risks associated with exposure to mobile phones has failed to establish a clear causal link.

The decade-long World Health Organisation tasked Interphone study, which covered 5,000 subjects across 13 countries including Australia, found that patients who used mobile phones for more than 1640 hours over their lifetime had a “slightly higher incidence of glioma brain tumours”. Glial cells protect the brain’s neurons.

“However, it’s best not to over-interpret these results,” said University of Sydney School of Public Health’s Professor Bruce Armstrong who led the Australian contribution. “We can’t say they indicate a cause and effect relationship.”

The study also found that brain tumours occurred on the side of the head that is used more frequently and evidence that the ‘temporal lobe’, which facilitates auditory perception, took the brunt of electromagnetic energy.

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPNSA) did not provide any recommendation to limit the use of mobile phones in the adult population, but left open the question that increased mobile phone usage common today may produce different results.

Some within the Australian telecommunications sector have cast doubt on assertions regarding “changed habits” over the past decade.

David Havyatt, a highly-respected authority on telecommunications in Australia who is also regulatory affairs officer for Telecom New Zealand subsidiary AAPT, said that Australia has used Global System for Mobile telecommunications (GSM) since 1992. He also points to the cordless handset as a potential source of harm, if, as the study argued, extended exposure to emissions is a likely cause of harm.

 Builders fined $685k after erection collapse

Victorian Permanent Erection Constructions (PEC) and its two directors were fined last week a total of $685,000 over the death of a worker that was caused because it failed to adequately test the load-bearing capacity of a semi-built floor.

Company directors Andrew Leorke and David Spedding were convicted and personally fined $60,000 each last week for their failing to properly assess the load-bearing capacity of a floor, which collapsed on one of its contractors in 2006. PEC itself last week itself was fined $350,000.

“All the company directors needed to do was seek the advice on an engineer to provide guidance on how much material could be stored on the floor,” said WorkSafe Victoria’s acting executive director Stan Krpan.

NSW to lead ‘compulsory’ asbestos registry

With incidences of asbestos-caused mesothelioma not expected to peak until 2017, the Federal and NSW Governments have teamed up to launch a new mandatory reporting registry for the disease.

The Australian Mesothelioma Register has been replaced by a similarly named Registry. Operations are to commence in June 2010 at the NSW Cancer Institute’s Eveleigh centre.

The registry will be managed by the Cancer Institute of New South Wales while Victoria’s Monash Centre of Occupational and Environmental Health will collect information from patients diagnosed with the disease.

“What we do know is that in the absence of mandatory reporting, with the former voluntary reporting, it is believed that the incidence of the disease was being underreported,” Deputy prime minister Julia Gillard said.
WA brings in new asbestos license

As of June 1 2010 business operators removing more than ten square meters of bonded and cement asbestos will need to complete approved training.

The new licence is meant to bring the state up to scratch with a pre-existing national code of practice for the safe removal of asbestos.

WorkSafe will display a list of asbestos licence holders on its website so anyone who needs asbestos removed will be able to identify properly licensed operators.

NBN Tassie project stalls over electrical safety

Work on the Tasmanian leg of the Federal Government’s $30 billion National Broadband Network (NBN) was stalled for two weeks in April after a worker suffered an electric shock during an installation.

The incident had occurred in Tasmania, where NBN Co has partnered with the state’s power utility, Aurora Energy to construct the network. Aurora is the lead contractor for NBN Tasmania, a wholly-owned subsidiary of NBN Co.

Network design on the mainland is still being scoped, however the Tasmanian build will utilise Aurora’s overhead electricity distribution network to connect homes in the state.

According to Telstra’s main union, the Communications, Plumbing and Electricians Union, training in power safety has since been organised for all NBN Co contractors. The CEPU, which has an axe to grind over NBN Co’s preference for contractors, is concerned contracting is the source of the problem.

“Aurora has contracted Leightons-owned John Holland as the head contractor for the build and John Holland has in turn sub-contracted to a number of smaller companies, including Power and Electrical, the firm involved in the electric shock incident,” it said.

Linfox boss calls for truck “black box”

The founder of trucking and logistics giant Linfox, Lindsay Fox, says the trucking industry should adopt the aviation sector’s “black box” for incidents.

“In Europe all new trucks must have black boxes. In trucks made in Europe and shipped to Australia, they remove the boxes. That needs to change,” said Fox at the recent Australian Trucking Convention, held by the Australian Trucking Association (ATA).

Australia had a poor record compared to Europe in single vehicle accidents, with Europe’s figure at 15 per cent much lower than Australia’s 50 per cent. He said the root cause was disrupted sleep patterns that followed drivers taking holidays.

New housing code defines positioning systems

Safe Work Australia has released its new National Code of Practice for the Prevention of Falls in Housing Construction. The code covers construction or extension of detached houses, and attached dwellings as well as “ancillary buildings” to the above, such as private garages, gazebos and carports.

In regards to travel restraint systems, the code states they must only be used if it is not reasonably practicable to adopt a fall protection system that prevents falls by providing a physical barrier (such as guardrail). The new code was based on Victorian’s current code.

Travel restraint system are also not considered a fall-arrest device

On fall protection systems, Unline Safety Systems managing director Simon Luke has warned that Australia is seeing increased usage of so-called “single point fall protection anchors”, which he claims are dangerous.

“Our own height safety specialists are finding roofs where multiple single anchors have been installed at distances of four to six metres apart, making it impossible for a worker with a two metre twin lanyard to move safely between anchor points,” said Luke.

“For a roof to be safe the worker needs to be protected from fall hazards at all times. The roof should have a continuous and comprehensive safety anchorage system or edge protection system such as a guardrail which should conform to national standards.”
Effective leadership on workplace health and safety is overdue and it’s high time organisational leaders woke up to this problem.

last year, in Australia, there were more than 175 “notified” work-related fatalities and over 131,000 serious workers’ compensated claims related to work injury or illness.

So what are the links between the health and safety of Australian workplaces and corporate performance?

The SIA and the Australian Institute of Management VT (AIM VT) jointly undertook “The Business of Safety” survey which attracted 2,815 participants including CEOs, board members, managers, support personnel and OHS specialists.

The results were released by CEO of AIM VT, Susan Heron, during her keynote address at the Safety In Action 2010 conference in Melbourne.

Most disturbing was that Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) standards were being compromised by concerns about reduced productivity. In other words, OHS standards are being undermined by leadership teams that are too focused on short-term performance and productivity goals.

This should be a big wake up call to the business world. It really is time for change. Organisations need to start believing that OHS is the responsibility of every employee regardless of structural hierarchy.

There are three key pillars around which efforts to improve this situation can be made: education, research and training.

First, there is a clear need for more research in OHS to answer questions that will be critical to improving safety outcomes at Australian workplaces. But to do this there will need to be for more funds.

During a recent OHS Research conference organised by the SIA Academy of University OHS Education and Research it was decided that workers’ compensation funds should be directed towards research.

This will have a direct impact on safety outcomes for the nation.

Priority research for the next ten years include investigating safety and health questions that will arise due to the changing nature of employment and work. With 40 per cent of Australia’s workforce employed outside the workers’ compensation scheme, precarious employment is a growing feature of it. There is also the question of known hazards in new industries, and new dimensions to existing industries, such as increased participation by women and different ethnicities in the workforce.

A greater focus and more effort in training is also required, but training can only be as good as its ability to engage those it attempts to educate.

Good training will need to be interesting, challenging and flexible. It will be targeted at and tailored to the needs of the industries, occupations and workplace groups it is being delivered to. It will not only be classroom based – it will more often be activity and action based.

Within Australia and overseas, in industries such as mining and aviation, innovative OHS training is being delivered. This training has eschewed the traditional “sit, listen and walk away” classroom format and has instead adopted innovative methods using case studies, evidence-based OHS research and personal development focus.

These include video and 3D video technologies; active learning; interview simulation; unfolding scenario exercises; and workplace and event simulations/recreations using resources such as physical workplace re-creations and electronic supports from the simple (e.g. accessing date and knowledge bases) to the complex.

