Mental health
The elephant in the OHS room

The role of OHS in safety governance

Safety leadership at Wannon Water and Siemens

Changing the safety regulator game
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Mental health: the elephant in the OHS room
There has recently been a groundswell of both interest in and appreciation of the importance of mental health in the workplace.

Features

Safety regulation: changing the game
Regulators are increasingly shifting their focus from hazard spotting and enforcement to more of a collaborative approach.

Taking OHS to the next level in New Zealand:
Gordon MacDonald, chief executive, WorkSafe New Zealand, on professional achievements, challenges and goals.

Machine safety:
Organisations and their OHS professionals should take a proactive approach to machinery safety and ensure they are across all hazards.

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The importance of leaders in good OHS

Leadership is a strong theme throughout this issue of OHS Professional, with a number of features that explore how good OHS outcomes can be achieved with the right support from the top.

There has recently been a groundswell of both interest in and appreciation of the importance of mental health in the workplace. A recent safesearch survey, for example, found that 85 per cent of HSE professionals believe mental health and wellbeing is the number one challenge facing their organisations.

With this in mind, our cover story (starting page 16) for this issue looks at the complex issue that is mental health in the workplace, some of the common challenges for organisations as well as practical and effective solutions. There is no easy answer to improving mental health in the workplace, however, a multifaceted, open-minded approach and supportive leadership play an important role in improving mental health outcomes.

Also in this issue we look at how the role of regulators is changing by shifting their focus from hazard spotting and enforcement to more of a collaborative approach with businesses and workers in order to improve safety outcomes and business productivity. Regulators such as SafeWork SA and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland have taken proactive steps towards a more collaborative approach, and they explain this in more detail in our news report on page 10.

The leadership feature in this issue explores how Wannon Water, Victoria’s second-largest regional urban water corporation, and diversified telecommunications multinational Siemens, have taken a holistic and leadership-driven approach to safety, with a number of positive outcomes as a result. As Wannon Water’s people & culture manager, Simon Fleming, notes, the most important key to the success of the program was engaging the board of directors and executive team right from the start. To read the full article, see page 26.

Leadership is a strong theme throughout this issue of OHS Professional, and this is also a key focus in our governance feature on page 8. Written by safety governance expert and OHS Professional editorial board member, Kirstin Ferguson, this feature explores the role of boards in safety leadership. Organisations that value the role of the board in contributing to safety culture tend to take a different approach and understand that high performance safety cultures are directly linked to business excellence overall, according to Ferguson. It is not a matter of safety or production; rather, boards and and senior executive teams should look to integrate both, she says.

“Organisations that value the role of the board in contributing to safety culture tend to take a different approach and understand that high performance safety cultures are directly linked to business excellence overall”

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Company director, ASX listed, private company & government boards

Michael Tooma
Head of occupational health, safety & security – Asia Pacific, Norton Rose Fulbright

Paul Breslin
HS&E Manager, construction + development, Brookfield Multiplex Australasia
**Where business gets safety resourcing wrong**

Many decisions are made at board and executive level with the genuine belief that they are financial or operational in nature and therefore have no safety impact – but “nothing can be further from the truth,” according to Michael Tooma, head of occupational health, safety and security for Norton Rose Fulbright.

“Many global disasters have resource decisions of this kind as their root cause. The challenge is to capture those decisions and analyse them for their safety impact,” he said. It is only then that the right decisions can be made or controls are put in place to address any safety impact, added Tooma. “Too often OHS professionals speak in technical jargon or emotive terms. That makes their message difficult to translate in business terms,” he said. “It is important to quantify the return on the safety investment sought. Potential benefits include savings to the business in workers compensation or absenteeism, and business development opportunities through improving the safety reputation. “If it makes you money, it will be easier to sell internally.” he said.

**CFMEU changes position on drug and alcohol testing**

The CFMEU recently did an about face on its opposition to drug and alcohol testing in the workplace, after its construction division announced a proposal for an impairment policy in the industry.

The policy revolves around the causes of impairment in the industry, which include fatigue, physical and mental health, job insecurity, injury and illness and drug and alcohol use, said CFMEU national construction secretary Dave Noonan.

“The union is recommending mandatory blanket testing including testing employers and is calling on the MBA to support the union’s proposal.”

Noonan said the union was changing its policy due to members’ concerns of the safety risks involved in working with someone who is impaired as a result of addiction or substance abuse. Our proposal is not punitive – it’s about safety and providing support for people to turn their lives around. The CFMEU is recommending impairment assessors that come from the safety committee made up in equal numbers of employer and employee representatives.

**SWA calls out leaders on safety**

Leaders can have a significant impact on improving work health and safety as well as improving the bottom line, according to Safe Work Australia (SWA) Chair, Ann Sherry, who said business leaders routinely manage a range of risks and can prevent injury and illness by actively managing safety risks.

“We need to reduce workers’ exposure to hazards and risks. By using good design principles we can minimise exposure by designing out the risk from the beginning – this is integral to prevention,” she said.

Sherry added, that under the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022 governments, unions, industry and business leaders all have an important role to play.

Michelle Baxter, CEO of SWA, also said that while the number of work-related traumatic fatalities has more than halved over the past 30 years and the number of serious claims has also decreased dramatically, there is more that should be done to reduce the significant personal, social and economic costs of work-related injury, disease and death.

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### Corporate Members

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- Australian Exhibition & Conferences (AEC)
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- Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB)
- Cancer Council Australia
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
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Would you like to become a Corporate Partner or Corporate Member of the SIA? Please contact SIA on 03 8336 1995 to discuss the many options available.
The bottom line

The Safety Institute of Australia’s board is committed to becoming more active in helping the profession and key stakeholders develop strategies and plans to enable workplaces to become fatality, injury and illness free, writes Patrick Murphy.

Sadly, as at 29 April, 51 Australian workers have been killed at work this year. And many more have been left with permanent disabling injuries or injuries that impact on family and cause inconvenience.

I know you agree with me that this is unacceptable and intolerable.

Recently, I had the opportunity to be a keynote speaker at the Far North Queensland Safety Conference, and I took the opportunity to put this issue as a question to all of us in the profession: Why does this still occur in a country like Australia?

Over the decades we have made substantial inroads towards being fatality and injury free, but the continued existence of fatalities and serious injuries in this country means we must seriously challenge ourselves about what we as a profession can do differently. We must be more effective individually and as a collective network; we must be more collaborative; we need to become more focused on learning from the past; and we need to be more aligned with the broader business and organisational context. We need to be more focused on understanding whether the controls we have in place to mitigate risk are implemented, effective and reliable, and perhaps be less focused on reassessing risks that have been over-assessed.

“The stronger we are as a body of OHS professionals and practitioners, the more able we are to work together to shape new approaches, solutions and insights.”

The Safety Institute of Australia exists – at least in part – to take up the responsibility of seeking to address this challenge. As our chief executive David Clarke has said in recent articles, the challenge is simple, and the solutions are multifaceted with a number of important elements. Ensuring the people who work in the field of OHS are credible and capable, and ensuring that we, as an Institute, are facilitating discussions and forums to address our shared and common problems are critical, and that is why being part of a professional body like the SIA is so important. The stronger we are as a body of OHS professionals and practitioners, the more able we are to work together to shape new approaches, solutions and insights.

Your Institute’s Board of Directors and I are committed to ensuring that we become more active in helping the profession and practice and other key stakeholders – including regulators and employers across the country – to develop contemporary, integrated strategies and plans to enable workplaces to become fatality, injury and illness free.

Patrick Murphy, chairman, board of directors, SIA.
Certification: adding one of the pieces of the puzzle

The SIA’s Certification program has a new range of requirements which meets international standards, writes Dave Clarke

Chairman Patrick Murphy has just reminded all of us who are working to create safer and healthier workplaces, what the challenge really is.

First and foremost, you can’t make a difference unless you know what the problems are, have a strategy to address them, and have harnessed the human, technical and financial resources to get on with the job – and that’s what we’ve been up to at the SIA.

Just one element of the challenge involves building stronger credibility for the profession, and just one part of that is better profiling the profession, including giving industry greater confidence in the capability of the profession. To this end, I thought I would discuss the progress of one of our new programs – Certification.

A transitional process

We have not introduced Certification in a vacuum. In the past, we have run a grading system, providing levels of membership and post-nominals on the basis of an assessment process. This system has been important and a valued precursor to the new program.

From January 2015 onwards, the new Certification program applies, and it has been set with a new range of requirements which meet international standards. The implementation of Certification has two parts: (1) from January to July 2015, conducting the transition of existing members to the new system; and (2) in June 2015, commencing new assessments for new applicants.

A more flexible program than in the past

An important element of Certification is that unlike the past grading system, people without university qualifications but who have a Diploma in WHS can still achieve certified practitioner status in OHS. This category has been introduced to acknowledge a very significant group of people with these qualifications who are doing great work in their field.

