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the spirit of safety
JUNE 2012

SIA management

MANAGER, MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Paul Stanmore

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Making the most of OHS management systems
Careful planning and preparation is required to get the best return on investment from OHS management systems

A primer on protecting hand and feet
How OHS professionals can reduce the number of foot and hand-related incidents in the workplace
A stake in the ground for OHS

The Body of Knowledge enables OHS to define itself as a profession, and must be a living and evolving collection to keep up with the exponential rate of evolution of knowledge in every walk of life.

At last we have an idea of what we are. The Body of Knowledge (BoK) now enables us to define our profession. But, who really cares? Isn’t it really just one of those nice-to-have things, something for the academics to feel warm and fuzzy about? After all, you know what you do in safety. In short, the answer is no.

Outside our profession everyone knows about safety because everyone has experience of safety in one way or another; I met a surgeon who on discovering that I was in OHS responded with “oh, you teach people how to lift properly” and previously when I qualified as a hygienist I recall the comment, “oh, now you can come and check out our toilets”. The BoK at least now gives us a reference point. That is not to say that I would refer the surgeon to the online resource let alone expect them to engage with it, but it does give us a touchstone.

From within, the BoK enables us to lay claim to foundation knowledge. This is neither an exclusive claim nor a bid for turf. Rather it defines the turf that is ours within which to operate and helps us and outsiders to understand the overlaps and our interactions with other disciplines. Perhaps even more importantly it helps us design OHS courses and then accredit those against a standard. That does not mean that safety courses should be standardised; it would be very unhealthy to constrain the academic freedom to design and deliver courses in a particular way and to remove the ability of students to select a course on the basis of the flavour at a particular institution. It does however mean that courses can be accredited with respect to the coverage of the discipline based on the BoK. For those waiting for a new challenge assessment process it means we can move forward with examination design, using a robust framework that reflects realistic expectations of a professional.

For those of you who have not been directly involved but read the repeated updates in the pages of this magazine, I am sure that it will seem to have been a long time coming and some will be wondering what all the fuss has been about. The significance should not however be underestimated and the hard work of all those involved and the financial support of WorkSafe Victoria must be applauded.

The germ of the Body of Knowledge originated like most good ideas among a group of people faced by a challenge. In this case, the challenge was how to gather a group of stakeholders to be members of the Health and Safety Professionals Alliance (HaSPA) which initially was formed on the basis of a need for WorkSafe Victoria to interact with representatives of the profession. At the outset HaSPA was an ill-defined group of OHS professionals, allied professionals, educators and others. Deciding who needed to be represented at the group was inevitably difficult given the multi-disciplinary nature of our subject and at each meeting more and more turned up to the extent that I recall one representative, who was perched on a seat in the corner of the crowded room, asking “why am I here?”. It reminded me of an exercise I used to run with my generalist OHS students when I was introducing occupational hygiene; I would draw a circle on the white board with OHS in the centre and draw another interlinking circle with hygiene in the centre of that and we would discuss the overlap. I would then ask the group to suggest what other circles might be added and from this emerged an image something like a very fluffy, and somewhat messy rosette. The parallels at HaSPA led to the realisation that we could not really progress until we had an agreed definition of generalist safety.

After lots of discussions and arguments, drawings of complex 3-D models and simple flow charts and models of flowers with a generalist pistil and allied petals, a path forward emerged. Internationally, other professions and academics specialising in such matters were consulted and interested parties gave their time and ideas through workshops and writings. From this a process finally emerged for the writing of a collection of documents that would be the first ever OHS Body of Knowledge. What has emerged is by no means perfect but it is infinitely better than what we had before, which was nothing.

But that, as they say, is just the beginning of the story. The BoK is not a text book. It is collection of writings that put a stake in the ground in 2012 with regard to what generalist safety is about at this point in time. Therefore it must be a living and evolving collection. In every walk of life knowledge is evolving at an exponential rate and our challenge will be to keep the BoK current and relevant. That challenge now extends to all of us within the profession and while we should all be very proud of our SIA and grateful for the hard work of the contributors led by Pam Pryor, the work is just beginning!

Dr Steve Cowley, FSIA,
SIA National Publications, Editor

“IT IS COLLECTION OF WRITINGS THAT PUT A STAKE IN THE GROUND IN 2012 WITH REGARD TO WHAT GENERALIST SAFETY IS ABOUT AT THIS POINT IN TIME”
Valuing our volunteers!

In the March issue of the magazine, I wrote about how we all need a driving force to get us through the myriad of tasks every day, and of the importance of nurturing that force through refreshing our inspiration – to keep us focused on improving health and safety for everyone. Continuing with this theme, I’d like to focus on another source of inspiration – our SIA volunteers.

For me, the valuable contribution of SIA volunteers was brought sharply into focus at the first SIA Safety in Action National Convention that was held in Melbourne recently. Personally, I’m no stranger to the amount of work involved with organising a conference or large event, after having directed the fifth ‘WorkCongress’ – an international event on work injury prevention, rehabilitation and compensation – in Adelaide in 2001. While the staff involved in the congress undertook their roles within the parameters of their day-to-day jobs (and a significant amount of ‘out of hours’ work), the key difference with the SIA’s National Convention in Melbourne was that it was arranged and coordinated entirely by volunteer SIA members. Yes, they had the support of the SIA national office, but the bulk of the work in organising and delivering our National Convention was the result of the hard work of volunteers who contributed their time in addition to their normal job workloads – what an outstanding and inspirational effort!

Then, of course there is the Body of Knowledge itself, which was launched during the Convention dinner. I am well aware that the Body of Knowledge would not exist if not for the contribution of so many people such as authors, reviewers, the Project Steering Committee, Board members, in addition to the substantial funding provided by WorkSafe Victoria. I believe the Body of Knowledge is a significant milestone in improving the professionalism of those involved in health and safety, and all those involved should feel proud of their involvement. Of course, the challenge does not end here. The Body of Knowledge is intended as an organic document – and not only needs to make an impact on the accreditation of OHS courses and the certification of OHS practitioners and professionals – but one that has to be kept up to date and relevant.

I work in a very busy national office, where we are all employees of SIA. Yet every day, I interact with the ‘army’ of SIA volunteers – Board Members, Branch Chairs and Committee Members, volunteers who run SIA branches, colleges, panels and member activities – the list goes on. Your commitment is the lifeblood of the SIA and a constant source of inspiration to me in my work. Your ongoing contribution is critical to the status and presence of the SIA in its achievement of its vision and goals. I hope, in return, that your involvement gives you both the satisfaction of making a contribution, but also contributes in a very real way to your own professional development.

Keith Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Safety Institute of Australia

“...The key difference with the SIA’s National Convention in Melbourne was that it was arranged and coordinated entirely by volunteer SIA members...”

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Harmonisation: nothing to lose?

If the current harmonised OHS model is not the right one, let’s not compromise the opportunity in front of us. Instead of looking at why we can’t do it, let’s focus on what we can do and find the model that will be acceptable to all jurisdictions.

As we approach the end of our first year as SIA Ltd we have much to reflect on in the way of progress, challenges and the environment in which we operate.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our CEO Keith Brown and the staff of the national office, who have undertaken a range of initiatives to benefit us as members. You will find updates on those many significant SIA activities elsewhere in this magazine. As always, I would also like to thank the many members who give freely of their time and expertise to support our activities.