Focus areas for improving effectiveness could include: particular industries; geographical areas (city, suburban, regional, provisional, rural); particular occupational groups; the needs of workplace groups (employees, health and safety representatives; managers; supervisors; OHS committees); and particular hazards and issues (e.g. bullying, consultation, design, risk control etc).

The items have been recent initiatives taken by the SIA in conjunction with key stakeholders who also recognise that improvements in OHS performance and management are essential to reducing social costs and enhancing corporate performance and productivity. For further details on these items please contact the SIA National Office on telephone 03 8336 1995.

Other recent SIA initiatives have included its 2nd submission to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission; and its Submission Paper to the preliminary Scoping Review currently being undertaken by Workplace Agenda Pty Ltd for the Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA).
The central tenet outlined in its submission - its second to the Commission, delivered on 14 May 2010 - is that all residents in bushfire risk-prone areas should be knowledgeable and engaged in “effective risks prevention measures”.

The need for a community engagement strategy was confirmed in the fire-prone area of Lara, Victoria when on 12 December 2009 101 Lara residents attended the Country Fire Authority Victoria’s “Bushfire Survival Workshop”.

An attendee noted that many of the participants had lived through an earlier Lara bushfire 41 years ago that had resulted in the loss of 17 lives.

Another survey found that even after the Black Saturday fires residents over the age of 50 years, living in bushfire prone areas had not talked to any of their neighbours about their bushfire survival plans before the subsequent bushfire risk period.

Of great concern was that some reported that they had no intention to do so, which indicated a clear need for a structured and mature approach to risk-management at a community level.

While industry has gone some way to developing information sharing processes and safe work models, the SIA recognises that work still needed to be done to create a broader “Living Safely Culture”.

With this knowledge the SIA realised that engagement of and communication amongst the residents would be critical to the success of a values driven safety program to achieve a broader-base “Living Safely Culture” that could be adopted by risk prone communities.

**CFSC’s four steps program**

The SIA developed its community-led model, known as the Community Fire Safety Culture (CFSC), with the residents of Ponds Drive in the fire-prone town of Lara, Victoria.

Ponds Drive has 25 residential homes within 65 metres of open grassland to the north west. The street houses 57 residents, comprising 42 adults (one elderly), seven school age children, six pre-school children and two infants.

Under the program a single Ponds Drive resident adopted the role of “safety practitioner”, and was assisted by a second resident at the opposite end of the street.

The implementation included “culture measurement” based on residents’ beliefs and values. Planning meanwhile was based on five criteria which helped identify residents’ current preparedness in relation to the “FireReady” standard, and also where they wanted to be in relation to it.

Developments were conveyed by weekly fire bulletins which were sent by email and direct mail handouts.

The four steps of the program included:
1. Assess Community Preparedness Using Community Fire Safety Culture Scorecard
2. Provide Feedback To The Community Via CFSC Survey Results And Set Out Their Bushfire Survival Plans
3. Develop Regular Community Group Information Bulletins and Preparation Meetings
4. Assess Community Preparedness Level And Action Needed; Use Community Fire Safety Culture Maturity Matrix

The SIA’s model has also garnered the support of at least two Members of Parliament. After viewing the SIA’s CFSC model, both Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Bushfire Reconstruction and Bob Cameron, Minister for Police & Emergency Service have suggested the SIA consider and discuss funding opportunities under the “Natural Disaster Resilience Program” to support a CFSC program for bushfire prone areas.
SIA’s Event Wrap: “Active and engaged”

110 professional women attended the 4th Women in OHS Networking breakfast sponsored by Simple OHS Solutions held on Wednesday 10 March 2010.

Attendees heard from speaker Danni Hocking (Health & Wellness specialist) and special guest Ms Christine Nixon (former Victorian Police Commissioner and current head of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority).

Danni Hocking, OHS consultant with KPMG shared with guests techniques for influencing decision makers and strategies to integrate wellness programs into existing safety programs while Christine Nixon drew on her own experiences of dealing with the health & wellness of men and women working in the police force and the safety concerns and considerations of emergency services personnel following tragic Black Saturday on 6 February 2009.
SIA conference attracts leading minds of OHS

Some 50 delegates who either teach or are conducting OHS research attended a special one day workshop which helped shape a solid research agenda for the next decade, writes Steve Cowley.

Held the day prior to the Safety In Action Conference, the workshop - organised by the Safety Institute of Australia (SIA) Academy of University OHS Education and Research - was chaired by eminent researcher Professor Nikki Ellis.

Ellis opened the workshop by quoting from a recent address by UK workplace health reformer Dame Carol Black who has argued that OHS is in a dismal state and need of major reform and effort.

Professor Tony LaMontagne, Professor Michael Quinlan, Professor Helen Linguard, Alan Clayton, Dr David Borys, Professor Dennis Else, and, by video, Professor Andrew Hale delivered thought-provoking speeches, while Ellis masterfully captured key ideas that created the basis for group work to help break down barriers to OHS research opportunities in Australia.

The speakers shared global perspectives on how to support research and questioned our traditional and arguably slavish adherence to a ‘positivist view’ of the research world. As Tony LaMontagne suggested, we need to take a horses competition, a relatively new concept which challenges the need to develop reports for more mainstream media were also discussed, with Helen Linguard warning of ‘the entombing of research’ results in academic journals.

At the end of the day many decamped to the Eric Wigglesworth Lecture before joining the research stream at Day 1 of the safety In Action Conference.

The highlight of the first day was the three minute thesis competition, a relatively new concept which challenges research students and a difficult task for those who may have spent up to four years pursuing an idea.

Notwithstanding the confronting nature of the challenge many people volunteered themselves and everyone did a sterling job against the time-limit, kept to with military precision.

The success of the two days was a credit to the hard work and planning of Pam Pryor and members of the Safety Institute of Australia (SIA) Academy of University OHS Education and Research without whose efforts the outcomes would not have been close.

The workshop also provided a forum to discuss key goals to be achieved for OHS research in Australia, including:

- A national research strategy, which engages workers and employers and identifies industry-specific research areas.
- Sustainable funding ideally from hypothecated link to workers compensation
- Target Australian Research Council and National Health and Medical Research Council to include OHS as a category of research
- Research network to foster co-ordination and collaboration on national and international projects as well as map capacity

ACT

Women in Safety Network Breakfast
The Boathouse, Grevillea Park, Barton — Thursday 15 April 2010

68 women from a diverse range of industries and both ACT and Commonwealth departments attended the SIA’s Women in Safety Networking breakfast on Thursday 15 April 2010.

Guest speakers included Mark McCabe (Work Safety Commission), Amanda Bresnan (Member of the ACT Legislative Assembly) and Julia Collins (Director of the model legislation project at Safe Work Australia).

The theme for the morning was workplace safety culture with speakers touching on the important roles CEO’s play in ensuring a positive safety culture is adopted in the workplace, empowering employees to take responsibility for safety and changing behaviours to create a positive organisational culture in workplaces.

Thank you to sponsors ActewAGL ‘Women in Utilities’, ACT Work Safety Commissioner and the Department of Defence.

TASMANIA

Harmonised OHS Legislation — Implications for Industry
Salamanca Inn, Hobart — Wednesday 24 March 2010
Weller’s Inn, Burnie — Thursday 29 April 2010

Following the successful presentation by John Kirwin FSIA on ‘Harmonised OHS Legislation — Implications for Industry’ held in Hobart on Wednesday 24 March, this success was replicated in Burnie on Thursday 29 April 2010.

John, with over 30 years experience in Safety Management Systems, has an extensive background in training, together with developing solutions for risk exposures. His presentation highlighted the key changes to OHS legislation and in particular the impact on organisations responsibilities moving forward.

“It is important that both employers and employees are aware of their obligations and the education required to come up to speed with these legislation requirements.”

The SIA Tasmania was pleased to see a variety of members and non-members in attendance, resulting in three new members.