Added to this is the creation of flexibility for those with extended careers in OHS. For the administrative transition process (members active at January 2015), we are developing an Alternative Knowledge Assessment (AKA) to give this group the opportunity to display the requisite knowledge gained through their significant work experience to gain Certification.

Overtly focused on education rather than experience?

Another concern raised by some members has been that we have introduced a program which values education over experience. In response, I say that this is just like all similar programs worldwide across many industries – of course minimum educational requirements are required. But this is not enough in itself, and is combined with minimum work experience requirements. The greatest challenge has been the acknowledgment that for people entering the profession today, the OHS education landscape has significantly changed to that which existed 10 or 20 years ago for those who have since had strong careers in the profession. Hence, the flexibility in the program and application of the AKA.

Are we saying that people who cannot get certified are not capable?

Not at all. Certification can never be a guarantee that all people certified are always the best people, nor does it suggest that people who do not qualify are not capable. Many people who work in the profession today gained their education in a different world to that which exists today, where the educational requirements for the profession were not the same. However, our goal at the SIA is to promote to younger people in the profession that they see higher levels of education than may have been the case in the past, and Certification is a part of that.

To try to strike the right balance between those entering the profession and those already in it for some years – again – we have introduced the AKA.

The program is not widely applied yet – so why get certified?

It’s a new program. Our task at the SIA is to promote the profession, and one of the ways to do that will be to promote certified practitioners and professionals.

Before launching the program later this year, through the administrative transition process we are establishing a body of certified people to “present” to industry. Ultimately, the more people who are certified, the more profile the program gets.

You don’t have to get certified to work in the field, and many SIA members will not be certified. But we believe that, over time, it will be beneficial for people. For younger people who do not yet have the requisite education or experience, it can be something to work towards.

I am a member of the SIA – can I still go through the simplified administrative transition process?

Yes – but not for long! I have just extended the application timeframe for SIA members to go through the simplified assessment process to 31 July this year but will not extend it beyond that. Go to our website and follow the links to apply.

We know it’s only part of the puzzle

Occasionally I get feedback that SIA is giving too much focus to Certification. We have certainly been talking about it for the past five years, and now we are taking action and implementing the program. The underlying premise of this concern – that Certification is only one aspect of what we do, and that it is only for some members – is quite correct. We are doing much more than just this program, and doing more to deliver effective services to the membership and raise the profile of the profession. We will be announcing other initiatives in the year ahead.

In the meantime, if you think Certification may be for you, ask the questions you need answered – including asking me personally – then put your hat into the ring before 31 July and be part of a program which forms an important part of our challenge to raise the profile of the OHS profession.

David Clarke, chief executive officer, SIA
The vital role of OHS professionals in safety governance

Organisations that value the role of the board in contributing to safety culture usually understand that high performance safety cultures are directly linked to overall business excellence, writes Kirstin Ferguson.

In one of a number of damning conclusions to emerge from the Royal Commission on the Pike River Coal Mine Tragedy, the final report made the statement that “the board did not provide effective health and safety leadership and protect the workforce from harm. It was distracted by the financial and production pressures that confronted the company.” Various examples were provided of the board relying completely on the management team regarding safety across the business while the board focused their attention on the considerable financial issues facing the organisation.

The Pike River tragedy is a lesson for all boards and senior executive teams, as it can be very easy to be distracted by an immediate crisis, often financial, which will then tend to dominate board meeting agendas and board papers. In an organisation where safety is seen as purely the responsibility of management, this can lead to a deepening of the lack of exposure and awareness by the board to the personal and process safety risks facing the business.

However, organisations that value the role of the board in contributing to safety culture tend to take a different approach and understand that high performance safety cultures are directly linked to business excellence overall. It is not a matter of safety or production; rather, boards, and senior executive teams look to integrate both.

Each of these two examples reflects an approach to safety governance that has been defined in recent research into safety leadership and governance for board members and senior executives, which I have conducted as part of my PhD thesis.

A five-stage pathway has also been developed to assist in moving organisations towards an integrated approach to safety.

**Safety governance** is the relationship between board members and senior executives in the safety leadership of an organisation and provides:
- the structure through which the vision and commitment to safety is set
- agreement on how safety objectives are to be attained
- the framework for how monitoring performance is to be established
- a means for ensuring compliance with relevant safety legislation.

**Identifying your organisation’s approach to safety governance**

Every organisation will identify themselves at a different point on a safety governance pathway and may find themselves moving backwards and forwards depending on the leaders in place, the emphasis and initiatives to drive safety improvements undertaken, or serious incidents which may have occurred.

It is essential for OHS professionals to identify where their organisation may be at any point in time in order to effectively influence change at the board level and with the senior executive team. To help in this identification process, a five-stage governance pathway has been developed (see graphic below).

OHS professionals might like to consider the following questions as a way of “looking in the mirror” at their own organisation and helping to identify how they can best contribute to safety discussions in the boardroom:

- Does your board generally see safety as a management responsibility? Do they tend to become engaged in safety only after an incident has occurred? Do you get the impression that production is the most important issue in the business?

If so, the approach to safety governance in your organisation may be considered transactional and will require safety professionals to work closely with their CEO to help inform and educate the board on the fiduciary responsibilities with...
respect to safety in the first instance. There is much work to be done, and so beginning with an approach that ensures boards are fulfilling their due diligence obligations is often the first step on the journey.

▼ Is compliance with relevant workplace health and safety legislation the main driver of reporting to the board? Is the board focused primarily on ensuring the minimum legislative standards are met?

If so, this approach may be considered to be compliant and will require safety professionals to help boards and senior executive teams understand that moving “beyond compliance” is essential in developing a mature safety culture. As safety professionals know, mere compliance with legislation, while essential, does not ensure that no harm is caused to employees.

▼ Have you noticed board members asking more detailed safety questions, often drilling down into the causes of incidents? Does your board consider site visits an important part of their safety leadership role?

If so, the approach to safety governance in your organisation is becoming more focused. During this stage, safety professionals have an opportunity to educate their boards in more depth with respect to trends data (which often includes the move to including lead indicators). A safety vision and/or safety targets may also be introduced, and the board may include safety responsibilities in their charter.

Kirstin Ferguson says that in organisations where safety is seen as the responsibility of management, this can lead to a lack of awareness by boards around safety risks.

▼ Have you noticed that most of your board members “get” safety? That is, they get that a strong safety culture is much more than simply compliance but requires safety leadership both inside and outside the boardroom.

If so, your organisation and your board are becoming proactive about safety. The board is becoming much more comfortable in their role as safety leaders and will seek even greater levels of performance from the senior executive teams and safety professionals. This is an opportunity for safety professionals to rise to the challenge and provide detailed safety reporting that meets the board's needs and moves beyond mere statistical analysis. At the same time, the personal commitments to safety of the board and senior executive team will be important to communicate.

▼ Does your board seek to understand the safety impacts of every decision being made across the organisation? Does the concept of “safe production” set the tone for board discussions?

If so, your organisation is considered to have an integrated approach to safety. As safety professionals, you will have a tremendous opportunity to embed the view that high safety performance and business excellence are inextricably linked. Safety in such organisations is not just a “bolt-on” issue to be considered on its own; rather, it’s part of the DNA of the entire organisation.

It is essential for safety professionals to reflect on where their organisation is currently situated on the safety governance pathway. This will assist safety professionals to identify the best methods for educating and driving change.

Dr Kirstin Ferguson is a member of OHS Professional magazine’s editorial board, a company director on ASX, private company and government boards, as well as an adjunct professor at QUT. For more information, email kirstin.ferguson@orbitasgroup.com.
On 1 July 2014, SafeWork SA restructured its operations into separate compliance and community engagement directorates, in response to feedback from unions and business organisations and recommendations from a parliamentary inquiry.

A South Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department report, Transforming Work Health and Safety Performance: How can we improve the effectiveness of our regulator?, explored the rationale for this decision and noted that there continues to be debates about whether work health and safety inspectors can operate effectively to deliver these dual functions. “Employer and union advocates have different views about whether education or enforcement is the best way to help reduce workplace injuries. Feedback suggests that many employers fear asking SafeWork SA for help, because a visit from an inspector may lead to compliance action against them,” said the report.

“It is time for the regulator to establish a culture of responsiveness, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. We need a highly trained, industry-focused, experienced team of inspectors.” Inspectors should be assigned to specific industries and geographical locations to ensure consistent approaches to regulation in each sector, according to the report, which said these inspectors should be supported by strong and consistent operational policies and direction. “The regulator should be respected, but not feared,” said the report.