My key focus in this issue is harmonisation of workplace health and safety (WHS) legislation.

The adoption of harmonised WHS legislation in some but not all jurisdictions appears to have all but defeated the original intent of the exercise. The original premise – to improve workplace health and safety nationally, reduce barriers to efficient business operations across jurisdictions and therefore reduce the cost of compliance to employers – seems to have been lost in the mire of parochialism.

While it has been apparent for some time that some jurisdictions would delay implementation, this lack of decisiveness creates ambiguity and a lack of confidence in the ability of decision makers to fully appreciate business perspectives and the true cost of avoiding definitive and unified action on the regulation of workplace health and safety.

In 2010–11 there were 138 notified work-related fatalities (Notified Fatalities Statistical Report, Safe Work Australia, 2012). Preliminary statistical data for 2009–10 (the most recently available compensation data) shows there were 127,620 serious workers’ compensation claims (Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Booklet Australia 2012, Safe Work Australia, 2012).

The total economic cost of work-related injuries and illnesses for the 2008–09 financial year is estimated to be $60.6 billion dollars, representing 4.8 per cent of GDP for the 2008–09 financial year (Safe Work Australia, 2012).

How can we continue to tolerate the imposition of such a toll on the social and economic wellbeing of Australia? While we argue about who has the right to legislate and who has the best system of regulation we will continue to experience an unacceptably high incidence of fatalities, serious injury and work-related illness in our workplaces.

We need only look to the global community for the long-standing models of unambiguous and sustainably better practice in harmonised OHS regulation to which we should aspire.

While our current Constitutional model clearly inhibits the adoption of similar models, consider the proven cost-effectiveness and relevance to business of organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the UK, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the US and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA).

Standardised, consistent, plain language, better-practice standards inform compliance. No second-guessing about what is required to comply with OHS legislation in your county, state or country – contemporary, accessible information, informed by effective partnering, consultation and collaboration with industry and international peers.

The return on investment in the development and implementation of a standardised, collaborative national approach to WHS regulation is a no-brainer to those of us at the coalface. We see the best opportunity we have seen in at least the last 30 years to improve workplace health and safety outcomes – and therefore to reduce the cost and the impact of such outcomes on business and the community in Australia. And it’s slipping away from us.

The Safety Institute of Australia calls on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and jurisdictional regulators to reconsider the current state of play. Instead of looking at why we can’t do it, let’s focus on what we can do.

If the current harmonised model is not the right one, let’s not compromise the opportunity in front of us – find the model that will be acceptable to all jurisdictions. Identify some key issues which will benefit from a harmonised approach and give it a go. Why not start with due diligence obligations on officers and directors? Who could argue that the requirements stipulated under harmonised WHS legislation do not codify obligations that have been implicit for years but until now were subject to guesswork?

Utilise the proven international models. Tap into the strategic and operational expertise and knowledge about WHS that resides in business operations around Australia, rather than confine the process to the tripartite model. Engage with all of the real stakeholders, including professional organisations (such as SIA) which represent those who directly advise businesses and employers in relation to OHS management, strategic planning and operational compliance.

Consider the opportunity to build the foundations for sustainably better workplace health and safety in Australia – where the safety and wellbeing of our children and grandchildren in our workplaces will be supported by collaborative and co-operative better practice models of legislation. Where there is no ambiguity in multi-jurisdictional operations about what is required of a business and where we do not, as a society, accept compromise on workplace health and safety caused by indecision, party politics and parochialism. What do we have to lose?

“The Safety Institute of Australia calls on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and jurisdictional regulators to reconsider the current state of play”

Sue Pilkington, FSIA, FRMIA Chair, Board of Directors, SIA
PERTH SAFETY
2012
CONFERENCE

‘From Downtown to Boomtown’

Hosted by the Safety Institute of Australia - WA Branch in conjunction with the WA Safety Show

A three day conference held at
Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre
7 August to 9 August 2012

Theme
The all encompassing theme for the three days of the Perth Safety Conference 2012 is ‘From Downtown to Boomtown’. Sessions are focused on providing valuable takeaways for small and large business safety practitioners and professionals alike.

Streams
Some of the streams you will be a part of at the conference are:
• Leadership & Culture
• Innovation & Technology
• Managing Safety
• WHS in the future

And many more. With so much on offer and the opportunity to network with your fellow professionals, can you afford to miss out?

Register online at www.sia.org.au/psc2012

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

General Peter Cosgrove
Leading Safety from the Top of the Organisation

Darren Flanagan
The Beaconsfield Gun

Gerard Forlin QC
Global Trends in Legislation & Accident Investigations: Where are we now and what do we still have to learn?
High Court rules on contractor safety duties

The High Court recently confirmed that engaging an expert independent contractor to perform work may be considered a reasonably practicable way for a principal to ensure worker health and safety. In Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd v The Queen HCA [2012] 14, the High Court heard that Baiada Poultry engaged a contractor, DMP Poultech, to round up chickens at a farm for supply to Baiada Poultry, which then engaged a separate contractor, Azzopardi Haulage, to transport them to Baiada’s processing plant. Baiada did not oversee any of this process. The incident at the centre of the case involved the death of an Azzopardi Haulage employee, who was killed when a chicken cage fell on him while he was assisting a DMP Poultech employee to load his truck for transport. Baiada was subsequently prosecuted by WorkSafe Victoria for not ensuring the health and safety of its contractors, and a jury found Baiada guilty. However, following an unsuccessful appeal to the Victorian Court of Appeal, Baiada appealed to the High Court, which unanimously overturned Baiada’s conviction.

Gaps in WHS procedures can be costly

With the new workplace health and safety laws in place in some jurisdictions of Australia, employers are exposing their businesses to hefty fines by dragging their feet on plugging compliance gaps, according to an employment lawyer. While 2011 ended with employers scrambling to understand the requirements of the new workplace harmonisation laws, Amy Towers, work safety managing consultant at employment law firm FCB, said the focus must now turn to getting the right systems and processes in place. “Many employers still haven’t got it quite right,” she said. “While most have an understanding of their new health and safety responsibilities, we’re finding the practises they do have in place don’t sufficiently meet the new compliance requirements – particularly for managing temporary or contracting staff.”

SMEs fall down on OHS: Minister Shorten

Most small- to medium-size businesses do not have either time for or any interest in health and safety, according to Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Bill Shorten. “The candid truth is that there is a lot of empty talk in health and safety, or even important talk that never does much for workplaces,” he said. Speaking at the recent 7th Annual Safe Work Australia Awards, Minister Shorten said SMEs are too busy focusing on issues other than workplace health and safety. “We know that 90 percent of Australian workers are in small to medium workplaces — the majority of which do not have much time nor interest in health and safety.” Minister Shorten also said that the “frustrating truth” is that most workers do not open their mouths to speak about the hazards they are asked to work with on a daily basis.