Stuart Slade, TAS President said: “It has indicated a desire for many to rejoin the SIA based upon the local management committee engaging with its members and prospective new members, providing informative forums and also the opportunity to network with other safety professionals.”
Q&A Around the Table

What is the relevance of research to you in your role & what do you consider research to be?

Deb Burlington, Director Enhance Solutions

A lot of the work I engage in focuses on cultural change and leadership. Organisations identify where they are up to on their OHS journey and we work with them on how to engage staff and create safety cultural change.

I find that referencing models such as Professor Hudson’s Maturity Model assists organisations in understanding the journey they are currently on and identifying where they want to go. Adopting a human approach to research, providing real life examples and case studies is another avenue often taken by Enhance Solutions. This allows our clients to see how using OHS as the conduit can change workplace culture.

For me, research is about connecting into a wide and varied network of knowledge. At the moment for example I am reading Richard Branson’s book Business Stripped Bare which details how his company has been able to create a positive, people focussed culture in the business. We also make use of works such as that of John Kotter and his eight steps to leading change.

Utilizing this and other sources of information that is available, including formal research and data, the companies we partner with can understand what other organisations have done; what’s worked; what hasn’t, and perhaps some of the pitfalls that might have come out of their OHS journeys. It allows them to make informed decision about how to change the journey in their own organisation and this is important.

Cassie Chadwick, General Manager HSE, Integrated Group Limited

The Labour Hire Industry is a singular sort of industry – it does not control or supervise the workplaces where the largest numbers of its employees work, its external employees work in many workplaces and many industries and a small number of internal employees service the needs of the employees working in other workplaces.

Consequent to the lack of control and supervision of the workplaces in which labour hire employees work, the hierarchy of controls, where elimination of identified hazards is the ultimate OHS prize, is not possible or plausible. The place for labour hire in the hierarchy of controls is in the PPE and administration space. Much conventional OHS wisdom is dedicated to improvements in OHS at the higher end of the hierarchy of controls. Research often provides less conventional assistance for less conventional industries. Integrated as a provider of mostly blue collar labour to a wide variety of industries, has used research to assist it to achieve its safety goals and assist in the safety improvements it has made and continues to make over the last 6 or 7 years.

I have used the work of Professors Hudson and Hopkins and James Reason to map, guide and explain Integrated’s safety improvement programme to internal employees and senior management for the last 5 years. The research Integrated has found to be most valuable has been the research into particular safety concerns and the testing of the efficacy of planned improvements, in recent years there has been a some focus on the construction industry which Integrated has found very valuable.

In particular, our toolbox and induction programmes have been built on some of the learnings taken from research in the construction industry. It is often useful to review the available literature about a particular subject and a comprehensive review of the academic literature conducted by researchers on a subject has great value in providing a comprehensive review of the learnings of others over a period of time.

Michael Ramsey, National Health, Safety and Environment Manager, Visy Pulp and Paper

Research provides information and gives business the opportunity to develop the underpinning knowledge required to ensure that they are implementing the most appropriate risk controls. It ensures informed decisions are made, effective strategies identified and strategic plans developed based on factual data.

Research information can be used by a business to treat current, latent, and potential hazards on an individual basis, targeting controls to individual hazards rather than taking a “one size fits all” approach in hazard management.

In the same way, research information allows for the most efficient and effective controls to be implemented by identifying variable solutions to particular problems, issues or questions.

Research ensures businesses continually have up to date and applicable data. In doing so, it provides the stepping stone that ensures the business review process is conducted from a position of knowledge. This in turn provides the business with the capability to ensure appropriate outcomes when our strategies, plans, and controls are reviewed in light of the ‘new information’.

I consider research to be any activity which is undertaken to increase knowledge. For me in the HS field this literally translates to research being the systematic investigation of a problem, issue or question which increases knowledge and understanding of that particular problem, issue or question.
Sick OHS needs health reform

Does occupational health begin and end at work’s front door? Legally it may, but according to renowned workplace health expert, Professor Niki Ellis, OHS professionals that view it this way risk becoming irrelevant.

“IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH TO BE ISOLATIONIST. WE NEED TO MOVE TO A MODEL WHICH RECOGNISES FACTORS IN THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT, AS WELL AS FACTORS OUTSIDE WORK AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS ALL INTERACT TO CAUSE ILL-HEALTH.”

BY LIAM TUNG
Perhaps to the dismay of some in the profession, Ellis, who recently returned from the UK to head up Victoria’s Institute of Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research, strongly believes that the OHS profession is “unfit for the 21st century”.

To level her criticism at the profession, Ellis borrowed from the architect of the UK’s Fit to Work initiative, Professor Dame Carol Black, who in April, while visiting Australia, slammed OHS as isolated, lacking quality research and a slave to the employer.

“I agree with [Black’s] comments,” Ellis tells OHS Professional. “OHS has become very boxed in and limited in its scope. It focusses on work-related injury and illness.”

Like Black, who in 2008 argued her case for OHS reform in the UK, Ellis wants Australia to follow suit by bringing occupational health into the mainstream of healthcare provision. Ellis believes that if workplace health was viewed this way, OHS professionals would be very much in demand as an implementation apparatus for broader health objectives.

But the profession is in a dire state, according to Ellis. Compounding its case of apparent tunnel vision, over the past decade OHS has largely become an outsourced function. For Ellis, this has forced the question: who is the client of the OHS professional?

“A few years ago I worked on a on occupational ethics project for the now closed National Institute of Working Life in Sweden,” Ellis reflects. “The output was a book, and in the introductory chapter it posed the question, ‘Who is the client?’ When I was a consultant, usually the answer was the employer.”

This new reality for OHS puts it at odds with what Ellis believes should be its true, and arguably its most logical goal: to ensure the health of employees.

“In the past when OHS services tended to be in-house, OHS practitioners were careful to be honest brokers between employers and employees. With OHS largely outsourced these days, and unions less influential in workplaces than before, the influence of the payer is pretty much unchecked. Surely OHS should be there to serve workers,” says Ellis.

And it’s this focus on serving the workers, who are also clients of the public health system, that is the crux of Ellis’ argument: in her ideal world the workplace is one part of an individual’s health, but also a platform for the delivery of healthcare.

Isolationism must end

Realising this vision will however mean OHS professionals need to radically re-think their role in delivering a healthy nation and workforce.

“It is no longer possible for occupational health to be isolationist,” says Ellis. “We need to move to a model which recognises factors in the working environment, as well as factors outside work and personal characteristics all interact to cause ill-health.”

As part of the UK’s efforts to integrate occupational health with the public health system, it last month implemented the latest of Black’s recommendations by ditching the antiquated “sick note” for the new “fit note”, which allows doctors to state what an employee can do, rather than what they can’t.

The hope is that the UK’s new “may be fit for work” category will support an employee’s return to work by allowing employers to negotiate interim terms with those returning to work within a medical framework. The new fit notes, for example, can include suggestions from a doctor to work part-time, adopt different hours temporarily, or recommendations to do or avoid different tasks.

But to achieve an integrated view of health across work and non-work life in Australia faces huge but not insurmountable challenges, not the least academic and cultural schism between occupational and public health professional circles.

According to Ellis OHS practice is “not well-founded on evidence”. “We do not have a strong culture of evaluation and evidence-based practice, compared to our public health colleagues,” she says, pointing to the gap between the two.

Indeed, this is one reason why Ellis last month took on the role as chief executive of the new Institute of Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research in Victoria.

The joint initiative between WorkSafe Victoria, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and Monash University, was established in 2009 to provide evidence to WorkSafe Victoria and the TAC to improve the performance of the schemes.

Under Ellis’ leadership the ISCRR will look at compensation scheme design and health outcomes, rehabilitation, and psycho-social factors at work.

Via a proposed think tank which would include the top minds in occupational health research, ISCRR will begin a program of reaching out to stakeholders.

“We hope to engage with academics, policy makers, unions, employer organisations, OHS, health and legal professionals and claimant organisations,” she says.