Marie Boland, acting executive director of SafeWork SA, said the regulator has since increased its focus on education and workplace support to help in the prevention of workplace incidents. “A key to the success of our changed delivery model is the active engagement with key stakeholders. SafeWork SA consulted with key stakeholders to get a better understanding of how we could do things better, and continued to consult throughout the change process,” she said. “In terms of the new model, SafeWork SA actively engages with industry representative groups, business organisations, industry associations, unions and leaders to agree on education and support priorities. These decisions are also informed by injury data.”
However, Boland echoed the SA Attorney-General’s Department and said a key challenge for the regulator remains the tension between the regulator and inspectors’ role of delivering education and support on the one hand, and compliance and enforcement on the other. “Debate continues amongst stakeholders as to where the allocation of inspector resources is best served and where the balance between education and enforcement should lie,” she said.

However, the changes have brought about some positive results, according to Boland, who said the trend in workplace fatalities in the state is on the decrease, with five less fatalities in 2013/14. “The impact of the new community engagement approach in terms of data will not be known yet – however, since adopting a new approach to injury prevention in July 2014, SafeWork SA has delivered a number of pilot projects with industries that currently show high rates of workplace injury,” she said.

“By engaging and working with all tiers of identified priority industries, work health and safety issues are being strategically addressed to ensure the state continues to meet both state and national work health and safety injury reduction targets. Our reach on social media has increased by 125 per cent for Facebook and 250 per cent for Twitter in the last year.”

Boland said an increased focus on engagement provides an opportunity for organisations and OHS professionals to engage and communicate their concerns and share their safe workplace practices. “In building on our stakeholder relationships, we can share improved practices across South Australian workplaces and further prevent workplace injury and death. Safety at work is a collective responsibility, and the more people who are influencing safety outcomes in workplaces the better,” she said.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland’s approach
Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) and the state’s Electrical Safety Office (ESO) and Workers’ Compensation Regulator (WCR) have also shifted their service delivery approach to act as a facilitator or enabler, according to Peter Thorning, manager: research partnerships for WHSQ. “This has meant a significant change in the way we do business. The aim is to gain duty holder co-operation and facilitate a process of joint problem solving and capacity building,” he said.

Thorning said that while coercive powers and sanctions are still used, they are more likely to result from an escalation response where other avenues to support compliance have failed. With this in mind, he said the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland (OFSWQ) is strategically moving
forward with three guiding principles: using an evidence-based approach; engaging industry and the community to make workplaces safer; and focusing on targeted responses to high-risk industries and hazards. This change in focus has also meant a change in how OFSWQ works with businesses, and Thorning said it actively assists business and industry with evidence-based programs, products and information that help them to understand what compliance looks like for them, so that they can successfully regulate their own activities to achieve safe outcomes. He said other measures the regulator has taken include:

- meeting the demand for in-person assistance and advice where required
- addressing the perennial "what's in it for business", providing much more concrete evidence about return on investment
- supporting businesses in the building of a safety culture and leadership in their organisations (for example, assisting them to motivate managers/staff/clients to take responsibility for their safety)
- ensuring that regulatory effort is focused on high-risk industry sectors and conversely assuring low-risk industries of their more limited compliance requirements
- changing the regulator’s approach from one where inspectors rely on the regulations in their transactions with businesses, to one of dialogue, joint problem solving and capacity building
- customising information to businesses and consolidating it in a “one stop shop” for all work health and safety and compensation matters
- making it easier to do business with the OHS regulator, for example, removing unnecessary paperwork and forms and improving online transaction services
- reforming/simplifying the regulatory burden, and introducing sensible changes to the Act, regulations and codes of practice which do not reduce safety standards.

There have been a number of challenges and lessons learned in the process, according to Thorning, who said one of the main ones was overcoming the perception that providing advice, guidance and the tools for businesses to focus on work health and safety is less effective than taking a “hard-line” approach by issuing notices and imposing punitive sanctions. “Regulatory research and our own experience demonstrates that businesses are more likely to improve health and safety when the regulator primarily focuses on advising and persuading. Indeed, the whole approach of responsive regulation is that optimal compliance is achieved when the regulator has access to very strong sanctions and uses them when needed, but for the most part uses an ‘advise and persuade’ approach rather than enforcing requirements,” he said.

“Changing approach has meant that we also need to change the way in which we measure our effectiveness. In the past, there has been a focus on ‘busyness’ with measures such as the number of workplace visits by inspectors and how many notices they issued rather than actually assessing the effectiveness of the approach. We are now more focused on actual outcomes achieved and in designing programs, from the ground up, to achieve sustained outcomes. This means that we have had to look more broadly to identify the best sources of information and research to inform our evidenced-based approach. To develop effective approaches we are moving beyond the data and simple risk management approaches. This means looking at the best ways to motivate people and businesses and how to develop programs which embed sustained change,” said Thorning.

This new approach has met with a number of successes, and Thorning said a good example of this is the regulator’s injury prevention and management (IPaM) program, in which senior advisers work closely with selected businesses from all industries over the course of multiple visits to identify and address opportunities for improvement in their safety and injury management systems.

“A growing focus of this program is the safety leadership element. Buy-in from these IPaM organisations’ leadership is vital if health and safety improvements undertaken in these organisations are to be sustained,” he said. In 2012/13, IPaM-participating businesses experienced an 8.4 per cent reduction in statutory claim numbers (compared to an overall reduction of 6.3 per cent across the scheme), a 14 per cent reduction in average days off work (while the scheme average remains unchanged), and a 7.4 per cent reduction in total statutory costs (compared to a scheme increase of 0.6 per cent).

Based on latest national comparative data, from 2008/09 to 2012/13, Thorning also said the number of traumatic injury fatalities occurring in Queensland workplaces reduced from 47 to 37, representing a 21 per cent reduction. He said the number of serious electrical incidences have also more than halved between 2009/10 and 2013/14 (down 58 per cent or 23 SEIs), and from 2008/09 to 2012/13, Queensland recorded a reduction of 15.2 per cent in the incidence of serious work-related injuries, from 16.4 to 13.9 per 1000 workers.

Thorning explained that there are a number of implications for OHS professionals in a regulator shifting its service delivery approach, and he noted that this approach is not just for the workplace safety, but for all safety matters.

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impacts on the work health and safety behaviour of individuals,” he said.

**Safe Work Australia’s collaborative approach**

Established under the *Safe Work Australia Act 2008*, Safe Work Australia (SWA) is, by its nature, collaborative, according to an SWA spokesperson. SWA’s members include representatives of the Commonwealth, all states and territories, employers and workers, while sub-groups such as the Strategic Issues Group on Occupational Health and Safety and various temporary advisory groups set up to examine specific topics, all reflect this structure. “We work closely with all representatives either informally on a one-to-one basis or more formally through the development of options and recommendations taken to meetings of Safe Work Australia or its sub-groups,” said the spokesperson.

When it came to the development of the model *Work Health and Safety Act* (WHS Act), genuine collaboration and co-operation was “really key” to the success of this approach, the spokesperson said. “Having the regulators, industry representatives and unions around the table during the development of the model legislation meant that we had the experience, insights and perspectives of all the main stakeholders during the development of the draft model laws, and not just during the public consultation phase,” they said.

Commitment at the political level through the Inter-Governmental Agreement was also very important, as was the National Compliance and Enforcement Policy, which sets out the approach work health and safety regulators will take to compliance and enforcement under the model WHS Act and regulations, the spokesperson said. “Industry representatives and unions made it clear from the beginning that consistency in compliance and enforcement was as important as harmonised laws,” they said.

According to SWA, a tripartite representative membership has many advantages, as members from the state and territory regulators bring hands-on experience of how work health and safety laws operate for the regulator. “Employer and worker representatives bring the perspectives of those who are most affected by work health and safety laws – something that should always be front-of-mind for every bureaucrat,” the spokesperson said.

“But it also has its challenges. By its nature, tripartite membership brings with it different and sometimes competing agendas. Policy proposals are most often improved by being subject to the rigours of SWA members and sub-committee processes, but sometimes proposals can be watered down or derailed because of the agendas of one or more members. The political landscape in one or more jurisdictions can change with the result that a project that has majority approval at its inception can be unacceptable 12 months later when it is fully developed.”

“Regulatory research and our own experience demonstrates that businesses are more likely to improve health and safety when the regulator primarily focuses on advising and persuading ...‘rather than enforcing requirements’”
Taking OHS to the next level in New Zealand

Craig Donaldson speaks with Gordon MacDonald, chief executive, WorkSafe New Zealand, about his greatest professional achievements, challenges and goals – and how OHS professionals can be more effective in business

How did you get into OHS, and what motivates you to keep going?
As I was getting to the end of my university course, I was thinking about jobs and I wanted something that contributed to some sort of social good and social benefit. My mother was an occupational health nurse at the time, and she’d come across factory inspectors in her working life and she said it sounded like an interesting job. At the same time, a careers adviser suggested I get some interview practice, so I took a punt in applying for a factory inspector role with the UK Health & Safety Executive – and got it. It sounded challenging, interesting, useful and it paid money – so those were the four criteria that I was after at that stage in my life.