SIA Events

10th SIA OHS Construction Forum
25 June 2012, RMIT University, City Campus, VIC

Perth Safety Conference 2012
7-9 August 2012, Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, Perth, WA

Visions Conference 2012
29-31 August 2012, Outrigger, Surfers Paradise, QLD

The Singapore WSH Conference 2012
12-13 September 2012, Suntec, Singapore

Occupational Safety in Transport Conference 2012
20-21 September 2012, Crown Plaza, Gold Coast

The Sydney Safety Conference 2012
23-25 October 2012, Sydney Olympic Park, NSW
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OHS Body of Knowledge launched to an appreciative audience

Three years in the making and with the input of 42 specialist authors and 31 peer reviewers, the OHS Body of Knowledge was launched on the 18 April at the SIA National Convention Gala Dinner held in Melbourne as part of the Safety in Action conference.

Pam Pryor, chair of the OHS Body of Knowledge Technical Panel, said at the launch that the development of the OHS Body of Knowledge is the most important event in the development of OHS as a profession, as it provides one of the defining features of a profession which is: special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level.

As Patrick Hudson clearly demonstrated in his 2010 Dr Eric Wigglesworth Memorial Lecture on rethinking safety: “OHS is not rocket science, it’s much harder.” While recognising that everybody has a stake, and therefore a role, in workplace health and safety one of the objectives of the OHS Body of Knowledge is to support and encourage evidence-based practice by OHS professionals.

The Body of Knowledge has been the result of time, commitment and the intellectual energy of many people: the members of the Technical Panel, the consultant facilitator, the editor, and the input of many professionals through workshops and focus groups. But without the foresight, funding and support of WorkSafe Victoria the project would not have occurred.

In reviewing WorkSafe Victoria’s role in influencing the OHS profession, Clarke Martin from WorkSafe Victoria rated the OHS Body of Knowledge as the biggest and most ambitious achievement by far. “To conceive of a project that required 15 universities, OHS professional bodies, a vast and varied group of writers and a funding organisation that is prepared to take high risks is ambitious in itself, but to actually go out and get it done is a very different story.”

Clarke went on to note: “It is unusual in these times of rapid change and movement that reaching the end of a long-term project can be celebrated with so many folk that were there from the start. Tonight we can celebrate that it has been done and WorkSafe Victoria is very proud of the delivery by the project team of the OHS Core Body of Knowledge.”

WorkSafe Victoria has assigned the copyright of the OHS Body of Knowledge to the SIA. In accepting ownership of the OHS Body of Knowledge Sue Pilkington, National Chair of the Safety Institute of Australia, reported that the “SIA considers its participation in the Body of Knowledge project to be one of the most significant activities in its long history of representing the discipline of OHS. We have been proud to have supported all facets of this project and are delighted to have now become the ‘owners’ of the BOK and the custodians of its future development and we are grateful to Worksafe for the confidence they have demonstrated in SIA by offering us that opportunity. The Body of Knowledge and its future are in safe hands with us.”

This responsibility for maintenance and updating will be managed by the SIA through the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board under the auspices of the SIA. Pam Pryor, in her role as Registrar of the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board noted that: “This is just the beginning. The OHS Body of Knowledge, 2012, is not intended to be a definitive statement, fixed in time. Rather it will be subject to continual reinterpretation and evolution as people engage with it, apply it, and extend it by research.”

Pam commented that the OHS Body of Knowledge Technical Panel had been on quite a journey over the last three years, one that has forced them to think about their approach to and understanding of OHS in general and some aspects of OHS in particular. She encourages all OHS professionals to embark on a similar journey, to engage with the Body of Knowledge and in constructive discussion about the content.
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A new benchmark in OHS education

The second outcome of the OHS Body of Knowledge project has been achieved by the establishment of the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board in August – an independent body auspiced by the SIA with the role of accrediting OHS professional education programs.

Funded by WorkSafe Victoria, the OHS Body of Knowledge project began in 2009 in response to a recognised need for certification of OHS professionals. The certification was to be based on a specified minimum standard of education, experience and demonstrated competence however at the time there was no agreed minimum standard of education nor was there agreement on the knowledge that should underpin the education.

The OHS Body of Knowledge was launched in April 2012 at the SIA National Convention, Safety in Action (see p10). The second outcome of the OHS Body of Knowledge project has been achieved by the establishment of the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board in August 2011. The Accreditation Board is an independent body auspiced by the Safety Institute of Australia with the role to accredit OHS professional education programs. The Board has broad representation comprising OHS professionals, OHS academics, OHS professional bodies (SIA, HFESA, AIOH, ANZSOM and AFOEM), employer, ACTU, OHS regulators and education.

Since its establishment the Accreditation Board has developed the accreditation criteria and process which took account of the recent changes in higher education including the new Australian Qualification Framework, new standards for providers of higher education and a new quality process implemented through the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency. This process has been overseen by Bruce King, Emeritus Professor in Education from the University of South Australia and a member of Accreditation Board. Professor King said that: “the emphasis on agreed learning outcomes as a measure of quality by the new Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency is the foundation from which we have worked making the OHS profession one of the first to embrace not only the Australian Qualification Framework but the new provider standards in their accreditation processes.”

He went on to say that: “The Board’s role is to set standards and to recognise universities who meet those standards in educating entry-level OHS professionals equipped to operate effectively in the work environment. The Board acknowledges that each institution will bring its own orientation and approach to the task, but ultimately the profession and industry must be assured that all graduates have achieved an agreed set of learning outcomes.”

As one of 15 Australian universities that provide OHS professional education programs, RMIT was the first cab off the rank for the accreditation with Latrobe University currently being assessed and other universities lining up. As Registrar of the Accreditation Board The contribution of RMIT in the development and streamlining of the application process should be acknowledged. It required RMIT to think about their program in a different way to bring their own educational commitments into line with three critical contextual elements: the OHS Body of Knowledge, the specification of Graduate Attributes in the Australian Qualification Framework, and Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency commitment to student achievement of prescribed learning outcomes. As universities progress through the accreditation process employers and recruiters will have confidence that OHS professional education programs adequately prepare graduates to enter the workplace as entry-level OHS professionals.

As part of achieving its vision of OHS professional education being based on strong scientific and technical concepts, evidenced-informed, delivered by suitably competent persons and so recognised by the profession, government, industry and the community the Accreditation Board considers that it also has broader role in supporting and promoting OHS professional education. To this end the Accreditation Board has conducted two workshops where OHS educators and OHS professionals have worked together to develop graduate attributes and learning outcomes that create a bridge between the OHS Body of Knowledge and the education programs. The Board is conducting an OHS education conference to be held in Brisbane on the 5, 6 and 7 of February with the title of the conference being “Incorporating practice into OHS education”.

For information on the Accreditation Board, accreditation, OHS programs and the 2013 OHS education conference go to www.ohseducationaccreditation.org.au.

Pam Pryor, BSc.BEd.GDOHM.FSIA Registrar, Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board
Going it alone in OHS business

The decision to ‘go it alone’ in the work health and safety professional world is a substantial one. Having appropriate plans and skills for establishing and building your work health and safety business is vital, writes Amanda Day.

The decision to ‘go it alone’ in the work health and safety professional world is a substantial one, with opportunities for substantial rewards – both fiscal and in the work/life balance area. But it also comes with risks, and the requirements for business skills, which WHS professionals may not have. While it may be appealing to say goodbye to the boss, work your own hours and not have to operate within the bureaucracy of large organisations, if you don’t have a plan, a strategy, a good product, an identified market and the appropriate business skills/knowledge you may find yourself drifting away from your goals.