But Ellis also acknowledges that past attempts to utilise OHS to deliver health services have not always been successful, in part because of the dichotomy placed between work and non-work health matters.

“In the past OHS has neglected illness as it did not easily fit with our approach of OHS being about the employer responsibility to create a safe and healthy working environment,” says Ellis.

For some areas of injury, she says, such as slips, trips or falls, or a hand injury from an unguarded machine, this division works well. But not for illness caused by longer term exposure to repeated physical and mental stresses because of the traditional view that health is the responsibility of the individual.

“Where health was on the agenda it was in the form of health promotion in the workplace which assumed the opposite - that heart disease and other illnesses were the responsibility of individual workers, and that benevolent employers were providing health screening and education programs to assist them to manage their own health.”
Yet, as Ellis notes, chronic musculoskeletal and psychological disorders predominate work-related illness today.

Safe Work Australia’s latest figures, based on state and territory workers’ compensation data, show that between 2006-07 in Australia 60 per cent of all claims over musculoskeletal disorders were the result of “body stressing” as opposed to being caused by a “single trauma”.

The attempt to set a national standard for manual lifting has seen compensation claims for body-stressing musculoskeletal illnesses drop 23 per cent over the past five years, however, at 11,000 claims per million employees in 2006-07, it still dwarves the rate of the second most prevalent source of claims - mental illness - which on average draw about 1000 claims per million employees each year.

“These conditions develop over a long period of time, often from a multitude of factors, from work, from outside work and from within,” explains Ellis. “And on the other hand we know from the Whitehall study in the UK that chronic occupational stressors can contribute to heart disease and other illnesses by directly [putting stress] on the body, and can cause ill-health through unhealthy behaviours in response to pressures, such as overeating, drinking too much, and neglecting to exercise.”

What’s the solution?

In Ellis’ view, prevention of illness and injury holds the key to bringing together public and occupational health. It won’t be an easy task, and some home truths about the profession’s shortcomings will need to be addressed.

But, says Ellis, OHS professional should be confident that they will have a critical role to play.

“(The public health sector) need our help as it recognises the value of workplaces as a setting for prevention,” says Ellis. “Prevention will require an integration of OHS and health promotion principles and practice. This does not mean that the traditional responsibility of employers to provide a safe and healthy working environment is diminished, we must add to it.”

In uniting the two, however, the OHS profession needs to acknowledge its shortcomings, which were similarly expressed in Black’s 2008 review of the UK workplace health system when she criticised it for making health services only available to a select group of employees from leading workplaces.

“OHS needs [public health sector] help as we are not good at reaching the self-employed or those working in small business for prevention or rehabilitation,” explains Ellis.

But most of all, to truly achieve workplace health reform, there will need to some way to leverage the complementary strengths of the two professions.

“We need their know-how in health promotion; they need our know-how in implementing change in the industrial environment consistent with the hierarchy of control principle.”

The other major shortcoming of OHS its lack-lustre academic record. More than ever before the profession needs to bolster its academic merit so that the research it does produce can harness the Federal Government’s taste for so-called “evidence based” policy - one that, as Ellis notes, is a major agenda for the Australian Public Service set out by Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.

But the problem for now is that institutions that could provide that kind of research are being closed down.

“Like glaciers, in Australia our OHS capability has been in retreat for some time,” says Ellis. “We lost our national institute, and research centres which have played a significant role, such as the [School of Safety and Risk Sciences] at the University of New South Wales, are closing.”

While the field continues to see knowledge centres disappear, Ellis does have strong views on exactly how the profession’s academic base can be raised.

“OHS is a multidisciplinary field,” says Ellis. “It needs multidisciplinary, applied research. Currently OHS is disadvantaged in the academic world. The journals we publish in are not rated very highly in academic performance assessment. The methodologies we use are a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. We develop, implement and observe interventions as best we can in environments over which we usually have influence, but no control. These are denigrated in estimates of quality of evidence by academia.”

The work Ellis is doing with the ISCRR in the longer term could prove to be useful model on which to base future research projects. For now, however, Ellis says that she her and team are working on developing its five year research agenda.

“It is due for completion in December this year,” she says. “We will be using systematic futures studies methodologies to bring rigour in thinking about knowledge needed to address the future.”
Reckless Endangerment: First Prosecution & Sentencing

With Victoria’s first prosecution and sentencing for reckless endangerment, the state is likely to see more such prosecutions levelled at companies that flagrantly breach safety laws, writes Piper Alderman lawyer, Sue Bottrell.

On 10 April 2010 County Court, Judge Felicity Hampel handed down judgement in a prosecution by WorkSafe Victoria of Orbit Drilling and its Managing Director Martin Smith under section 32 of the OHS Act (Vic) 2004 for recklessly endangering a person at work, after both pleaded guilty to recklessly endangering the health and safety of employee, 21 year old Bradley Alford.

After only 11 hours of training Alford obtained his heavy riggers drivers licence. A week later he was employed by Orbit Drilling and commenced working on a mining site in Victoria. On 9 December 2006 Alford was instructed to drive a heavily loaded truck down a steep slope, with no road, and reverse onto a drilling pad.

The truck had not been serviced since May 2006, had defective brakes (including no operating park brake and no effective rear brakes). The combination of the gradient of the slope, weight of the load and severity of the defect in the rear brakes meant that the truck no longer had the capacity to stop. Smith and Site Supervisor knew the brakes were not working. Alford drove the truck down the slope as instructed but due to the faulty brakes the truck gathered speed and continued down the slope, past the pad, and into a gully where it overturned. Alford was thrown out and killed.

In sentencing Judge Hampel highlighted the seriousness of the offences and;
- the failures to induct and supervise Alford, an inexperienced worker, and
- the recklessness of Orbit and its Managing Director in allowing the continued use of the truck knowing the brakes were defective and
- she noted that Alford had died as a as a direct result of these failures.

In his review of the OHS Act 1985 Chris Maxwell QC rejected the introduction of the industrial manslaughter defence. Maxwell maintained that the concept of manslaughter did not sit with the focus and purpose of OHS legislation, which is the elimination or prevention of risk, whether or not that risk results in an injury. By contrast the offence of manslaughter requires a certain outcome to have occurred, namely the death of another person.

The duty under section 32 requires foresight of the probability of or likelihood of the consequences of the contemplated act or omission. The introduction of the section also recognises the need to punish and deter conduct in the workplace which has a high level of culpability and places those in the workplace at risk of serious injury due to the recklessness of others. It ensures that duty holders are held accountable when a level of knowledge about serious risk is present but ignored. Judge Hampel highlighted that the gravity of a section 32 offence is to be assessed by reference to a particular state of mind. In this case that was the knowledge that serious injury would probably result from directing an inexperienced, unsupervised and untrained driver to drive an inadequately maintained vehicle, carrying a heavy load, known to have defective brakes down a steep off road slope. She also commented that the grief of Alford’s family at his death was compounded by the knowledge that the incident was avoidable. The offence of reckless endangerment carries a maximum penalty of $1,051,380 and or 5 years imprisonment. Orbit Drilling was fined $750,000.00 with Smith being fined $120,000.00.

Now that a prosecution has been successfully completed and a significant sentence handed down, there is an increased likelihood of WorkSafe Victoria commencing further prosecutions of people who demonstrate conduct which recklessly endangers those in the workplace.
January 2012, a newly defined concept will be applied consistently across Australia to workplace safety: due diligence. According to one of the Act’s architects, its “proactive” focus will significantly alter how leaders of many organisations approach safety requirements. It will also put in place a clear framework for determining where the buck stops in workplace safety.

The WHS Act, according to Barry Sherriff, partner at law firm Norton-Rose, a key player behind the law’s design, will be upward looking, and there are signs it has already caught the attention of some circles in the higher echelons of the corporate world.

“I think we succeeded in achieving what we set out to achieve,” Sherriff told the Safety Institute of Australia’s recent Safety in Action conference in Melbourne. “I have to say I have never had this much involvement with boards and senior executives.”