One of the things that’s kept me going is the range of challenges in health and safety. There are engineering and technological challenges. There are human factor challenges, as well as organisational motivation challenges. There’s also a political dimension to it. It’s so multifaceted and endlessly interesting. I’ve learnt about health and safety in everything from rural farming communities through to helping ensure nuclear power reactors don’t go bang in the night. These are hugely different challenges, and this is what’s kept me going for the past 35 years.

Also, one of the things that I tell my staff is being involved in this health and safety game is incredibly rewarding, because there are few jobs where you could say, “I have saved somebody’s life and limb or health”. But you don’t know who they are and they don’t know you are, because you never quite know the incidents that could have happened because you’ve done your job. So it’s an interesting conundrum, where you know you’re having an impact but you can’t actually pinpoint what the impact is.

What has been your greatest professional challenge?
I would say the job that I’m currently in, because leading an organisation is different to being at senior levels of an organisation that you’re part of, but not leading. The task here in New Zealand is a very compelling one, especially against the backdrop of the Pike River disaster. There is also room for improvement with regards to workplace accidents and ill health in New Zealand, compared to where Australia, Canada and the UK are. So the scale of the challenge to influence a significant shift in this environment is a big one.

This is a huge challenge for the regulator, not just to maintain a steady-state environment on health and safety but to change the way people perceive health and safety in the workplace. Helping people to competently manage their risks is a massive challenge. When you are dealing with issues like culture change, like step changes around safety in organisations and industries, it sometimes feels as though progress is slow and difficult.

But if you stand back and review this over a longer timeframe, what was acceptable practice 10, 15 or 20 years ago would be completely unacceptable now, not just to the regulator but to everybody. So we have come a long way. If you think about a person’s life experience of being permanently and seriously disabled as a result of an avoidable work-related accident, this does emphasise the value of what we do – not just to individuals but to the economy in terms of productivity and placing unnecessary demands on the health service.

What is the one hallmark of organisations that have good OHS?
The one thing that makes the biggest difference is the leadership of the organisation, whether it’s the owner of a small business, the chief executive or chairman of a larger entity. If they don’t get it, or if they don’t want to get it, then it’s going to be a mighty difficult thing for those underneath them when it comes to achieving the best OHS outcomes possible.

Then there are organisations that don’t have the systems and procedures in place, but they have the right kind of behaviours at the top that reinforce safe behaviour. So the boss values health and safety. If there’s a choice between producing goods today or staying safe today, then workers can say to their immediate boss, “we’ve got a problem with health and safety here”.

“So OHS needs to focus on what creates life-threatening consequences for people and what places a great economic and emotional burden on society”
Organisations that have the leadership commitment from the top are more likely to get it right and do it well. Those organisations who are committed to OHS see it as the right thing to do from a moral perspective and because it’s simply better for business. They get the business arguments around staff engagement and productivity, and they apply professional disciplines around the protection of their people, just as they would the protection of plant or other important business assets.

What can be done to lift the standing and quality of OHS in practice?
I think OHS generally is in a pretty good place and is getting better. The standard of people who get the occupational health brief is high, and standards around qualification and professionalisation of OHS have been enhanced significantly. So I think the profession needs to continue to build its much-improved position and reputation.

One area for improvement is in a more uniform offering from health and safety consultants. If we take New Zealand as an example, one of the issues businesses sometimes face is in getting some good advice on what to do about an OHS problem. It’s important to have a network of consultants who are giving good quality, tailored advice to business. It’s not just about handing over a ring binder of procedures that could apply to any old company and then pretending that that somehow makes me better at managing health and safety.

I also think OHS needs to focus on what’s important. Sometimes it’s easy for the health and safety message to get trivialised and be devalued. In the UK, for example, we got ourselves into a good place in terms of accident and ill health performance. However, a few people started doing things in the name of health and safety that were patently bonkers, such as women’s institutes being advised not to bake cakes for their summer fetes because people might suffer food poisoning. Or local authorities being told not to have hanging baskets of flowers because they might fall and drop on people’s heads. And schools advising their pupils to wear eye protection when they were playing ball games.

So OHS needs to focus on what creates life-threatening consequences for people and what places a great economic and emotional burden on society. And when the OHS profession spots myths, it must tackle them head-on and bring the focus back to the serious stuff and what is really important in health and safety.
Mental health: the OHS room

“If mental health is the last priority in an organisation then the likelihood of improvement is unlikely”
Mental health: the elephant in the OHS room

There has recently been a groundswell of both interest in and appreciation of the importance of mental health in the workplace. Craig Donaldson speaks with a number of experts about this and what OHS professionals can do to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

The impact of employees’ mental health conditions on productivity, participation and compensation claims costs Australian employers at least $10.9 billion a year, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) research report – this comprises $4.7 billion in absenteeism, $6.1 billion in presenteeism and $146 million in compensation claims. The report also observed that mental health conditions are common among the working-age Australian population and represent a significant cost both to organisations and to individuals. Around 45 per cent of Australians between the ages of 16 and 85 experience a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime, and in a given 12-month period, 20 per cent of Australians will have experienced a mental health condition.

The report also says that Australian businesses will receive an average return of $2.30 for every $1 they invest in effective workplace mental health strategies. Investing in mental health benefits businesses of different sizes within different industries, and small business often benefits the most, according to PwC.

“For example, small mining businesses that invest in effective mental health programs receive an average return on investment (ROI) of 15, meaning they get $15 out of every $1 they spend,” says PwC partner Jeremy Thorpe. “Small, essential service providers receive an average ROI of 14.5. This is because employee participation is vital in implementing a successful program. Any positive ROI is something business should strive for.”
Common mental health workplace issues

Many organisations still have a very vague understanding of the types of factors that affect mental health at work, according to Rod Gutierrez, leader of culture, capability and change management for DuPont Sustainable Solutions. “Organisations tend to lump together a number of risk factors such as bullying and harassment, and the demands and pressures of work, together with poor individual resilience, all into one category;” says Gutierrez, who adds that these organisations then try to manage these related but very separate issues in the same manner, all under the banner of “mental health at work”.

Another issue is the lack of understanding in the interconnectivity between risk factors and mental health outcomes, adds Gutierrez, who referred to research he conducted into the nature of workers’ compensation claims in NSW. He found that the vast majority of successful claims for compensation do not come from pressures of the work or the demands placed on people; rather, they come from human interpersonal relationships that occur in the context of work. “When relationships break down and the conflict arises, these have a much larger impact than previously realised,” he says. “As a result of our misconceptions regarding the nature of mental health at work, we tend to gravitate towards solutions that mitigate specific risk factors, rather than develop integrated approaches that treat these problems more holistically.”

Nick Arvanitis, head of research and development (workforce) for beyondblue, says that workplaces, leaders, managers and front-line employees are generally struggling to deal with a broad range of workplace mental health issues. A significant issue is the stigma associated with mental health in the workplace and potential discrimination that may follow as a result. “We know that individuals are very reluctant to disclose to their manager or even to access any workplace-based service or support, because they are concerned that their privacy won’t be respected,” says Arvanitis.

“There are huge barriers to individuals seeking treatment and support for depression and anxiety. If OHS professionals or organisational leaders think about providing an employee assistance program or some other kind of workplace-based support, that’s not necessarily going to address stigma or encourage people to seek treatment and support, because we know that one in two individuals don’t seek treatment or support.”

Leaders and front-line managers also need to know their responsibilities, as well as their boundaries, when it comes to managing mental health issues, according to Laura Kirby, partner and principal consultant psychologist with the CommuniCorp Group. Staff also need to know how to support psychological wellbeing (especially their own), and HR/WHS professionals need to be “internal experts” on how to intervene, manage and prevent psychological health issues, she adds.

Another common issue with organisations is that they consider an employee assistance program (EAP) to be a holistic solution, but Kirby says EAPs are not a complete answer. “It only provides tertiary support to an organisation, a reactive resource that comes into effect once things have gone wrong,” she says. “Where a real difference can be made is in terms of prevention, and early identification and intervention – that is, primary and secondary solutions. This is how many organisations are starting to realise the true cultural and productivity benefits of developing psychologically safe and healthy workplaces.”

Another pitfall is relying on diagnostic, community-based or awareness programs, Kirby adds. “The danger with these kinds of programs is that they don’t provide individuals or organisations with the actual capability to have a direct impact. Having an understanding of diagnostic criteria is not only dangerous, it does not aid individuals or organisations to prevent psychological illness or injury from occurring and it doesn’t consider the workplace-specific issues that may arise, such as legislation and performance management,” she says.

