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EDITOR:
Craig Donaldson

GROUP EDITOR:
Sarah O’Carroll

DESIGNER:
Lindsay Cole

DESIGN MANAGER:
Alys Martin

SALES MANAGER:
Robbie O’Rourke

PRODUCTION MANAGER:
Kirsten Wissel

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT:
Steve Cowley

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MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES: sia.org.au

CONTACT US

EDITORIAL:
3reelance@gmail.com

ADVERTISING:
robbo@mediavisionaust.com.au

PRODUCTION:
kirsten.wissel@lexisnexis.com.au

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26 Q&A What is a safety culture?
Recently I was privileged to meet our longest-serving member, Stan Porter. Stan was the inaugural president of the Tasmanian Division in 1955 and at 88 years of age remains a member today. When Stan entered the profession, ideas about unsafe acts and notions of worker carelessness prevailed and a model of toppling dominoes was emerging as an explanatory model.

Asbestos mining and “AC” sheet manufacture was in full swing and mesothelioma had not been diagnosed. Malingerer’s back was rife and RSI, let alone OOS had not been heard of. Noise and deafness was “part of the job”.

Confronted with these issues in the hazardous environment of the State Railway, Stan chose to tackle contemporary opinion head-on; he looked for solutions that focussed on changes to the environment and the task; he recognised the benefits of fitting the task to the person; and he was prepared to take a stand against the opinion of more highly respected individuals in the medical profession.

Stan didn’t have access to formal health and safety courses but took it upon himself to seek out text books and manuals and so began his journey as a life-long learner and a reflective practitioner. I report in more detail on Stan’s work in health and safety in the personal profile section of this edition of OHS Professional.

Listening to Stan talk about his work of 43 years at the railways and also his reflections on safety in 2010, I was saddened. Here is a person who recognised the importance of a knowledge base for his practise, actively built that base and began to gain traction through a process of interweaving his informed arguments with hard-won experience in the workplace and a language that endeared him to people at all levels. However, in 2010 we are still yet to gain recognition that the knowledge we possess and skills we develop in transmitting it and translating it to action in the workplace have special value.

Today, safety and health is a discipline that we can formally study from TAFE certificate level through to PhD and post doctoral research level. Internationally there are numerous peer-reviewed, scientific journals sharing the findings of research and there are global and local conferences where practitioners come together to exchange ideas and views. So where does the idea that “safety is just common sense” come from? How does this notion survive to the end of the first decade of the 21st century? If safety is so simple, why do we continue to kill and injure people in the workplace and at home? We seem to take steps forward only to slide backwards.

“In the process of taking the complexity of health and safety science to a level of simplicity that enables engagement at workplace level we seem to have lost part of the message”

We should all take note of recent developments in the UK through the review of OHS under the new Cameron government. Lord Young, leading the review, has been quoted as saying the operation of health and safety law has become a “music hall joke” and that there needs to be more sense in the system. His suggestion that emergency services ought to be exempt from health and safety law should send shivers through us all.

This 19th century view of the world is based on the opinion that, “Technically speaking, the firemen could say they wouldn’t go to a fire because it was too dangerous. We’ve just got to get sense back into the system.”

The review and the emerging themes seem to be significantly influenced by a sustained campaign waged by elements of the popular media that have highlighted certain instances of apparent lunacy with regard to risk aversion (many of you will be familiar with the HSE’s retaliatory “myths campaign”). Other influences are undoubtedly motivated by the belief that the unnecessary burden of “elf and safety” on business needs to be relieved.

The extent to which the UK health and safety legislation is overly burdensome is not for debate here. What worries me is
the extent to which the uninformed are prepared to pontificate on matters about which others clearly are knowledgeable and, in the case of the UK, jeopardy years of progress and wind back the clock to attitudes more befitting of a bygone era.

I have no doubt that the very nature of our discipline and its application is a major part of the problem. Everyone knows something about health and safety because we are good at promoting the subject and because everyone has some either direct or indirect experience of injury and environments where risk exposure occurs. But few people understand the knowledge base behind the discipline.

In the process of taking the complexity of health and safety science to a level of simplicity that enables engagement at workplace level we seem to have lost part of the message.

Obviously the portrayal of the subject as highly complex and mysterious will not serve our ends, but we do need to be able to argue that the subject is much, much more than common sense; as Professor Patrick Hudson said at the inaugural Dr Eric Wigglesworth memorial lecture “safety is not rocket science – it’s much harder”.

Our colleague, Stan Porter, recognised this in the 1950s. I take my hat off to him for his pioneering work as a practitioner and for his foresight. It is important that we are able withstand attempts to now dumb-down the subject. The protection of life in the workplace at home and at play is too important to be left to common sense.