But there is a long way to go. Referring to the Australian Institute of Management and the SIA’s recently released survey, which revealed a sizable gap between the perceived seriousness with which OHS is treated in an organisation, Sherriff said this indicated there was “an enormous number of organisations that do not understand where we’re heading or what it is that needs to be done.”

Due diligence, commonly applied in business and accounting law, will underpin this new direction and is set to become the cornerstone of Australia’s new workplace safety regime.

Described by Sherriff as a “positive duty of care”, he said that if you don’t have the right systems in place, you are guilty.

In short, to avoid guilt officers need to take “reasonable steps” to ensure the structure and resources for their organisation to provide a safe workplace. And those that have influence within an organisation can’t sit back and allow others to be responsible for gathering that knowledge. Ignorance is no excuse.

To meet the requirements under that duty of care, officers will need to:
- inform themselves about OHS hazards, risks and compliance obligations
- ensure proper allocation and use of resources and the availability of policies and procedures to provide for compliance and hazard management, and
- verify that the resources and policies are providing for effective OHS risk management and compliance.

“It’s not unqualified,” Sherriff assured delegates. “It’s not the case that you must ensure absolutely everything - it is take reasonable steps. Reasonableness will be determined by your level of influence, involvement and so forth, but also by reference to the particular elements of due diligence.”

“It’s all about the organisation and understanding what the risks are and ensuring that the resources are available and applied,” he said.

The WHS Act will also see new, tougher penalties introduced, which pose a threat not just to the organisation, but also the individual.
The structure of penalties under the Act will see three key types of offence, ranging from Category 1 to 3, with the highest offence where an officer or organisation was alleged to have recklessly endangered the safety of its workers. The new law could land the individual up to five years jail time.

“Yes [the penalties] are high, but so they ought to be for that sort of behaviour,” said Sherriff. “The other categories of offences are more commonplace. And effectively they have taken the current level and uplifted it slightly.”

In some circumstances, according to Sherriff, even where the organisation is not in breach of the law, an individual may very well be. “That is a key change. At the moment the law simply says if the organisation commits an offence and it’s because you as an officer failed to reach a certain standard … then you may be liable.”

“It’s a positive duty of care. You must do it. If you don’t do it, you are guilty.” The duty is aimed at ensuring sustainability of performance and compliance.

Macro, not micro focus

So how might this be applied in a real life situation? Say if a team of police officers responding to a violent hostage situation were to shoot and kill a perpetrator in order to save hostages? Would those officers be held accountable under the WHS Act?

A police officer present at the SIA’s conference asked this exact question in reference to a recent incident he had faced.

It illustrated an important point. The laws, said Sherriff, are designed to regulate officers of an organisation at the macro level, not the micro.

“Because it was at the micro level, these were not ‘officers’,” explained Sherriff. “However, those up the chain of command who make the key decisions for the organisation as a whole - part of which is things like the defensive tactics training, policies and procedures for dealing with circumstances such as this - would certainly have an obligation to see that things are in place that should effectively provide for the minimisation of these risks.”

“But they are not necessarily caught for the immediate decision unless they have failed dismally to enable the right decision to be made. It’s about enabling rather than the immediate judgement call. And certainly the senior sergeant who is in charge of the local police station is not an ‘officer’ because that is only a small part of the organisation.”

Eye towards the sky

The focus on officers in the Act, according to Sherriff, was designed for regulating the conduct of those who make the key decisions in a business as it responds to changed business conditions.

“When we get things like recessions and GFCs and we need to look carefully at pruning back and reorganisation and shuffling and so forth, [officers] are the people who make those critical decisions,” he said.

“They are the people who set the values of the organisation. And safety is about values of the organisation. And if they are not driven from the top, then your safety culture will suffer and people will suffer.”

“It is they that provide the wherewithal. It’s they who make the decisions about resourcing and how the business is run - the way the organisation is structured.”

How that is applied in a government context remains to be seen. While Ministers and councillors are not exposed to the incoming laws, how far up government bureaucracy it reaches - for example departmental secretary - has yet to be tested.

“But if you look at the definition overall, it is about control and influence,” said Sherriff.

How prepared is your organisation for the model WHS Act?

On day one of the SIA’s April Safety in Action conference, Norton-Rose conducted a quick survey of 196 high-quality delegates to find out just how prepared organisations are for the incoming WHS Act, which produced some very interesting and in some instances concerning results.

Here’s the response to a selection of questions:

Q&A

OHS Professional (OP) asked Barry Sherriff to clear up some confusion about harmonisation and what it mean for different organisations:

OP: Are officers not liable under current laws?

Sherriff: Officers can be liable under current laws, but it is not a positive duty. It is hidden up the back of the Act in each jurisdiction, and what they must actually do to avoid liability is not spelled out.

OP: Does the WHS Act override existing legislation that has been designed to regulate specific high risk industries such as mining or offshore drilling?

Sherriff: The new model Act will apply to all work across all industries, unless there is specific legislation to the contrary in a particular area. The jurisdictions are currently working out whether there will continue to be other safety related legislation as well.

OP: It’s been argued that the WHS Act will not deliver a harmonised framework since it will be interpreted in nine different jurisdictions and enforced by as many regulators. Some have also criticised the Act because companies that have moved under the federal system will be forced back to state schemes? Is this true?

Sherriff: The application of the same Act, same regulations and same codes of practice in every jurisdiction should limit the opportunity for different interpretations and approaches in specific jurisdictions. There will however be different regulators for each jurisdiction and that theoretically could cause some differences. Certainly far less than under the current situation with a multitude of differences in the laws in each jurisdiction.

If the companies remain under Comcare for workers compensation purposes, they would have a different regulator(s) for that and safety. If the companies go back to State systems for workers’ comp then they will have a multitude of regulators to deal with and vast differences in the laws for workers comp.

OP: Does harmonisation only deliver benefits only to those organisations that operate across multiple jurisdictions, or does it also deliver benefits to organisations that only operate in one?

Sherriff: I think there are benefits in the model Act for business and workers operating in a single state, as the Act will improve on the current laws. It is not only the benefits from having consistent laws, they will be better laws.
When addressing the issue of drugs in the workplace there are a number of risks companies should consider. Often the focus for Alcohol or Other Drugs (AOD) is on the period of intoxication. What happens when someone turns up to work after they have consumed a substance? How, or to what extent are they impaired? How can this be measured? What actions are appropriate?

Testing is an obvious means although there is little information or validated studies to relate drug impairment with the levels specified in the Australian Standards. Let alone what do we do with drugs like Human Growth Hormone (HGH) that are associated with positive health benefits.

Ultimately the only decision relating to intoxication must be one based on risk. Issues of measured impairment, personal values, or choice must be addressed after the risk of injury or illness is removed form the workplace.

Missing the boat

In many cases we are missing the real risk period. The risk associated with intoxication is compounded during detoxification by issues such as fatigue, poor mental health, and unbalanced physiology. This is inherently more difficult to assess. The substance may no longer be detectable through alcohol or drug testing. The person has regained some measure of self awareness or rationale and is better equipped not to attract attention. The signs and symptoms of detoxification can be easily disguised as a common cold or flu.

Even with these considerations we are still only viewing AOD use as a single event. We as supervisors or managers often have the misconception we can actively control the person’s behaviour or decision making on this event.

Workplaces represent a cross section of the wider community. Similarly in the community there are people that will seek treatment. There are also people that will continue to use drugs regardless of the cost to finances, family, health, or wellbeing.

The nature of addiction itself means the person’s rational decision making process is somewhat impaired. The nature of human psychology lends itself to people defending their addiction, and the choices they make to sustain it.

These mechanisms of human psyche are individual and situation relevant but overlay a greater cultural issue of presenteeism. This is generated through a number of influences including national culture, industry perceptions, developmental environment and even gender identity.

It may be fairly safe to say at this stage that a prohibitionist, law enforcement approach has its work cut out for it to combat generations of culture, personal upbringing, and innate psychology.