Organisations, pressure and resilience

Kirby says it is critical that HR, L&D, OD and WHS leaders ask themselves what their organisation actually needs, what foundational capabilities they already have in place (people, policies and procedures), and how their organisation can take the next steps in developing and sustaining the psychological wellbeing and performance capabilities of people. “From a prevention perspective, one of the areas that has room to improve is ensuring good psychological job fit, or person–job fit. Different roles require different psychological demands, and therefore, the kinds of coping mechanisms, resilience strategies and psychological approach required will be different,” she says.

Similarly, Gutierrez says many still believe that mental health is an individual problem, however, he points out that the risk factors affecting a person’s mental health are complex. “In many ways it could be said that mental health issues arise in the context of an individual’s environment, therefore, the combination of an individual’s psychological makeup and their ability to adapt to their work environment needs to be looked at more closely,” he says.

Gutierrez says that at the individual level, organisations tend to rely on theories of resilience and coping as a way to assist people with dealing with the pressures of the workplace. “In fact, there has been a massive increase in the attention we give to resilience programs, but when we look more closely at these programs, it becomes apparent that the main focus is to toughen up employees to be able to bounce back faster to adverse situations at work,” he says.
“The fact is, resilience programs do little to mitigate or improve the conditions that underlie or create worker distress, as they aim to change the individual’s reactions to those conditions, rather than to improve those conditions directly. One of the downsides of resilience programs is that they tend to look to those people with the least power to solve the underlying and often systemic issues that affect them, by giving them strategies to adjust to, rather than change, underlying causes of distress.”

Notable mental health trends
Arvanitis also notes that many organisations are grappling with prevention, as businesses seek to help staff become more resilient and able to cope with stress. “The key issue here is about the workplace itself and factors such as job design and the working environment, and how that can be modified in a way that helps prevent mental illness in the workplace,” he says.

“There are increased demands and pressures on workers, and it’s unlikely these will reduce in the short term, but organisations are thinking more about what they can do in light of increased demands to protect their workers against mental health conditions. So what are some of the protective factors that they can introduce to help people manage heavy workloads and high demands? Can that work be structured in a way that’s more flexible? Maybe there are different start and finish times, or staff can take a two-hour lunch break if that means they’re happy to stay back an extra hour or two to make up that time? Organisations need to think about risk management more broadly by introducing protective factors such as more flexible working arrangements or even more informal peer support within the workplace, because that can be a very effective way to offset some of the stressors within the workplace.”

Kirby also says that with the blurring of boundaries between work and home, due to the changing nature of work and the evolution of technological tools enabling greater flexibility, establishing effective work–life boundaries is an important factor in sustainable workplace productivity and wellbeing.

She adds that many leading organisations are already moving well beyond tokenistic gestures when addressing the benefits of creating and implementing positive workplace mental health strategies. “They are rightly undertaking more rigorous, systemic and strategic workplace-specific and psychosocial-based programs; we see this direction progressing as more organisations realise the benefits of positive workplace mental health strategies. Organisations will get more savvy in determining what pragmatic and appropriate initiatives and responses look like – this means an increase in prevention activities largely. An increased understanding of psychological health and safety should emerge, and alongside this, I believe organisations will improve their mechanisms for measuring and evaluating initiatives and efforts to support
“They also focus on contributing to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of their people. This goes beyond fruit baskets and Friday barbecues”

psychological health and safety in the workplace,” she says.

“This is a crucial step that is not always done so well presently. It’s important to understand whether what you are doing is actually working and having a direct impact on the psychological wellbeing of the organisation. Presenting psychosocial hazards may change over time, so it’s important that these kinds of undertakings are ongoing, that organisations are reviewing the climate regularly and implementing appropriate control measures as needed.”

**Hallmarks of mentally healthy workplaces**

There are a number of hallmarks of organisations that have mentally healthy workplaces, according to Gutierrez, who says a key one is that they have already moved to a more systemic mode of thinking about mental health issues in the workplace. “They are organisations that don’t just rely on individual-level interventions and focus. These are organisations that demonstrate care for the wellbeing of their people, not just making a commitment to sending them home safe and injury-free at the end of the workday,” he says. “They also focus on contributing to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of their people. This goes beyond fruit baskets and Friday barbecues – it’s the demonstration of true care for people. At DuPont, we refer to the show of true concern that is actually palpable to the employees as ‘felt leadership’.”

Kirby says there are a number of key points to CommuniCorp’s psychologically safe and healthy workplaces framework: visible and authentic executive support and commitment to psychological safety and health; policies and procedures in place that support psychological wellbeing; and the right capabilities for a critical mass of people within the organisation. “People leaders need to know their responsibilities when it comes to psychological health, and how to do it,” she says. “Likewise, staff, WHS/HR, senior leaders, et cetera, need to have strategic plans in place that accurately assess the current climate, desired changes, and how to get there and where to start; plus ongoing rigorous evaluation and assessment of implemented initiatives.”

Arvanitis agrees that active support from an organisation’s leadership team and senior management is critical to a mentally healthy workplace. “It’s about them walking the talk,” he says. “So if they say to staff, ‘we don’t want you to be working excessive hours every day of the week’, leaders also have to role model this, as this helps shape the culture of an organisation.”

Capability within middle management to manage a broad range of mental health issues skilfully and with confidence is also important, says Arvanitis. “So if someone approaches a direct report, for instance, because they’re struggling and may have a mental health condition, a manager needs to know how to approach that conversation constructively and sensitively. If that person does have a mental health condition, it’s about being able to provide some kind of ongoing support via reasonable adjustments, such as changes to their role that ideally help them stay at work and be as productive as they can,” he says.

Organisations need to understand at all levels that mental health in the workplace is a shared responsibility and not just about employers providing for employees. “Everyone in the workplace has a responsibility to take steps to look after their own mental health; I think the ultimate litmus test around this is if workers do in fact feel safe and comfortable to disclose to their manager or to their colleagues, and if there are open conversations about mental health and mental illness. That’s a really good indication of whether an organisation is mentally healthy.”

**The role of OHS professionals**

OHS professionals have a significant role to play in starting the dialogue with organisational leaders, with workers and with fellow professionals about how they can take a more holistic view of the factors that impact psychological and mental health issues in the workplace, says Gutierrez. “OHS professionals need to address questions such as: How do we step up to the challenge? Where do we start? What is the appetite for change like in the organisation? These are critical questions that we need to take to our organisations,” he says. “OHS professionals are the catalysts in the cultural transformation that we must have to achieve true improvement in this area.”

Kirby also states that OHS professionals will inevitably become internal experts, in partnership with HR, around psychological health and safety. “It’s imperative that OHS professionals have a solid understanding and confidence in identifying psychological health concerns, intervening in these situations, and know how best to manage these situations,” she says. “Building on OHS professionals’ expertise too, is developing robust psychosocial risk registers that allow for the capture, measure and assessment of psychosocial hazards specific to their workplace, with clear steps on how to control or mitigate those hazards.”

Arvanitis explains that OHS professionals’ ability to improve mental health in the workplace varies. “On one end of the spectrum there’s OHS professionals who are still coming to grips with
what risk management means in the context of mental health in the workplace and how the hierarchy of control applies to physical health risks within the workplace. On the other end you’ve got OHS professionals who recognise that there’s a broader business case to be understood and to be promoted around investing in mental health,” he says.

“There’s plenty of research to suggest that there’s a significant return on investment for organisations in the form of reduced costs associated with mental illness within the workplace, and we also know that staff in mentally healthy workplaces are more committed and are more engaged and are more prepared to go above and beyond. So it’s about understanding that there are broad benefits for the organisation – beyond just managing risks to mental health – that flow on from creating a mentally healthy workplace.”

OHS professionals who understand this are focusing on prevention as well as thinking about reducing risk factors, like lack of control and lack of job clarity, as well as increasing protective factors, such as flexibility, peer support and having leaders that understand the benefits of mentally healthy workplaces, he says.

“I think they also are recognising that stigma is a considerable issue that needs to be taken into account. You can’t just apply a standard risk management process without thinking about what strategies an organisation has to reduce the stigma, to encourage people to speak openly about any mental health risks they see within the workplace,” says Arvanitis. “If they are in the early-onset period of having a mental health condition, they need to be seeking treatment and support as early as possible so it doesn’t lead to a more severe condition or go down the personal injury and workers’ compensation road, with worse outcomes attached to that. So it’s about understanding mental health in the workplace broadly, recognising that there are benefits beyond just reducing risks, as well as benefits in terms of increased staff commitment and staff engagement.”

**Practical steps to developing mentally healthy workplaces**

There are some practical steps organisations can take to help develop a mentally healthy workplace and foster a culture which supports mental health among employees. As a first step, Gutiérrez says it would be useful to assess the level of reliance on individual-level programs and interventions, as opposed to cultural and systemic management. It is important that there is a balance between these two levels of intervention, and Gutiérrez says it is also important that the balance shift towards organisational systemic interventions.