In the current economic climate, having appropriate plans and skills for establishing and building your work health and safety business is vital. Helpful tips and tools are out there to assist readers in establishing a work health and safety business.

Before embarking on a business venture, there are lots of things to think about, and it can be a bit overwhelming. Luckily there is a broad range of advice and support available. Business.gov.au is one such resource offered by the Australian Government which can provide valuable information and tools that you can take advantage of. Available services through Business.gov.au include information and advice on starting and growing a business, obtaining funding and training for yourself and (if relevant) your staff.

Business.gov.au suggests that you conduct some research to see whether your idea is really feasible. This process should include gathering, analysing and evaluating information to help you formulate your business goals.

The website identifies some key questions to consider, including: What product/service will you provide? Is your idea feasible? How will you protect your idea? And is there a market for your product/service?

The website provides information guides, templates and resources such as the ‘starting your business checklist’ and ‘business readiness diagnostic tool’ to assist you. Over the next few issues, we will be exploring topics and issues related to establishing a work health and safety business in more detail.

Amanda Day is manager of corporate relations, SIA.
Lending head, heart and hand to safety

From establishing important safety standards through to furthering the cause of the SIA, from implementing process safety reviews through to assisting the next generation of safety professionals, Ern Millard has made a notable contribution to the OHS profession. Steve Cowley reports

Ern Millard is one of those names that members will have seen in a variety of contexts. Anyone who attends the Safety in Action conferences will be familiar with his face on the SIA stand as a regular volunteer doing his bit to promote the SIA and meet and greet existing and potential members alike. While people like Millard become part of the scenery, we often know little about what’s behind the energy and commitment. I was lucky enough to have a peep.

Millard has long been a highly active member. Having joined in 1985 he served on the Vic Division executive during the late 80s and early 90s and for a number of years ran free professional development courses for members. These courses offered members practical foundation knowledge in key areas that members would face as part of their day-to-day work; on topics such as hazard identification and risk assessment, machine guarding, electrical safety and occupational hygiene with particular emphasis on the selection and use of PPE.

During the same period he was the Chairman of the Victorian Congress of Employer Associations OHS Technical Advisory Committee. However, perhaps the area for which he is best known is within the technical committees and involvement in Standards setting, sitting initially on SF2 – Reporting and recording of workplace injury, SF8 – Power press safety, SF39 – Robot safety, but from 1988 onwards Chairing SF 41 – Safety of Machinery.

Millard sees his work here as some of the most important and when I ask about achievements of which he is most proud, one he suggests, "is a no-brainer"; the development of the suite of Safety of Machinery Standards (AS 4024). For this work he received an Outstanding Service Award from Standards Australia in 2006 and a similar award from the SIA in 2007. "It creates a configuration through which all machinery safety standards have been integrated into a cohesive whole not only by number but by structure – a world first," he says.

Millard’s first job in safety was as supervisor of the safety department at Ford’s Geelong manufacturing and product engineering complex. "I commenced work at Ford in Geelong in 1955 as an apprentice toolmaker. I had wanted to start a Diploma of Mechanical Engineering for which I won a scholarship, but had to relinquish it as family circumstances were too tight," he says.

On completion of a five-year apprenticeship Millard was offered a move to trainee draftsman in the engineering department working on the specification and planning for the manufacture of the Falcon body sheetmetal and assembly. "I elected to make the move as I had always been academically inclined, but soon found the work too boring so I moved sideways into engineering planning. This work suited my inclinations far better and I commenced night school study for a Certificate of Mechanical Engineering," he recalls.

Millard worked in the planning area for about 15 years before moving on to a shop floor engineering support role as a supervisor for five years. "I was the engineering department’s rep whenever the safety department was investigating a more serious incident, and so became involved from early days. I joined the SAE (Society of Automotive Engineers) and became their representative on a number of Department of Labour Committees formulating various legislative approaches to workplace safety, particularly machinery safety," he says. "I guess safety chose me when a promotional opportunity arose in the safety department. I was offered the job, which I took."

The safety supervisor role led to head office as Ford Australia manager of safety and environmental planning – a position which he held for five years before retiring and establishing Ern Millard & Associates, offering OHS consultancy to industry. "During those 40 years at Ford I studied my Grad Dip OHM at the University of Ballarat and Grad Dip Occupational Hygiene at Deakin University."

With all this going on in his life I asked about his motivation for joining the SIA. "I have always believed in the importance of professional engagement in whatever field of endeavor one is in ... the decision to join the Safety Institute wasn’t really a decision at all, it was the only thing to do." Millard believes that the SIA presents a wonderful opportunity to network and gather together a peer group that one can use as a resource. "Of course it can’t be all take and no give; like most things in life over the long haul you only get out what you’re prepared to put in."

Today Millard thinks it is on the right path. "There is always a problem with such a broad term as safety. A high percentage of members are practitioners in the field who in one day may handle issues as diverse as machine guarding, manual handling and chemical safety, drawing on a wide array of knowledge and expertise," he says.

"The SIA then is faced with the difficult task of trying to be all things to all people – a hard ask. Nevertheless the practical issue on the ground is that many members have to be all things to all people and they look to the SIA for help. The Internet is creating enormous opportunities for the sharing of resources and the development and support for special interest groups is also an important initiative."

While Millard believes that the SIA has become recognised as an authority in its own right, he comments that we need to become more scientific and technically oriented. "I realise the vehicle is there and the publishing of research papers, etcetera in the Journal is going down that path but as I look at many of the topics, they are in the realm of the ‘touchy-feely’ – important as they may be to some, they are not in my view at the forefront of what I see the SIA standing for."
Millard has never been a great fan of the touchy feely behavioral safety concepts “having seen too often management grasp them opportunistically as a cheap fix”. “However I do concede that after the engineering phase of the hierarchy of control has been implemented there will be a role for this field,” says Millard, “not in my view along the lines of the brainwashing dob in ‘mate type programs’ that abound to date, but a real understanding of how humans think, the real nature of our ‘missing or inappropriate’ response so that where needed we can move towards the ‘safe person’- but only after we’ve implemented the ‘safe place’.”

These views are hardly surprising when Millard tells me: “I don’t think I’ve been more influenced than by two of my lecturers at Ballarat – Derek Viner and the late and great Eric Wigglesworth – not only during my time at Ballarat but also as I subsequently followed and touched base with them from time to time. I was also influenced by some of my engineering peers and managers during my manufacturing days. They taught me the value of questioning and not blindly following ‘It’s always been done that way’ and the absolute necessity of knowing what you’re talking about; get some education and know when you don’t know and be up front,” he says.

The outstanding achievement for Millard was the implementation of process safety review at Ford. “In short, the system interrogated and documented the current model in terms of what issues relating to vehicle design, etcetera, were affecting OHS performance and then subjecting the next model design to the same review to ensure that we weren’t building in the same problems in perpetuity,” he says.

For the first time, a new model launched 10 per cent better than the outgoing model. The process won the top WorkSafe Award in 1995 and has been incorporated in Ford procedures worldwide. Modestly, Millard comments: “Not earth shattering, but it had never been done.”