Is zero tolerance good business?

Despite this some companies will take a “one strike your out” policy. With the expense of replacing and retraining staff estimated at up to 3 times the annual income of the employee, this can quickly become a cost prohibitive exercise.

There is also an issue of passing the buck, as people move around the industry where their behaviour may go unchallenged. Some managers may argue that this is not their concern. However, this business culture contradicts the growing efforts towards corporate social responsibility. It can also damage an industry or sub industry that is perceived to inherit the problems other people were unwilling to address.

Generally speaking management principles look to eradicate duplication, confine tasks to a strict objective, minimise cross over, and reinforce a single strain of line management. When dealing with alcohol and drug use in the workplace companies need to consider other viewpoints if they are to effectively address the issue.

While poor “fitness for work” is a workplace issue the health sector has without argument the most experience in addressing behaviour and drug use. It is commonly recognised within the AOD sector that users require a number of entry points with a variety of treatment approaches. Hence there are government and non government organisations.

Their services can range through detoxification, rehabilitation, pharmacotherapy, counseling, personal support, and informal support groups. Their organisational goals can range from abstinence through to harm reduction.
Having already acknowledged that the workplace is a reflection of the community it becomes difficult to understand how business operations can ever effectively address the issue through the provision of a single Employee Assistance Program (EAP). While an EAP is a definite and beneficial step in AOD management it is commonly applied in a one dimensional manner.

By integrating an internal support worker within the organisation companies can gain substantial depth in their application. The role of the support worker does not duplicate or replace the EAP. It does, however, provide an alternative entry point and allows for personal support to exist and complement ongoing counselling by the EAP.

Some companies may argue their managers or supervisors fulfill this role. This is a naive approach. It doesn’t acknowledge the workplace, supervisors and managers quite likely have a large, if not major role in the pressures that affect the person’s behaviour. Neither does it provide the “on call” nature of a support worker, who is available when staff members are off duty.

The manager/supervisor has a responsibility to protect the employee and their workmates. Therefore, the support of the worker has to be dealt with outside this forum. A manager or supervisor can not provide objective assistance when their function within the organisation is to provide a safe workplace and maintain or improve effective production and minimise expenditure.

The support worker solution
An option does exist for companies to introduce the role of a support worker.

Support workers may specialise in areas like AOD, mental health, disabilities, or youth work. A support workers role is to assist people who are making changes in their behaviour or lifestyle. This is not counselling or psychology. Support workers help with the day to day mechanics of maintaining motivation, making appointments and following up on attendance.

The role of an internal support worker is providing a level of care, assistance, and time that is otherwise unavailable in efficiency based roles.

By integrating a support worker into the organisation companies can expect a number of additional benefits as a result of the extra time, attention and support provided by the role.

These include:
- Increased engagement with the workforce,
- Improving EAP effectiveness and usage,
- Improved retention
- Reducing the impact of dissatisfied workers
- Assists exit strategies through an identified and supported approach
- Proactive treatment seeking behaviours.

A support worker creates a consistent focus on issues that can become less urgent, and gradually or eventually overlooked by other roles of the organisation.

One of these five workers will cause 80% of safety incidents.
Can you tell which one?

Onetest can.

Onetest is the leading Australian provider of online safety assessments. We can help you reduce **LTIs, MTIs, workers’ compensation costs and insurance premiums** by identifying high risk workers.

“It’s about getting the balance right and taking a firm but fair approach,” says Lyhne when asked about her role as chief of the state’s workplace health and safety regulator.

WorkSafe Western Australia’s stable if humble annual budget of $18.7m enables it to undertake compliance and education activities in the state, which, in terms of compliance, has a wide focus. It’s major focus for the past year has been on safety in agriculture, forestry and fishing; construction; health and community services; manufacturing; transport and storage; and wholesale and retail.

Still, with that modest budget, during 2008-09 WorkSafe WA conducted over 10,000 general investigations, 13,000 priority inspection reports, and issued more than 9,800 improvement notices and over 700 prohibition notices. There were also 18 successful prosecutions.

But the success of WorkSafe’s activities can’t be judged by figures, says Lyhne. When asked about its most successful activities, Lyhne pointed to those which engaged an industry body, followed by targeted information and compliance-related “interventions” and education campaigns.

“That way of operating ensures you get long term change in an industry,” she says.

But it’s not all about compliance. Culture is important too, according to Lyhne, who believes that it can be a competitive advantage for business.

“We know it’s good for business,” Lyhne says with certainty. “If you can demonstrated that you have a good consultative processes and communications, it’s good for the operations of the business.”
Lyon said that companies that it awards for outstanding OHS practices do understand the value it can have for the business, however she admits that some small businesses do see it as a burden due to the complexity of OHS laws, which is why it offers support via its SMB program.

But for it to be a competitive advantage, OHS cannot be an expert led initiative. It needs the engagement and support of frontline workers.

“People who understand the issues are those that are in the workplace,” says Lyon. “It’s very important to have expert advice but it’s also very important that the message is not lost by making it too academic.”

“There are certainly times when you need an OHS professional, but it wouldn’t be good if an inspector writes a notice and to understand it you need to call in an OHS expert to interpret it.”

The interventionist
The most recent example was last month’s commercial driver fatigue roadblock which was executed with the help of Main Roads WA and WA Police. Commercial driver fatigue is a “huge issue” due to Western Australia’s vastness, says Lyon.

Rigid truck crashes alone in the state caused 17 of Australia’s 85 fatalities in 2008, leaving Western Australia as the third highest source of fatalities behind Victoria and Queensland.

Initially Western Australia introduced a code of practice in an attempt to deal with driver fatigue. “But the message was not getting through”, says Lyon. Legislation was then introduced, which WorkSafe regulates.

“This has been in place for some years now and WorkSafe goes out and conducts road blocks,” says Lyon.

The April roadblock observed commercial vehicles between Perth and Port Hedland to check whether the required rest breaks had been taken. A total of 174 commercial vehicles were stopped at the Port Hedland roadblock, according to WorkSafe, with one prohibition notice issued to a driver who had not had the mandatory seven-hour rest break.

WorkSafe’s inspectors will now follow up with help of transport companies over fatigue, medical checks for drivers as well as training and record keeping.

“In the early years there were quite a few prohibition notices issued, but we’ve seen a significant improvement,” says Lyon.

The campaigns are not so much targeted at the driver as the business itself. Despite its efforts and a better awareness of driver fatigue, some “elements” of the industry are still poor at complying.

But there are still some areas of regulation that Western Australia could improve on, admits Lyon.

While NSW via WorkCover will commence regulation of the entire supply chain in the transport sector - ie to include, for example, large retailers that impose unsafe demands on contracted truck drivers - Western Australia currently only looks at the business.

“Do agree that the chain of responsibility is something we need to look at and it’s something that’s being done to some extent through harmonisation,” she says.

Harmonisation
According to Lyon harmonised OHS laws bring clear benefits for larger businesses and their employees that operate across multiple jurisdictions, but the benefits to small businesses are not as clear.

“A major program needs to be put in place, including retraining of staff [at WorkSafe],” says Lyon.

Western Australia Treasurer Troy Buswell late in 2009 poured cold water over the Federal Government’s plan for a national set of OHS laws by rejecting four key compliance measures, but according to Lyon, it has adopted the “vast majority of changes” under the model laws.

Those that it has not agreed to include raising the level of penalties imposed on a business when it breaches or recklessly exposes a worker to danger; union right to entry at the workplace; the reverse onus of proof for discrimination issues relating to alleged safety breaches; and the right to stop work.

Lyon doesn’t believe this undermines the model laws, since, she argues, the fundamental principals remain the same.

“Apart from those four areas, Western Australia really will be adopting the model laws.”

Still, a lot remains to be seen in terms of the attempt, and like others who question the sustainability of harmonisation under nine different jurisdictions and regulatory bodies, Lyon has her own reservations.