An assessment of the level to which leadership is involved in preparing and developing strategies to manage mental health in the workplace is critical, he adds. “If mental health is the last priority in an organisation then the likelihood of improvement is unlikely. Leaders from senior levels of the organisation need to understand and to be involved in the design of the solutions and change program,” he says.

Kirby says the first step is to assess where you’re currently at, understand what your biggest gaps are when it comes to psychological health and safety (and therefore, what your priorities are), and what you can practically do about this – considering preventative strategies wherever possible. “There can be a rigorous process around this assessment and planning, but it will provide a strategic framework for how the organisation can make a start and engage a sustainable approach to building a psychologically healthy workplace,” she says. “When engaged in this process, often we find that a good starting point is getting senior leaders on board, followed by training a critical mass of WHS/HR professionals and people leaders.”
A recent Safe Work Australia research report found that more than one-third of workplace fatalities could be due to poor safety design. Thirty-six per cent of the fatalities examined in the study were found to be either definitely or possibly design-related, and the report said these fatalities would probably not have occurred if the risks of the equipment involved had been eliminated through safe design. The most common causes of design-related deaths were:

- Inadequate guarding (21 per cent)
- Lack of roll-over protection structures/seat belts (15 per cent)
- Lack of residual current device (12 per cent)
- Lack of interlock (8 per cent), and
- Driver obstructed vision (8 per cent).

This study examined 523 worker fatalities for which there was sufficient information on the circumstances to make a judgment on the contribution of unsafe design to the incident. Of these, 63 fatalities (12 per cent) were determined to have been either definitely caused by unsafe design or clearly contributed to by design-related factors. A further 125 fatalities (24 per cent) were considered possibly design-related: these included incidents where the circumstances suggested that unsafe design played a role, or incidents that might have been prevented had existing safety technology been used.

“In most work situations there are many different ways a task or process could be carried out to minimise the risk of harm to the worker,” said the Work-related fatalities associated with unsafe design of machinery, plant and powered tools, 2006 – 2011 report. “The best methods of protecting workers are passive – those that protect from harm, or decrease the likelihood of injury, with no input from the worker. Therefore, the most effective way to deal with hazards is to eliminate them, and in many situations this can be achieved by implementing design changes to the machinery, plant or tools.”

**Machine safety trends**

Scott Moffat, managing director of Pilz Australia & New Zealand – a leading, innovative automation technology company that specialises in human, machine and environment safety – says a worrying trend in machine safety is that
a large number of plant and machinery in workplaces are not compliant with the relevant machinery standards. These standards include the prevailing Australian Standard (AS/NZS 4024), which now includes parts of ISO 13849, or an alternative functional safety standard for Machinery (IEC 61508 & IEC 62061).

However, Moffat says a more positive trend is that OHS professionals are playing a stronger and a more technical role when it comes to the implementation of machinery safety.

“We have also seen a shift in focus at a corporate level. Historically, corporate OHS teams predominantly focused on policies, procedures, systems, PPE and work practices and/or behavioural-based safety programs and left machinery safety to those at a plant level,” he says.

“We are now seeing machinery and plant safety as a key plank in corporate OHS strategy and, pleasingly, with the associated funding to support the rollout of programs. As a result, more and more businesses are taking ownership of rolling out their own in-house machinery and plant safety policies, guidelines and engineering standards.”

**Good machine safety hallmarks**

The key to good machine safety is to follow a rigorous process of risk assessment (hazard identification and classification) through to safe design and implementation, finishing with the all-important step of validation, says Moffat. “Validation is a crucial element in the process, independent of the design function, to ensure that all parts of the
safety function interact correctly and operate as intended. It also ensures the required safety level is met and that unintended functions do not occur,” he says.

When buying new equipment or machinery, it is important to ensure suppliers are well aware of the relevant Australian safety standards and that these have been applied, according to Moffat, who says a couple of simple questions to ask your suppliers are:

Is my equipment provider aware of AS/NZS 4024, especially the recent changes to the standard?

Can my equipment provider supply me with the correct supporting documentation to demonstrate this, such as a design risk assessment, target category, performance level (PL) or safety integrity level (SIL)?

Who will validate the plant and/or machinery once installed? And what safety accreditation do they have?

**Common machine safety challenges**

A common machine safety pitfall for organisations is that they often rush straight into the solution stage and start remediating machinery after a near miss or incident. “Everyone is keen to solve the problem, but you need to make sure you take a step back and tackle the issue in a measured and structured way. Start with the risk assessment and hazard identification,” says Moffat, who adds that it is important to include a variety of different personnel in the process who are familiar with the plant to help identify the hazards.

“Understand your standards and what you are working to, as this will influence your machine safety solutions. Also, don’t use a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Make sure your solutions are practical and suitable, taking in all the various factors including ergonomics, operator access requirements, surrounding equipment and location.”

Moffat adds that too often, equipment is simply delivered and installed on site, with little thought of safety – and then the cost of remediation post-installation becomes considerably more expensive than if it was designed into the equipment at the start. “Always have safety designed into your plant and equipment at the beginning of the procurement cycle, and never as an afterthought,” he says.

**Overcoming machine safety pitfalls**

It is important to take a proactive approach to machinery safety and ensure you are across all of your plant and its respective hazards, according to Moffat. “Too often we see companies being prosecuted for incidents and injuries which should have easily been identified and remediated. The cost to do this is typically minimal compared to the potential overall cost of the impact of the injury after the event,” he says.

Often, excuses are made and blame is shifted to factors such as behavioural safety, when there are not adequate safety control systems in place in the first place, according to Moffat. Questions such as, “Why didn’t the operator speak up and ask questions about how to remove a jam before they put their hand in to the danger zone of a guillotine?” or “Why did they operate the machine with the guards off?” are often raised in such instances.

“Machinery safety standards are very specific in these instances about the use of removable guarding and its interlocking, as well as the use of presence-sensing devices to protect against injury,” says Moffat. “Again, the message here is clear: ensure your machinery is safe and complies with the relevant standards, and make sure it’s independent of operator behaviour.”

**The role of OHS professionals**

“Admittedly, the calculation aspect of performance levels and/or SILs can be very complex; therefore, make sure you have access to someone deemed competent in this aspect. TÜV-certified machine or functional safety engineers typically meet the requirements here.”

Most companies have a detailed and mature risk management framework. However, when it comes to machinery risk assessment, Moffat says the hazard identification part is quite weak and often only picks up general or holistic hazards on machinery. “To maintain an effective safety program, you need to ensure your company has a framework and a risk assessment process that specifically addresses machinery and plant safety, and captures all the hazards at a very detailed level so they all can be addressed.”

**Changes to Australian Standards impact new machinery**

There are critical changes to the Australian Standards on safety of machinery – AS 4024 – which need to be fully understood by anyone considering new machinery, according to Scott Moffat, managing director of Pilz Australia & New Zealand, the international leader in safe automation technology. “The updates are intended to align Australian Standards more closely with European and global standards and strengthen workplace safety – initiatives which should be welcomed by Australian food and packaging manufacturers. It is a logical step to continue to update AS 4024.1 Series to European Standards, as they lead the world in this area of machinery safety,” says Moffat. For more information, visit www.machinesafe.com.au.
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“Ensure you engage the highest level of management at your organisation to gain their support”
Making safety stick from the top

Leadership support plays a critical role in successful OHS initiatives and outcomes. Craig Donaldson examines how safety in Wannon Water and Siemens has benefited from a holistic approach to OHS, led from the top.

Wannon Water is Victoria’s second-largest regional urban water corporation by service area, and its region extends over approximately 23,500 square kilometres. It employs more than 200 operational, engineering, financial, environmental and administrative employees to service a permanent population of more than 82,000 people, including residential, commercial, industrial and rural customers.

Workplace safety has always been important to Wannon Water, according to its people & culture manager, Simon Fleming. However, prior to implementing a safety improvement program, Fleming said it also recognised that safety performance, while not poor, could still be improved. “We elevated the importance of safety – embedding it in our mission statement and strategic objectives – but also identified that if we were really serious about improving our performance we needed to address two key areas. First, we had to ensure we had the right foundation for a safe working environment by building an accredited safety system based on the
highest standards and regulations; and second, we needed to ensure our people had the right knowledge and skills to be safety leaders and to influence others,” he says.

In response, Wannon Water developed a program to embed safety as a fundamental part of culture, driven from the top down, according to Fleming. The program advocates a safe approach not just to work but to life, recognising that employees’ health and wellbeing extends beyond those hours they are at work. To help market the message, the program was branded “Work Safe Home Safe”, which personalises the safety message using Wannon Water’s own employees as examples. Central to this was a series of posters, each with a photo of an employee working safely alongside a photo of them enjoying their home life with family and friends. “This demonstrates to all of us that keeping ourselves healthy and safe allows us to enjoy the happy home and family life we desire,” says Fleming, who adds that this was supported by safety leadership training, which gave leaders an understanding about what it means to be a safety leader and how to put this into action among their teams.