Now as he and his wife make the most of their time gardening and working around their farm, they also enjoy their travel, family and grandchildren. As he reflects on his career, would he do anything differently? The firm response is: “Nothing apart from getting a better academic base.” And this is his advice to today’s graduates: “Become qualified in the particular discipline that you are going to follow. An engineering degree doesn’t qualify you as a safety engineer, a science degree doesn’t qualify you as an occupational hygienist. These degrees are an essential base only.”

Knowing Millard as prone to understatement I suspect that “I’m going to continue as a retired member so I might be inclined to dip my oar in from time-to-time” means that these are not the last sage words and advice for graduates.
How to promote innovation in OHS law

Harmonised OHS laws should contain common philosophies, an encouragement to innovation and a willingness to share these ideas so that the Australian system changes and grows, writes Dr John Culvenor

The state of play with the harmonisation was summarised by Michael Tooma, Alena Titterton and Melissa Carmell in the past edition of OHS Professional.

In the meantime the Victorian Treasurer announced in a recent budget paper that: “The Government will not sign up to the current proposal for harmonised legislation for occupational health and safety. It offers little benefit for Victoria to offset the $3.4 billion of estimated costs, the majority of which falls on small business. Victoria will continue to work towards best practice legislation.”

The decision in Victoria is a sensible one. Harmonisation was never particularly important with little likely practical impact on health and safety. The Council of Australian Governments (2008) connects it with phrases such as “seamless national economy” which might sound appealing but it never held much promise of revolutionising practical exposure to risk. The key issue at the moment is not how much of it has been done but the possibility that the presence of the intergovernmental agreement and accompanying documentation could be a handbrake on innovation.

Why harmonisation was never a revolution

The first is about the laws in occupational health and safety. There are two main sources of law: one the statute law which was already harmonised even before the so-called process of harmonisation began; and the second is the common law which was more than harmonised, it was the same. So in this discussion I use the word harmony (and therefore harmonisation) as meaning the arrangement of things that are the same but not clashing either; thus working together.

The statute law was already harmonised before the process began. So you wouldn’t think that harmonising something that was already harmonised would cause so many arguments or worries over whether it was finished or not. We already in-effect had a “model act” which by and large every place in Australia had implemented. The model act has been the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (UK). The UK act was based on the reforms recommended by the review known as the Robens report (Committee on Safety and Health at Work 1972). These reforms introduced in the UK a codification of common law into statute and collaborative problem solving. All of the Australian jurisdictions subsequently followed much the same style. Thus we have had a model for years and therefore laws throughout Australia that have been the same in style and similar in substance and I would say generally in harmony.

Even more remarkable than the desire to harmonise a set of statutory arrangements that largely were already harmonised has been the overlooking of the common law. The common law applies across jurisdictions and provided a consistent law in occupational health and safety. The common law was already an Australia-wide system. Access to remedies under common law varies but the duties themselves are the same. Thus the duty of care from one party to another potentially affected person is consistent throughout Australia. If you are looking for consistent law then look no further than the common law.

The second point is about the relevance of any inconsistency. Most people work in small businesses. Some small business, especially those near borders may have some interest in two jurisdictions but most do not. Many larger businesses have interests in more than one place but some do not. The end result is that most people work in places that have no interest in multistate affairs. Your local hairdresser in Glenelg in South Australia has no concern about the tiny differences in legislative matters covering a hairdresser in Bendigo in Victoria any more than they would be worried by a difference in rules governing a hairdresser in Auckland or Los Angeles. The differences throughout Australia in statute law are at the edges rather than the core and these minor differences are of no relevance to most people.

The third point is that law is of only some importance in driving change. Law is only one motivation for actions on health and safety. Law is not all-important. It is possibly not even very important. Actions are motivated by many other things. Law establishes a minimum set of actions, a reasonable set of actions, not a high quality set of actions. Think about a health and safety improvement that you have seen or helped create at a workplace. Was it that bad that it was illegal at the outset? If it was not then the law provided no motivation for the change. By observation of practical problem solving activities at workplaces it seems as though the great majority of health and safety improvements do not occur in order to cross the illegal-legal threshold. They are done for the purposes of
further improvement for other reasons. This work in health and safety is in the “optimisation” space. Once beyond the legal minimum what motivation does the law create? None. Therefore, thankfully, people who can influence health and safety are motivated by other things; otherwise everything would be at the legal minimum. So if the law is not particularly important in driving many, and I would say most, health and safety improvements, it follows that small differences in it are not particularly important.

**A more targeted response**

The harmonisation approach was a case of using a broad spectrum solution to a narrow problem. The approach taken was to address the whole system to deal with a small number of organisations with concerns. Some large organisations may have found differences on the fringe of regulation to be of some burden. Hence it sounded sensible to iron out those differences. However it meant changing the laws for everyone for the benefit of an arguably a fairly small group.

A lateral and simpler approach would be to not change the laws for everyone to suit a few but rather allow the few for whom it mattered to choose one set of laws and follow those. An agreement could have been made between jurisdictions that organisations in multiple places could nominate one or the other set of laws by a declaration. Most organisations have no interest as it does not affect them. And it is doubtful whether those that do cross borders would have ever made the nomination. The thinking behind this is that once they tried to compare the laws side by side they would not be able to see any real difference or advantage or would see minor points one way and some the other and would not have bothered choosing.

Nevertheless the option to choose would have addressed complaints about differences being burdensome. This would be an example of a targeted solution rather than a blitz; a bit like pulling a weed out of your garden rather than attacking the whole thing with a bulldozer.

**The downside to harmonisation**

For the above reasons, the harmonisation process was never going to radically change on a vast scale exposure of risk at work. It probably had the prospect of some improvements here and there, but with that also came the prospect of some diminution in other places. At best then the intergovernmental agreement is of little practical relevance but what could be a problem is that it could be harmful. Whatever value you ascribe to legislation, whether it is a lot, some, or a little, if it is to be of more benefit, it needs to innovate. That is self-evident. If it is to be better it must change.

The intergovernmental agreement could be harmful by making innovation in law more difficult. Innovation does not come from making sure every jurisdiction is perfectly ordinary. Innovation springs from being imperfectly great in some places. Innovation does not come from consistency. Innovation comes from inconsistency. The approach of refining the philosophical base for legislation might have been worthwhile but the hundreds of pages of detail necessarily reverted to the lowest-common denominator that could be agreed and if left in place makes change difficult.

In terms of idea evolution, the harmonised approach was bound at the outset to ensure the survival of the most acceptable ideas, not necessarily the best ideas. In Sweden roll over protection on tractors was mandatory on new tractors from 1959 and on tractors in use from 1965. Imagine if the Swedes had to wait until we decided to agree? The same is true of the danger of not allowing experimentation and innovation within Australia.

**What we need to do now**

As Mark Twain said “I didn’t have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.” That seems to be what has happened with harmonisation. It seems as though the simple philosophies were too difficult and so instead we have reams of detail. The harmonisation documents are long and detailed which is ironic for a set of arrangements that are supposed to be principle-based. The danger of this is that it is a large anchor discouraging forward innovative movement. The agreed harmonisation approach, if it was needed, should have been written on a few pages and that still should be done now.