“Harmonisation is one thing, but it’s another when the rubber hits the road,” she says.

As a member of the Heads of Workplace Authorities she has also been working with other heads, with the next meeting to be held in June.

“These meetings are very much about operational matters, and looking at harmonisation - issues such as inspector training and commitments to national intervention campaigns, for example aggression in the hospital sector. These send a good message that we are all working in a similar way,” she says.

Bullying figures up
The number of bullying cases being reported to WorkSafe WA is up, which is a good sign, says Lyon. “I don’t think that’s due to an increase in bullying.”

“A few years ago we convinced people that it was a problem. Now workplaces do have good systems in place, but clearly there is a lot of work to be done,” she says.

And, like her Victorian counterpart, WorkSafe Victoria’s Stan Krpan, Lyon is a believer in the idea of prevention over remedy. “The only way to deal with bullying is to prevent it.”

While there have been calls for workplace bullying to be dealt with by the courts as a criminal matter, Lyon said bullying really needs to be dealt with in the workplace first.

“There needs to be good reporting mechanisms in the workplace. And of course, if you can’t deal with it at work, then you can always come to WorkSafe.”
Slips, trips, falls minimisation a cultural issue

According to Victorian statistics, in 2008-09, about 13 per cent of all serious workplace injuries were caused by slips and trips (falling on the same level or stepping, kneeling or sitting on objects).

These injuries don’t happen by accident. Poor housekeeping and maintenance are common causes of slips and trips. Cracked and uneven floors, blocked walkways, dust, discarded off-cuts, spills, cords, hoses and fallen tools are all culprits.

Some of the more serious injuries caused by slips and trips are sprains, strains, broken bones, back injuries (due to the sudden and forceful impact of a fall), burns and cuts.

Since the start of the decade, more than 14,000 Victorian workers have been injured after falling at ground level (as opposed to from height). That’s nearly 30 people every week injured seriously enough to make an insurance claim.

According to WorkSafe Victoria’s Strategic Programs Director, Trevor Martin, the number of claims does not reflect the whole story.

“Medical and associated costs are paid through insurance premiums. However, these become an added business cost because the premium rate is affected by the number of injuries people sustain in their workplace.

And this does not include hidden costs such as hiring and training replacement staff, immediate productivity lost after the incident, reduced productivity by the injured worker and return to work planning.”

The business case for top level support

So what can you do to raise the profile of slips and trips as a serious risk?

According to a British review of scientific literature on how attitudes and behaviours may affect the prevalence of slips, trips and falls (STFs), factors in successful attempts to address the problem included housekeeping, management style and rewards.

In relation to management style, a 2005 Health Safety Group report concluded that:

“The influence of management on safety culture and safety performance in an organisation appears to be key. In controlling STFs, supervisory staff that demonstrate enthusiasm for, and take part in safety practice will be more likely to help nurture a positive safety culture.

“The involvement of top management in safety matters also appears to be crucial, such that employees are in no doubt...
that safety is just as important as other criteria such as profit and production targets."

WorkSafe’s Clarke Martin heads a team set up to help businesses with 30 – 200 employees improve safety through strategic planning. He agrees that buy-in at owner/director level is critical to success.

“A safety management system needs to lead from the top,” Mr Martin said.

“For example, when it comes to controlling slips and trips, OHS professionals are often dealing with administrative controls.

“For these controls to be effective, you need to drive management to ensure supervisors create an environment that promotes workers to be proactive when they come across a slip or trip hazard.”

**Setting up a safety management system**

Within a safety management system, that means each hazard has to be identified as an action item, then signed off by the most senior manager in the business, who must also be part of solving the problem.

“I often ask the question: ‘Has this workplace accepted STFs as a problem?’ If the problems are not documented and there’s no evidence of proactive action then the answer is, no. That step of getting commitment from the top is often missing when trying to address hazards perceived as low order.”

Some prevention activities which could be incorporated into a safe system of management include:

- placing the issue on the next OHS Committee agenda
- ensuring supervisors conduct regular workplace inspections with HSRs and/or workers and fix identified problems quickly
- ensuring incidents are quickly and thoroughly investigated
- analysing all new tasks for potential slip/trip hazards and options for control
- introducing a staff awareness program.

Mr Martin said he regularly advised businesses of the benefits of engaging a suitably qualified OHS professional to ensure optimal outcomes.

“It is the responsibility of management to maintain systems and ensure supervisors and workers do what is required to keep them running effectively.

“However, it is also accepted that management will not necessarily have the required knowledge and capacity to meet that responsibility, which is why professional OHS advice can be beneficial.”

All state workplace safety authorities have information on controlling STFs. Employers must comply with their own state-based workplace safety laws, but guidance material can be sought from other states, as well as overseas.

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**Tips for reducing trips and slips**

- Keep work areas undamaged, clean, well lit, uncluttered and free of waste.
- Floor surfaces should also be kept clean, flat and maintained. Be aware of carpets curled at the edges and loose tiles.
- Install additional power points, suspend cabling from the ceiling or use lead stands to keep electrical cords or hoses from stretching across floors.
- Encourage all workers to clean up spills immediately, even small spills.
- Regularly audit machines to locate and fix the cause of spills or leaks.
- Make sure footwear provided for or worn by workers is suitable for the workplace, floor surface and task.
- Replace worn floor surfaces with a slip-resistant surface.
- Make sure all ramps and stairwells have handrails and are slip resistant, with foot grips and textured surfaces.
- Make sure all work areas, walkways and stairs are well lit.

For more information and resources, visit worksafe.vic.gov.au/backonsafety
The recovery from Black Saturday

With a quarter of Victorian Department of Primary Industries’ (DPI) 2,500 staff responding to the Black Saturday fires, DPI knew it would need to pave a road to recovery. Its OHS manager Hayden Cater explains to the SIA how it implemented its recovery and wellbeing program.

Hayden Cater

though it may often go unseen, DPI’s role in responding to state emergencies underpins many of the frontline services that respond to floods, disease, drought and fire.

Its scientists, legal officers, technical support, trade staff, corporate support, compliance officers, policy advisers, and fisheries officers amongst others, are considered lead, support or key support for the management of such emergencies.

While, for example, animal disease or drought is a slow or slow developing emergency, fires are a different beast. And those that occurred on Black Saturday were the worst in Australia’s history, taking the lives of 173 people and destroying over 2,020 homes. To make things worse for DPI as a responding department, many of its own staff were either directly affected by the fires themselves.

“Approximately 600 employees of the Department of Primary Industry worked in various roles to support the fire fighting efforts. Some of those roles were directly fighting the fire,” explained Cater.

“Many staff also lived in the communities that were devastated and they lost family members and friends,” he said.

Others were involved in the recovery process, assisting the community, providing advice to farmers whose farms had been destroyed. “And our vets assisted with injured animals and animal welfare issues.”

Its staff assisted victims who had lost family, farms, stock and fencing. They provided technical advice on pasture re-establishment, soil erosion and pest control, support with applications for assistance, and they worked with other key agencies such as the Department of Human Services.

Early on, said Cater, there was an awareness in the department at senior levels that staff would likely face a sense of “let down” once the emergency was over - one which would be compounded as they dealt with heavy post-crisis workloads.

“DPI senior executives recognised that once the bushfire emergency was over and the initial rush that had sustained people during the fires had subsided, our staff would be potentially exhausted, emotionally drained and under stress,” Cater explained.

In support of DPI’s emergency response and recovery efforts it developed a unique seven step recovery program to assist employees confront their return to work and, equally importantly, address potential longer term impacts of their involvement.

The types of pressures faced by DPI’s managers and supervisors included dealing with other distressed staff, as well as their own, while its centre leaders, who were the local focal point to coordinate services, were also under pressure.

The seven steps: wellness and recovery

The seven step approach included project scoping and planning features that cover expected outcomes, costs and benefits; developing a communications strategy and documenting them; provisioning immediate support; data collection and workshops, group coordination and follow up visits, ongoing support, as well as a structured post-even analysis which included review, monitoring and modifying its strategies.