The role of leaders
The most important key to the success of the program was engaging Wannon Water’s board of directors and executive team right from the start, says Fleming. “We made it really clear what the safety improvement program was all about, and the board and executive team fully supported what we were trying to achieve. This was crucial, as it sent a strong message that safety is taken seriously at Wannon Water and also encouraged buy-in from the rest of the workforce,” he says.

The personalised messaging in Work Safe Home Safe has been particularly effective, according to Fleming. This is backed up with specific actions, including health education sessions, free health checks and support for national health events, with tools and strategies for employees to adopt both at work and at home. “These have really resonated with our employees. Where previously they might have seen workplace safety as burdensome, there is now a clear understanding of why it is so important,” he says.

Work Safe Home Safe results
On an individual level, Fleming adds that the program is paying dividends. For example, one of the skin check sessions identified a skin cancer on the back of a long-serving employee that would otherwise have gone undetected. He was immediately referred to a specialist and admitted for surgery where the cancer was successfully removed.

From a business point of view, the program is also reaping rewards, according to Fleming. Since introducing the program, Wannon Water’s lost time injury frequency rate has fallen by 53 per cent, the lost time injury severity rate has fallen by 94 per cent and there has been an overall 1 per cent reduction in absenteeism. Numerous employees have quit smoking as a result of a Wannon Water-sponsored cessation program, and the results from a recent safety culture survey showed that Wannon Water has a “sustainable safety culture” that is on the improve.

Advice for OHS
“The main lesson we learned was that having the support of our board and executive team was crucial and the program wouldn’t have worked without it,” says Fleming. “Ensure you engage the highest level of management at your organisation to gain their support before you embark on your safety improvement program.”

Also, safety improvement is an ongoing journey, and it won’t happen with just one training session. “You need to be persistent and keep reinforcing your key messages over several years. And, most of all, be genuine: don’t say one thing but do another. You have to live by your safety message and follow up your words with clear actions,” says Fleming.
Making safety stick at Siemens

In mid-2012 there were a few important drivers in place to support a change to the way Siemens Australia and New Zealand approached health and safety, according to its head of EHS and quality, David Scott. “We had a sense that our internal health and safety ‘standards’ had slipped a little, but had no real reliable measure of culture to either quantify or explain it. We were very focused on systems and processes and had too many of them, creating duplication and bureaucracy. We had a single, narrow measure of health and safety performance, based on a single lagging injury indicator [Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate],” he says.

At a company level, there wasn’t a strong focus on the most important risks, leading to too-frequently occurring high-potential incidents, according to Scott, who adds that there was a sense that Siemens “lagged” many of its customers, and saw in the market that the expectations that most of its customers had about health and safety were increasing.

“Safety has always been a priority at Siemens, but because our business is so diverse, it’s an even greater priority as we not only need to meet our own requirements but we also need to meet the requirements of our customers,” says Scott. “At any given time we could have people working on a power station, an industrial plant, an oil rig, a wind farm, a hospital, a factory and anything in-between. We also have office-based employees. But apart from the business needs, it’s really about the fundamentals of keeping our people safe.”

Until a couple of years ago there was a divisional approach to safety programs, for example, Siemens’ energy business would run a safety campaign and then its industrial businesses would run a different campaign. “We weren’t necessarily sharing these, and we didn’t have a consistent approach or understanding of our safety culture,” he says.

A “whole of company” approach
The first step in the turnaround was to get safety onto the CEO’s agenda and taken as a “whole of company” approach. “Getting the strategy right from the start was critical. We needed ownership and buy-in from the CEO, the senior leadership group and the broader leadership group. So one of the first things we did was establish a reference group to involve all the right people. The program took a full 360 degree communication and training approach, beginning with engaging the managers. We applied a bottom-up and top-down approach,” says Scott.
The strategy is focused on long-run achievement with the first time-horizon of five years, but with measurement throughout. A general baseline measurement of safety culture was also needed, so people were surveyed early in the program. The strategy contains a number of goals, but there are four that were most important:

• Build a constructive safety culture
• Grow health and safety capability across the business
• Effectively manage risk
• Grow the wellbeing of our people.

Each of these key goals had an initiative built around it to deliver in practice, with a plan-on-page to support it.

**Successful implementation**

A key to implementing the strategy in practice was to shift away from a rules-based approach towards an ownership-based approach. “We knew that to make this work the key was to get people to ‘want to be safe’, rather than telling them they had to be safe,” says Scott.

To launch the new strategy and program, a “Stop for Safety” day was held in March 2013, which involved more than 130 leader-led one-hour workshops to provide the opportunity for people to understand why Siemens was changing its approach and the business drivers for it. In “Stop for Safety”, every team in the business set two team-oriented safety and health goals to help change their safety and health performance and culture, and then team members signed the goal poster and they were displayed prominently where the team works.

“At the same time, we started to use storytelling to communicate on health and safety and released the first of ‘Our Safety Stories’. This was about ensuring our fundamental message was that we were invested in everyone in the Siemens family arriving home at the end of the day in the same state that they came to work. We used storytelling to make it real and authentic,” says Scott. “It was designed to help people make an emotional connection to understand the impacts of safety outside of work in their personal lives. This encourages a culture of ownership as well, and really gets people to think about safety and make good decisions about safety rather than blindly follow rules. In essence, we had a much greater focus on the ‘why’ and not just the ‘what’.”

**Challenges and lessons learned**

The journey has not been without its challenges, according to Scott, who says that as is always the case in a change program, some stakeholders would like to go faster and sometimes the new behaviour or approach isn’t immediately “hard-wired” into how we work in practice – so the changes don’t stick. “Being consistent is important, and having that ongoing commitment from the leadership team is critical,” says Scott.

“We’ve also needed to be flexible, as the organisation has changed with acquisitions and divestments and challenges in the market. That means you always need to keep in mind new

“We needed ownership and buy-in from the CEO, the senior leadership group and the broader leadership group”
managers and staff who join the company and reinforcing the desired culture.”

Complacency can be a challenge with people who have done things for a very long time, according to Scott, who says another challenge is making connections with all types of employees – from people working on a mine site through to office-based employees. “For instance, it’s difficult for an office worker to connect to safety messages designed for electricians or manufacturing workers. Therefore, you need different ways to connect with all audiences. The use of storytelling covered all angles in a way that everyone could relate. One example was the story of an apprentice who lost an eye. Another was of a call centre manager who slipped down the stairs and broke her back. These were powerful, authentic and memorable,” he says.

Safety program results
From a safety culture perspective, the baseline measure taken in March 2013 – which took in more than 1250 Siemens people (about 55 per cent of the target audience) who chose to participate in an online survey facilitated by GSI – achieved a fairly sound safety culture score of “Maturing”.

“We completed the 2015 Safety Culture Survey in March 2015, with more than 1650 respondents (about 75 per cent of the target audience) and saw a 10 per cent increase in our safety culture score, moving it to ‘Sustainable’,” says Scott.

“We’ve seen a significant decrease in the frequency of ‘High Potential’ incidents (where the possible consequences related to an incident may have been major or catastrophic based on our risk matrix), from 13 in 2013 to 1 so far in our fiscal 2015.”

The frequency of Recordable Injuries per million hours worked has also decreased from 10 to 7: “so we’ve still got a fair way to go to our aspirational goal of zero, but we have made sustainable progress,” says Scott.

Advice for OHS
Tone from the top is a commonly-used cliché in workplace health and safety, but the behaviour that most senior leaders in a business demonstrate is fundamental to any significant safety change program, says Scott. “Managers need to genuinely care about the safety of their employees, and employees need to be thinking about risk in everything they do,” he says.

“This has to include engagement in building the strategy and telling stories about why safety is important to both the business and everyone in it. Being visible in the business is also important, as well as allocating time and resources so initiatives can be delivered and effectively ‘hard-wired’ into the way a business operates.”

Industry generally over-relies on safety systems and processes at the expense of focusing on leadership and behaviour, he added. “It’s also too easy for health and safety practitioners to ‘own’ all things safety in a business, rather than building capability in people managers so they can run safety as they run their teams. Finally, health and safety programs need to demonstrably add value to a business and not be orientated mainly around regulatory compliance,” he says.
Innovations in work health and safety

With a focus on WHS innovations in the workplace, the SIA Brisbane Safety Conference 2015 featured a range of high quality international and local presenters.

The SIA Brisbane Safety Conference was held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in late April, and featured a range of presenters including Gordon MacDonald, chief executive, WorkSafe New Zealand; professor Mike Behm from East Carolina University and member of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), USA; and Peter Thorning, manager: research partnerships, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.