What we need to do now is to move on from the 2008 agreement with a new 2012 agreement that sets out the agreed philosophies so that the system is enabling of legislative innovation. This would allow progress and for law to complementary but not necessarily the same. It probably should contain common philosophies, an encouragement to innovation, and a willingness to share these ideas so that the Australian system changes and grows. I think we still should do it – even if it is a bit harder.

Dr John Culvenor, independent consultant in ergonomics and occupational safety
Making the most of OHS management systems

Getting the most out of OHS management systems requires planning and preparation. Craig Donaldson looks at some of the latest trends in OHS systems, common challenges associated with them as well as how to get the best return on investment from such systems.

OHS management systems can provide organisations with a number of benefits. From stronger compliance and better reporting through to time savings and greater efficiencies, there are a range of reasons that organisations choose to use OHS management systems.

An industry survey conducted by business software and OHS solutions provider ComOps found that just under a third of organisations have a dedicated, industry-developed OHS and risk management system, while a further 21 per cent rely on a paper-based system, 20 per cent use an excel-based system and a further 20 per cent have an in-house system.

There are a number of important trends in OHS management systems, according to ComOps’ CEO, Daniel Sheahan. Analytics and performance analysis have become a critical component of both OHS management, and the systems that support it, he said.

“Analytics opens the door to new levels of insight and critical understanding about organisation’s OHS and risk performance, empowering the business to make faster, smarter decisions when it comes to the safety of their workforce,” he said.

Frank Rizzeri, general manager of marketing for payroll, HR and OHS management system provider HR3, also said technology lends itself to mobile

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information access (both entry and retrieval) as well as “need it now” reporting. “The bigger picture involves rolling OHS information into the business reporting component and using it to drive change both at a corporate and employee level,” he said.

Paul Douglas, CEO of specialist OHS consultancy and product provider Best Practice Managed Solutions, has also noticed a large increase in enquiries from larger organisations about the benefits of structured management systems, as such organisations often have parts of a system in place, but no formalisation of their system. “This has been driven by new legislation and generally a lack of understanding of what is an OHS management system,” he said.

Glen McIvor, managing director of online injury management system injuryConnect, said there is a trend in all software systems, not just OHS systems, from a client/server model to Software as a Service (SaaS) or cloud-based models.

The second major trend he has noticed is a move towards mobile and tablet devices. “We are often asked if our systems can be used on smartphones or iPads and we now test our systems on iPads to ensure compatibility,” he said.

**Common OHS management system challenges**

There are a range of challenges and pitfalls that OHS professionals and organisations face with OHS management systems. Douglas said one of these is purchasing a system as a knee-jerk reaction to achieve compliance because new legislation has set timeframes for compliance. “Seek the advice of not just OHS professionals but also business advisers,” he said.

“Ensure the system is written for your industry not just adapted from something

**CONTRACTOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

New Work Health and Safety laws have shined the spotlight on contractor safety, according to Marc Steen, divisional manager of contractor, vendor and supplier management services firm Ebix Trades Monitor.

As contractors are often used by multiple clients, to get the most benefit out of using a contractor management system, he said it is best to use a system that already has a lot of contractors in it. There are also different types of systems on the market, and he said some are only developed by software providers who leave the time and risk to clients, while others provide a full service in which monitoring/tracking on behalf of the client is looked after.

Steen also said there are two common dangers/pitfalls in selecting a contractor safety management system. Firstly, it is critical to ensure that safety audits are actually conducted face-to-face (for medium/high risk contractors), and not just conducted online, he said. Secondly, it is important to select a provider that has a strong financial backing (preferably a public company), in case something goes wrong. “This is not the sort of area that you want to be dealing with small software providers given the high risk nature of contractor safety management,” he said.
In thinking about OHS management systems, Sheahan said organisations need to think about the four pillars that drive best practice: zero harm to workers; protection from litigation; compliance with legislation; and cost reductions.

“Each pillar is quite different in its needs and approaches, and hence software must be configured to be able to support the organisation’s approach to the processes that underpin these pillars. Many organisations implement either incident management systems, or risk management systems, and then find themselves exposed or failing their KPIs later in the OHS lifecycle,” he said.

Buying a system that does everything you want can sometimes be too much of a stretch, according to Rizzeri, who said it can also be very expensive and ultimately it can be too complicated to work properly in the real world.

“Often, it is better to be realistic about what you need and how much maintenance and administration you can allocate to the project in order for it fit your budget and business requirements,” he said.

After purchasing a system, the most common challenge/pitfall is incomplete staff training and the system not being implemented thoroughly, while he said another issue is sometimes key users don’t want to embrace new ways of doing things and this can undermine the implementation process.

McIvor said the biggest challenge with the acquisition of any IT system, not just OHS systems, is gaining a very clear understanding of individual requirements. “If you have a very clear understanding of what you are trying to achieve then it makes it easier to go to market and find the right solution for your organisation,” he said.

The second challenge is the trade-off between getting all of the functionality you want and getting it within your budget. “Almost every single company in Australia manages safety differently to every other one,” according to McIvor, who said this results in OHS staff wanting a very customised solution that complements their current practices and procedures.

**ROI on OHS management systems**

Building the business case for OHS management systems and establishing return on investment (ROI) can only be done on a case-by-case basis, according to Rizzeri. “Each organisation (even in the same industry
sector) has variations in the way they do certain tasks,” he said.

“OHS professionals often know where the problems are in their organisations and look solely at how to fix them. The bigger picture involves looking beyond the immediate fires that need to be controlled and looking at what needs to be done once the fires are out. The ROI comes from using the system to improve processes, integrate with other core systems and provide corporate reporting to senior management.”

In trying to understand a possible ROI on OHS management systems, Sheahan said organisations are often well aware that they have issues, but they are unsure just how much these issues are costing their organisation and don’t know how to address them. “Calculating the financial impacts builds a strong business case and helps gain the support needed to run a successful safety program,” he said.

“The message to every OHS professional is that OHS management systems are fully self-funding, with 100 per cent ROI typically achieved in year.”

TRAINING WORKERS UP IN OHS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Most companies have a process in place to induct and train their workers to comply with the requirements of their OHS management system, however, Susan Zheng, campaign executive, training & improvement solutions (Asia-Pacific), SAI Global, said many fail to evaluate the effectiveness of the induction or training provided.

In gaining maximum traction with an OHS management system, she said there were a number of steps that both OHS and L&D professionals should take:

- Nominate or engage an OHS professional who has the knowledge and experience with training skills, or using a training organisation, who can then demonstrate the required skills as an OHS professional to help develop a training program and train.
- OHS training needs to: (1) Target the audience (senior managers and workers alike); (2) assess competency; and (3) identify any weaknesses in OHS within an organisation and help to modify the training program to enable continuous improvement.
- Recognise the benefits of consulting with L&D professionals to optimise the safety content of courses and maximise learning retention and putting the theory into practice
- Be prepared to develop their training ability (links to influencing ability across all aspects of safety in their everyday activities at work as well as at home)
- L&D professionals should be prepared to get involved in task observation and make sure that learning outcomes match the requirements of the workforce routine/non-routine activities

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A primer on protecting hands and feet

T
here have been many changes in the personal hand and foot protection equipment market in recent years. As far as hand protection goes, there was really only one type of work glove about 20 years ago: leather riggers, according to Tim Bird, managing director of personal protective equipment supplier Paramount Safety.