Planning and documentation was critical not only to its own goals in delivering the program, but also to gain support from project sponsors.

“A project plan for implementing the program enabled the OHS unit to demonstrate what we were going to actually do, where we were going to target our resources, when it would be done and by whom,” explained Cater.

“[It] is vital for gaining senior management support and formal endorsement of the program,” he added.

Communications

DPI’s communications strategy needed to consider the geographical spread of DPI sites since 40 per cent work in the city or on the metropolitan outskirts, while the majority, 59 per cent, are spread across Victoria’s vast regional territories.

DPI also rigorously tested its communications platforms such as email, intranet, articles, posters and briefings.

“It involved multiple communications and the process began well before the actual intervention was officially launched,” said Cater.
Key to its testing phase was ensuring that messages were clear, identifying the best mode of communication to reach key stakeholders, using existing channels such as established meetings, and critically, ensuring that the message reached its intended recipient.

**Immediate Support**

The support program, which targeted all staff that were involved in the response, commenced after the immediate emergency. Staff that were contacted appreciated that someone cared, according to Cater, but it also allowed them to alert DPI to others that needed help.

“From this process it was much easier to provide a range of counseling services at all of our sites that had either been affected directly or at sites where staff who had been involved in fighting the fires,” said Cater.

Due to the volume of assistance required, DPI also contracted a specialist service to provide additional support to its existing provider under DPI’s Employee Assistance program.

“DPI involved an independent psychological and rehabilitation service early in the process to help develop the program,” explained Cater.

“The psychological and rehabilitation service provided advice and assistance on technical issues, documenting what processes would used to identify and analyze the data, as well as collating and interpreting data.

After immediate support had been delivered, DPI focused its attention to workshops and data gathering.

“The Staff Wellbeing and Recovery Program involved facilitators from “Gus Carli and Associates” (Psychological Services) discussing all issues with staff, listening and developing strategies to assist staff on their return to their substantive duties,” said Cater.

The workshops provided an opportunity for those involved in the response to share their experience, manage the “high” of being involved in the emergency, and a forum for staff to discuss family and personal issues.

DPI also developed a section for its line managers which were used to set realistic goals and expectations, and develop appropriate support reactions to those that requested help, and strategies to defuse ongoing staff concerns.

**Was it a success?**

While the program was broadly considered a success, it also provided an opportunity to assess where DPI could better meet requirements under Victoria’s OHS Act.

Successes included that staff appreciated the debriefing opportunities, and that DPI had consulted with staff on what support services were required.

“Through listening to people we were able to tailor the program to the needs of our staff and make it more effective,” said Cater.

Amidst the upheaval, data collection could have been compromised, however, said Cater, the accuracy in its collection allowed management to ensure they were acting on the right issues.

Cater and the DPI’s advice to others that need to respond to emergencies include, first and foremost, preparation.

“Although the process worked well, greater preparation and planning may have yielded better results. The next time DPI faces an emergency it will be better prepared,” he said.

Schedule debriefings close to the event. “A significant delay may alienate employees and valuable insights may be lost,” he said.

A solid communications strategy will aid delivering an efficient program. One shortfall in this area was promotion of the campaign, according to Cater. “Not all staff became aware of the program,” he conceded.

Be sensitive. While debriefings should be held close to the event, response teams need to be responsive to those it wants to collect data from.

“Employees are tired when they come off the fire ground and don’t have time or want to talk. It is not always possible to do it between shifts,” he advised.

While frontline support was the engine room of the program, senior management buy-in underpinned its efforts on the ground. “[This] meant that the program was thoroughly planned with outside independent expertise to provide DPI management with an unfiltered view of their operations and to provide psychological advice and expertise,” he said.

Cater’s parting advice is not to look at compliance as the end game.

“Overall, the focus of the program was not just to ensure compliance with legislation but to identify real opportunities to improve the health and safety of DPI employees returning to work after an emergency.”

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**10 Tips to Develop Your Program**

1. Document the communications process, check that recipients receive the message, and test communications channels.
2. Outline planned benefits, costs and outcomes. This will help sell the plan to senior management and provides evidence that you know what you’re doing.
3. Providing support is also an opportunity to gather data.
4. Workshops provide a chance for participants to be debriefed and discuss obstacles and strategic improvements. It can also be a forum to speak with an expert, and develop peer support networks.
5. Use a systematic approach to identify issues, select priorities and implement actions. Major issues have been resolved and key systems improvements implemented.
6. Identify and have in place expertise prior to the emergency.
7. Accurate collection of data provided an evidence-based approach to the management of OHS issues.
8. Consult clients on what they need.
9. Involve people doing the tasks as a reality check as to what was going on at the “coal face.”
10. Monitor that the program is delivering what it was intended to.
A guide to managing mental illness at work

While many OHS professionals may understand the complexities in balancing productivity with basic human care and OHS obligations, AHRC claims many managers simply do not know how to manage mental illness when it confronted with it at the workplace.

"Managers want to provide support to staff members who live with a mental illness, but often lack the confidence or skills to do so," AHRC president Cathy Branson QC said at the launch of its new 69 page guide, Workers with mental illness: a practical guide for managers.

The report, endorsed by Safe Work Australia, provides managers scenarios that illustrate the legal and practical challenges managers may face, and contact details to agencies such as workplace safety regulators, police and health services that are able to assist.

Why workers with mental illness can be catered to in the workplace, the AHRC argues, is that it can be treated; mental illness does not equate to being a danger; people already live with it; and there is not necessarily a loss of intellectual functioning.

The report breaks down mental illness into three broad disorders, including mood (for example depression and bipolar disorder), anxiety, and psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia and some forms of bipolar disorder.

AHRC’s advice covers the legal and privacy implications in the initial process of addressing mental illness, as well as strategies to manage it if and when a worker decides to disclose it.

Its three steps to dealing with mental illness included:
• communication
• reasonable adjustments
• addressing performance concerns
• responding to concerns over the health and safety of a worker with mental illness

Highlighting one of the complexities a manager may face in balancing a worker’s right to privacy with the manager’s OHS responsibilities, it warned:

“In some situations, the fact that the worker has not disclosed their mental illness will limit or even prevent you from providing reasonable adjustments or support. In other situations, it will still be possible to proceed with an adjustment in the workplace to assist the worker regardless of their non-disclosure.”

AHRC’s communication tips include:
• Plan what you will say and it is appropriate to offer the worker the option of bringing a support person to the meeting
• Be aware of privacy obligations since person details will need to be kept strictly confidential unless they have given permission to disclose info to others
• Seek the assistance of professionals such as as GP, social worker, OT, who can help.

Reasonable adjustments that a manager could take included basic steps that may be overlooked as managers seek to fulfill their day to day duties:
• Providing flexible working options, such as part time work, discretionary leave, and offering workers a variety of tasks.
• For workers that experience memory difficulties, it suggests to provide written instructions, colour code key information, provide digital organisers
• For workers experiencing difficulty concentrating, allow regular breaks and flexible start times, provide a means to reduce distracting noise in the workplace such as music, to combat industrial noise, and allowing extra time to complete tasks.

The categories are:
The AON Consulting Award for Employer of the Decade
The Award for Employer of Choice (more than 1000 employees)
The Frontier Software Award for Employer of Choice (less than 1000 employees)
The Award for Employer of Choice (Public sector)
The HR Champion (CEO) Award
The HR Partners Award for Best HR Leader
The Careers MultiList Award for Best HR Team
The Award for Best HR Strategic Plan
The Award for Best Talent Management Strategy
The Award for Innovation in Recruitment and Retention
The Award for Best Employer Branding Strategy
The Award for Best Learning & Development Strategy
The EmployeeConnect Award for Best Overall use of Technology
The Award for Workplace Diversity
The Award for Best Health and Wellbeing Strategy
The Award for HR Young Gun

Venue details:
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Thursday 14 October 2010
Guest MC – Adam Spencer

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