Keys to effective safety design
Speaking at the conference on safety design, senior associate with Strategy& (formerly Booz & Company), Les Haines, said most government and commercial organisations generally do not fare so well when it comes to “designing out” safety risks before implementing programs. These organisations are yet to embrace strong program management models where safety is a critical consideration at all points along the program lifecycle, he said.

“In these organisations, the focus is mostly on the safety of their own workforce (as important as this is) rather than also on the inherent safety of the ‘things’ they produce,” said Haines, who added that commercial organisations in the aerospace, automobile, mining, shipbuilding and construction industries that have a strong systems engineering and systems safety discipline and that practise “cradle to grave” program management, generally fare better than government and commercial organisations.

“In these industries, safety is an integral part of conceiving, designing, building, supplying, using, maintaining and disposing of material items, like vehicles and facilities. For these commercial organisations, the need to embed critical safety decision making and action early in the program lifecycle is unchallenged, because experience has shown it saves lives, time and money. In these organisations, the focus is just as much on the inherent safety of the ‘things’ they produce as it is on the safety of the workforce who produces them,” he said.

“Strong through-program safety performance doesn’t happen in organisations by accident. There has to be a conscious decision to embrace safety as an integral part of the program lifecycle. A necessary first condition is for the leadership of the organisation to be convinced of, and then champion, the ‘business case’ for investment in program safety,” said Haines, who noted that this must then be reinforced by the creation of a strong program safety culture in the organisation, and by proactively driving a sequence of linked safety effects along the program lifecycle to cumulatively deliver a safe program.

How hoteliers can improve OHS
Also speaking at the conference was workplace health & safety manager for Queensland Hotels Association, Ross Tims, who said that while Queensland’s hotel industry is classified as low WHS risk with median work-related injury rates reported, a two-tier situation exists within the industry which generally correlates with the level of resources a hotel has available to spend on compliance issues such as WHS.

“Generally, accommodation hotels and pub groups achieve solid WHS outcomes, because they can afford to and are generally more organised, structured or corporate. However, most hotels are ‘mum and dad’ operations or small- to medium-sized enterprises. These businesses don’t have many resources to spend on non-core issues,” said Tims, who noted that trading hotels are about the most regulated industry in Queensland, because of liquor, gaming, food, mandatory training, music copyright, smoking, security, anti-money laundering, VLAD, weights and measures, and local by-laws.

“A hotelier’s core business is completely regulated, to the ‘tenth degree’ in many cases. Sometimes, WHS can become lost in this regulatory burden,” he said. Young workers in Australia have an 18 per cent higher injury rate than older age groups, according to a recent Safe Work Australia study, and Tims said 45 per cent of workers’ compensation claims in Queensland in the hospitality industry are from injured workers under 30 years old. A large proportion of the 50,000 people employed in hotels in Queensland are in that age bracket, as hospitality has the youngest age profile of any industry in Australia, he added.
“I’ve always regarded young persons employed within our industry as our greatest risk factor. About 60 per cent of the industry workforce is casualised, and staff turnover rates are high – up around 25 per cent in some cases,” he said. “Many people see employment in the hospitality industry as transitory or temporary. This can sometimes mean a lack of ownership, or indeed, interest or focus on the job including health and safety aspects.”

**Keys to heat stress management**

Christine Killip, managing director of Katestone – a consulting firm that specialises in air quality, meteorology services and safety management – also spoke at the conference, and she said most organisations in Australia generally don’t do enough to manage heat stress in the workforce. In some instances organisations implement a basic strategy, but a poorly designed strategy can actually undermine efforts to manage heat stress.

“Some organisations identify heat as a hazard and undertake a basic thermal risk assessment to determine appropriate measures to mitigate that risk. However, this is typically done only once and doesn’t take into consideration the change in risk associated with different weather conditions and job types,” she said. “A general warning may be issued every day during the summer, or possibly when the temperature is predicted to exceed a certain level. However, these are coarse triggers that can amount to ‘crying wolf’ for at least some of the time, with the consequence that personnel become blasé about the risk of heat stress.”

Killip said there are major misconceptions around the drivers of heat stress and, consequently, the actions that can be taken to mitigate risks are poorly targeted. She also noted that media reports commonly focus on the forecast daily maximum temperature as the indicator of an impending heatwave, however, she said temperature is only one of a number of factors that define the potential for heat stress.

“High humidity, light winds and radiation all play equally important roles. It is also important to consider the type of work, clothing and an individual’s tolerance to heat. A focus on maximum daily temperature alone will lead to poorly targeted actions for the management of heat stress. It may also miss times of high heat load, for example, when the temperature is moderate but humidity is high and the wind speed is low. Such conditions can occur in the morning – a time not normally associated with risk of heat stress,” she said.

“Anecdotally, I have heard some industries say ‘working in the heat is part of the job, toughen up and get back to work’,” said Killip, who noted that a recent Australian study into the exposure of workers to heat stress found that in 95 per cent of the businesses that were interviewed, workers experienced excessive heat at work and 100 per cent indicated that heat caused a loss in productivity.”
OHS students recognised with awards

Two outstanding OHS students from Edith Cowan University were recently recognised at an awards ceremony in Western Australia.

The winners of three student awards that the SIA sponsors through Edith Cowan University were announced at a ceremony on 18 March 2015 at Joondalup Resort in Western Australia. Edith Cowan University (ECU) is a corporate partner of the SIA, and the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board has accredited ECU's post-graduate OHS courses through its faculty of Health, Engineering and Science.

The Safety Institute of Australia Graduate Diploma of Occupational Health and Safety Award was awarded to the graduating student from the accredited Graduate Diploma of Occupational Health and Safety with the highest course-weighted average mark for 2014 – Lisa Daffen.

The Safety Institute of Australia Master of Occupational Health and Safety prize was presented to the graduating student from the accredited Master of Occupational Health and Safety with the highest course-weighted average mark for 2014 – Bertha Nyoni.

Ms Nyoni was also awarded the Safety Institute of Australia Research Award, which is presented to the graduating student from the accredited Master of Occupational Health and Safety with the highest mark in units Health Science Research Project 1 and Health Science Research Project 2 for 2014.

“I was very pleased and honoured to be recognised by the SIA,” said Ms Nyoni. “Being selected to receive the two awards was more than I had ever imagined. Occupational health and safety has always been my passion and having finally completed the course makes me feel proud. Even though I knew that I had put effort into the work, it came as a surprise to be recognised for these prizes. When I look back, I realise that hard work pays and we can only claim mastery of the practice of health and safety if we apply effort to it. Without my educators at ECU who I regard as my mentors, this would not have been possible. I am grateful for their unwavering support and the firm but amiable teaching instructions.”

To acknowledge the students who have now gone through these accredited tertiary courses, SIA (WA Branch) has entered into a student award agreement as part of the faculty’s annual student awards.

“We entered into these awards not only to promote and recognise tertiary course programs which have been accredited by AOEAB, but the highest student achiever in completing such study,” said Michael Walsh, WA Branch chairman for the SIA.

“We have also supported these awards as part of our own strategy to collaborate further with local universities, and to acknowledge the graduates wanting to enter into the profession as future OHS professionals.”

Michael Walsh, WA Branch chairman for the SIA, congratulating Bertha Nyoni, winner of the SIA Master of Occupational Health and Safety Award and the SIA Research Award.
As the premiere conference for the year, the SIA National Safety Convention 2015 will bring thought leadership to the fore and encourage national and global involvement and networking across the two days. The 2015 Convention will outline the need for change in systems - looking beyond safety disciplines may be the answer.

With a speaker line-up of respected favourites and newcomers, the Convention aims to provide new directions to age old safety challenges. Academically driven, the agenda will bring to the fore the key issues primed for implementation in the workplace. The program will feature streams on the second day that will allow delegates to choose their focus to create a unique Convention experience.

Already confirmed speakers include:

Innes Willox, CEO, Australian Industry Group
Jennifer Taylor, CEO, Comcare
Robert Taylor, Barrister and Independent Law Practice Professional, Victorian Bar
Loren Murray, Head Safety, Wellbeing & Environment, Pacific Brands
John Green, HSEQ Director - Australasia Hub, Laing O’Rourke
Daniel Hummerdal, Safety Innovation Leader, Thiess
Patrick Murphy, Senior Health, Safety and Environmental Manager, Rio Tinto

Topics to be discussed include:

- Business and safety
- Why safety organisations fail
- Open disclosure
- Relationship-based safety
- Complexity and safety
- Governance, accreditation and compliance
- Infection control and hygiene
- Leadership and complexity
- Regulatory landscape
- Due diligence
- Workers’ compensation
- IR and safety

250 safety industry stakeholders got together at the 2014 National Safety Convention to exchange knowledge and network – Join us in 2015!

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