“We’ve seen a lot of changes in hand protection, but it seems to have escalated significantly within the last five to ten years,” he said. “Today, gloves are designed with a task or working environment in mind which determines the level of protection required, standards accreditation, materials used, and even the colour.”

As far as specific features are concerned, Bird has noticed a strong demand in the marketplace for back of hand protection with a motocross aesthetic. Other strong trends include incorporating premium materials such as Neoprene, cut resistant textiles, high visibility colours, and a general trend towards gloves made from durable synthetic materials. “Having said that, there will always be a loyal market for leather rigger gloves and that will never change,” he said.

Jérémie Daunay, owner at Tiger Grip Australia, which provides a range of personal foot protection equipment, also said that manufacturers are now exploring new technologies and innovative materials. “The footwear industry for example has been using alloys, new rubbers, composite materials,” he said.

“High technologies are everywhere and the safety footwear industry is embracing them. We want our users to be safe and feel good in their shoes at the same time. I would say that is a new and general trend.”

For example, Tiger Grip Australia recently launched safety cap overshoes with a non-slip sole. Daunay said the overshoes are designed to be as light as possible with the most resistant safety cap available, and incorporate an alloy of aluminium and titanium which is 50 per cent lighter then steel. “The day will come when safety footwear will be just as comfortable and light as a pair of the last sneakers on the market,” he said.

Common hand and foot protection pitfalls

According to the Australian Safety and Compensation Council’s 2008 report, Work-related hand and wrist injuries in Australia, the most common hand and wrist injuries are due to using a sharp edged tool, operating unguarded powered plant or machinery, using unguarded power tools or appliances, and preparing food with a knife or appliance.

Survey results from the report indicate that glove use reduces the risk of hand injury by 60 per cent, and Bird said that the remaining 40 per cent risk can be reduced within a controlled and safe guarded environment by choosing appropriate PPE, such as a ProChoice Safety Gear glove, that is fit for purpose.

Many consumers are unaware of glove standards that are rated depending on their application (for example, EN12477 – gloves for welders, EN511 – protection from cold, EN374 – chemical risks and EN407 – thermal risks heat & fire) and therefore make purchase decisions in store based on “hanger appeal” or price rather than the application itself, Bird added.

As far as foot protection goes, Daunay said the main causes of incidents in the workplace are hazards such as liquid spills, fallen objects or trips. “These are by far the worst enemies of safety at work in my field. Just as car accidents happen mainly near home or on journeys we are used to, the principle is the same at work. Routine is safety’s first enemy,” he said.

Avoiding the pitfalls

In reducing hand and foot-related incidents, Daunay suggested that safety guidelines are usually a good place to start. “Training staff regularly on
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OHS matters is also very important," he said. "I would recommend employers train their employees to be extremely aware that their professional routine might contain safety hazards. This is why I think safety assessments and controls have to be frequent and done by different employees or OHS professionals each time."

As far as hand protection goes, Bird said ProChoice Safety Gear endorses a process for Hand Protection procurement that includes:
• Involve the end user of the glove
• Assess the application
• Identify potential hand protection risks
• Ascertain the standard requirement
• Determine the highest level of protective armour required
• Define the level of dexterity required to carry out the job effectively
• Ask a trusted safety outlet for a recommendation based on these requirements
• Conduct product trials
• Specify in most appropriate glove

The role of OHS professionals
OHS professionals must have a close working relationship with the end users of the hand and foot protection products, and encourage open communication lines, especially during product trials, according to Bird. "OHS professionals can also assist in educating staff on the most appropriate type of hand protection to use, and when," he said. "ProChoice Safety Gear has worked with many distributors and end users in creating glove matrices that show all procured gloves on a worksite and their application. The matrix is put up onsite as a guide to safe hand protection practices and the direction," said Bird, who added that a solid relationship with a trusted PPE supplier also helps a great deal.

“OHS professionals can also assist in educating staff on the most appropriate type of hand protection to use, and when”
Tim Bird, managing director, Paramount Safety
Injury prevention as an ecological problem

Professor Rod McClure discussed the issue of reframing injury prevention as an ecological problem at the third Eric Wigglesworth AM Memorial Lecture

Professor Rod McClure, a highly regarded academic who serves as director of the Monash Injury Research Institute and professor of the Faculty of Medicine Nursing and Heath Sciences, treated the Eric Wigglesworth AM Memorial Lecture audience with an engaging “journey through ideas ... into new territory by reframing injury prevention as an ecological problem”.

As a starting point for his story titled “On living with Tigers: An ecological postscript” Professor McClure reminded the audience that it was in 1970 that Eric Wigglesworth wrote in the Medical Journal of Australia that common sense approaches to injury control were ineffective. In the same year, William Haddon argued that the transfer of energy is the cause of injury, with the prevention of injury achieved through minimising this transfer.

While Professor McClure suggested that the transfer of energy approach was “the single most important idea in the developing science of injury prevention” he said that it had reached a “dead end” and that even Dr Wigglesworth would acknowledge that a rethinking of our approach is required. He argued that reframing injury prevention was a four-step process:

1. Understand energy transfer as part of an ecological model of causation
2. Recognise that the practice of injury prevention is an ecological activity
3. Acknowledge that ecological injury prevention is social change
4. Social change requires a systemic not a systematic approach

Professor McClure used a number of case studies to engage the audience and to reinforce the limitations of current approaches, and to emphasise the importance of the ecological approach. He told the story of a truck driver who suffered a head injury after his truck ran off the road. He posed the question: “what’s the cause of the injury?” Was it the kinetic energy absorbed by the brain at point of impact; was it the absence of countermeasure such as side impact air bags or was it upstream factors to do with the distribution of goods and services? Although energy transfer was involved, the ecology of circumstances better reflected the true cause.

In another case, Professor McClure showed the audience a picture of competitors in a surf life saving competition. The surfboat, riding high on a wave, overbalanced one competitor tethered to the boat by a strap around his leg. Professor McClure systematically discussed how the energy from the waves, in combination with the boat’s motor, was transferred to the boat and then to the leg of the competitor. Professor McClure made the case that it was easy to predict the damage to the competitor’s leg, but was this the cause of the injury? No. This particular case must be understood in its broader ecological context, which then raises questions about the role and organisation of surf lifesaving competitions at a more general, or systemic level.

Having made his case for the four-step approach to injury prevention, he argued that injury prevention should move from local fixes to “upstream” solutions applicable across a large proportion of the targeted conditions and situations. In this way, the ecological approach provides a “unified theory” which will overcome the fragmentation of current approaches. As such, injury prevention becomes a societal problem, moving injury prevention from the current researcher-centric “push” approach to a “pull” approach where researchers, practitioners and public policy makers “pull” evidence and information from a wide variety of societal sources. Therefore, society, not the laboratory, is central to effective injury prevention.

Thus Professor McClure offered a definition of injury prevention as “the optimal governance and functioning of individuals within their social and physical environments and circumstances where human wellbeing is an essential performance requirement expected of all institutions, organisations and citizens”. The benefits of this are that it encompasses all areas of injury prevention including workplace health and safety, road safety and farm safety, to name a few. He went on to say that workplace health and safety was leading the way in this regard compared to other areas of injury prevention, although there is a gap in translating scientific evidence into practice.

Finally, Professor McClure said that it was no longer acceptable for researchers to remain in their “ivory towers”; they must respond to questions posed by society across all safety domains. They must still have the answers, but they must be in response to societal questions generated through integrated policy development.

In closing, Professor McClure urged the audience to read Haddon’s seminal text more closely, to understand energy control in context, and to reframe injury prevention as an ecological problem.

Professor McClure’s paper will be published in the next edition of the Journal of Health & Safety Research & Practice.
Safety leadership from the front

 Held from 16 to 19 April at the Melbourne Convention Centre, the convention brought together a number of nationally recognised OHS experts and other speakers. One of the most inspiring presentations was delivered by elite SA Special Task and Rescue (STAR) Group member Derrick McManus, who was shot 14 times in less than five seconds when he and his team went to arrest a man.

 In crisis situations, he said the most important thing is courageous and decisive leadership. “The most important thing in such situations is to take action. While everyone has the ability to take action, not everyone has the courage to do it,” he said.

 “That leader doesn’t necessarily have to be the formal leader, but just someone who steps up and takes the action that is necessary. I encourage everyone to believe in their own ability to lead and get the job done.”

 Despite all medical predictions, McManus went back to work with the STAR Group, and he said that he learned an important number of lessons as a result of the experience.

 He reflected on the process of how he survived and recovered, and now has a stronger belief in people’s ability to deal with stress and trauma. “We doubt we have the real ability but we do, and my goal is to help people find just how much capacity they have within themselves,” said McManus, who now teaches the ‘five-drivers of success’ – optimism, influence, passion, planning and support – to people in helping them overcome challenges and realise success.

 Also at the convention was Rod Maule, general manager health and safety, ANZ, Fonterra, who led one of the numerous “up close and personal” leadership roundtable sessions. His main message was that OHS professionals need to broaden their functional horizon in order to better identify issues affecting line managers and demonstrate safety leadership within their organisations.

 “The better you understand your stakeholder’s issues, priorities and drivers, the better you can engage/influence them,” he said.

 To help gain a broader business understanding, Maule suggested OHS professionals take on projects outside their functional area and get involved in other business issues, and lobby for/take on a seat in business meetings, rather than just attending for the safety update.

 “I know safety colleagues who have put themselves onto business-related training courses, from diploma courses through to MBAs to gain insights, knowledge and skills in non-safety areas. You...
can also expand your networks inside and outside the organisation to understand what is going on in the non-safety space and affecting your stakeholders,” he said.

Maule also said a broader business understanding will help OHS professionals in providing high quality risk-based advice with well reasoned recommendations to operational leaders.

“This can then allow them to make informed decisions to improve safety in their business. The other end of the spectrum is where poor safety leadership by safety professionals is regurgitating regulations and telling operational leaders what their problems are, with few or no solutions, or poorly reasoned solutions,” he said.

Also speaking at the conference was John Tooley, professor at RMIT University’s Graduate School of Business and Law. His main message was that many OHS professionals make three key mistakes when it comes to applying effective leadership principles to deliver strategic OHS outcomes.

The first mistake is that they assume that everyone shares their passion and interest in OHS. “Normally managers don’t and sometimes they see OHS as an inconvenient necessity – a ‘must do’ with no inherent benefits,” he said.

Another common mistake OHS professionals make is that they assume people understand how an effective OHS strategy can contribute to and enhance corporate outcomes. “In reality, the OHS manager needs to build credibility and relationships in the corporation and be seen as a core contributor,” said Tooley.

In addition, he noted that OHS professionals also focus on OHS as their core strategy and fail to contextualise this in the “big picture” – the corporate strategy of the organisation. “The OHS operative must have a strong, sophisticated understanding of the corporate goals – what the organisation is about, its mission, and so on,” he said.

“They need to understand what the core strategy is and how they can contribute to this core strategy. This requires understanding that OHS is part of the process and not the whole process.”

Tooley, a former Commissioner of Comcare Australia and director of Worksafe Australia’s Industry Development Branch, noted that OHS professionals are normally highly motivated and often altruistic people. “They are often passionate and enthusiastic about their field ... even evangelistic at times. Use these attributes. Work with your staff on their communication skills, but ensure that they have the necessary technical/clinical skills and knowledge to deliver,” he said.
From downtown to boomtown

‘From Downtown to Boomtown’ is the theme of the upcoming Perth Safety Conference 2012

To be held from 7–9 August 2012 at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, the conference will feature a range of streams on leadership and culture, innovation and technology as well as managing safety while keynote speakers include General Peter Cosgrove, Darren Flanagan (‘The Beaconsfield Gun’) and Gerard Forlin QC.

Speaking ahead of the event, Flanagan said he firmly believes that Australian mines are industry leaders in terms of both mining methods and ground control. “An incident like Beaconsfield reminds us of the dangers and forces us to refocus on the little things that help to prevent serious incidents that can claim lives,” he said.

Flanagan acknowledged that Australia’s natural resources sector has expanded rapidly over the past decade, but many of the most experienced miners have retired, leaving a large void in the industry. “There was a time when the supervisors at our mines all had grey hair and arms on them like Popeye; now the majority are young men in their twenties without the vast knowledge and decades of experience to properly manage these very important positions,” he said.

“In my opinion people are moving too quickly with promotions due to a shortage of suitable staff to fill these positions. I would like to see the industry trying to bring back these experienced supervisors to work with the training departments in a more centralised induction and training facility before these new recruits head out to our isolated mine sites.”

He also said communication was vital for OHS professionals to ensure effective operational safety ‘at the coalface’ and in working with management in the resources sector.

“The safety and training professionals at our mine sites really need to be on their toes at the moment and make sure that they are effectively communicating to senior management what they think the mine should be doing in terms of improving both training and supervision before a problem evolves,” he said.

“Our mine managers are busier than ever at the moment so they need strong support and clear communication from all of their departments to ensure that they get through this extremely busy time without a major incident.”

Also speaking at the event will be Gerard Forlin QC on global trends in legislation and accident investigations. Where notable workplace incidents do occur, Forlin observed that regulators are increasingly looking at what organisations are doing in other countries and why they’re doing it in a different way. “If there is a difference that can’t be explained, then that is something that they may take into consideration,” he said.

Forlin also noted that with major workplace incidents, lawyers in particular are looking at the companies and industries involved as a whole and what kind of problems they have had with regulators in the past – “wherever that may be in the world”, he said.

He gave the example of a recent case in the UK, where a company was facing charges over a double death. “The court took into account the conduct of a sister company in California where there was also a double death, and when it came to sentencing the company in the UK this was taken into account with the sentence as an aggravating factor,” said Forlin.

The general awareness of OHS professionals about jurisdictional issues across countries varies greatly, he added. “It depends on the industry – some are much more aware of these issues than others. So it’s a mixed bag, it depends on the issue, the company and the country,” he said.

“Regulators are increasingly cooperating across borders and jurisdictions now, so corporates need to realise this and know what the other hand is doing. Often headquarters for multinationals might be in Europe or the US, so what a regular in one jurisdiction says about them can have a massive effect on them in another.”

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