Dr Steve Cowley, FSA, SIA National Publications, Editor

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“If safety is so simple, why do we continue to kill and injure people in the workplace and at home?”
In the face of concerns about the safety and security of competitors and their supporters at the Commonwealth Games in India, OHS legal experts recently questioned whether it is prudent for the government to place its games delegation, and for business to place their employees, at risk by sending them to the games.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991 (Cth), which covers Australian Commonwealth government employees, has extra-territorial scope, so the government has an obligation to ensure the health and safety of their employees in India, according to Norton Rose’s Michael Tooma and Sam Witton.

“Since 2000 there have been at least 14 major terror attacks in New Delhi”

They said that sending a large Australian government-employed delegation to the games, in the face of adverse security, safety and health risk assessments from credible sources, is potentially a breach of the duty of care.

Commenting on the OHS implications of sending personnel to the Commonwealth Games, Tooma and Witton noted that, to make matters worse, media organisations may well be in a similar position.

“Journalists and commentators are covered by the state-based OHS regimes,” they noted in a recent briefing on the issue.

“The acts of the Australian states do not have extra-territorial scope. However, if a decision is taken within a state by a manager to send one of their employees to Delhi in the face of adverse risk assessments without additional precautions to mitigate that risk, the decision may well be in breach of the duty of care of the company to ensure the employees health and safety."

In the event of serious injury or fatality, they noted that the prudence of the decision to send an employee overseas would most likely be closely scrutinised.

“An occupational health and safety policy should have triggers inbuilt at which point a decision is taken that no travel to a high risk country is permitted,” said Tooma and Witton.

“Such a decision may be linked to the travel advice of the home jurisdiction government. For areas which are less frequently travelled to (or where travel is deemed essential), the advice of security consultants may need to be relied upon."

Tooma and Witton noted that the spectre of a terror attack in India is not new.

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Tooma and Witton noted that the spectre of a terror attack in India is not new.

“Since 2000 there have been at least 14 major terror attacks in New Delhi targeted towards busy markets, train stations and other public areas,” they said.

“An event which the world is watching only serves to heighten the terror threat in New Delhi.”

Visible safety leadership critical to OHS: WesTrac

While organisations can have “best practice” safety systems, their safety cultures can be compromised unless all leaders in the business, from the CEO to the tradesperson supervising apprentices, visibly promote safety leadership, according to Michael Brack, HSE and quality manager for WesTrac. “Visible safety leadership from all leaders in the business is the critical ingredient for a successful and substantiated safety culture in an organisation,” he said.

“It only takes one or two instances where a leader condones or accepts an unsafe work practice and it becomes the norm. The strongest skill-set required from leaders to build and enhance a culture of safety is to not only talk the talk but also walk it.”

As such, Brack said OHS professionals need to develop strong and long-lasting relationships with frontline supervisors.

“Be seen as the resource to assist rather than hinder their ability to get the job done. Always use a consultative process to drive change,” he said.

“Be the advisor not the regulator, and become a partner – not the enemy, continually coach and mentor on the importance of workplace safety.”

The “advisor not the regulator” approach at WesTrac had helped in building strong working relationships between business unit leaders and OHS professionals, said Brack, who added that this approach had helped the business enjoy a positive downward trend in injury rates.

Brack said it was important for OHS professionals to help leaders understand that safety is “not” a priority in the business.

“It should and needs to be a ‘core value’. Why not a priority? If safety is a ‘priority’ it sends a message that it can be moved up and down the priority list according the daily pressures. Priorities change every day,” he said.
How to reduce WR-MSD injuries in the workplace

While most Australian businesses are painfully aware that work-related-musculoskeletal disorders/injuries (WR-MSD/I) comprise the majority of workplace injuries and claims, interventions put in place to reduce WR-MSD/I are often unsustainable or unrealistic, according to an expert in musculoskeletal injuries.

“Unfortunately, when much of the good work and excellent intentions are put into action in the workplace to address this, we often seem to end on a merry-go-round with the same results,” said Michael Lawrance, manager at JointAction, a consulting firm which specialises in the prevention of musculoskeletal injuries.

“For some reasons the results of our intervention can often look like, ‘get rid of all the lifting’, which is not healthy or advisable.”

Manual handling training is also often prescribed, however, much of this is restrictive in its application, not scientifically sound and not well received by employees.

“Human bodies vary greatly and the application of a single technique to suit all people is not realistic,” Lawrance said.

As anyone working in workplace injury prevention or management knows, he said the gains in work-related musculoskeletal injury improvement have not kept pace with other safety improvements.

Lawrance noted that it can be hard to establish the true long-term costs of such injuries to individuals, businesses and the community because of the high proportion of transient casual workers who often work in higher risk industries/roles.

“A common challenge is that the people who know most about musculoskeletal health, injury prevention and recovery have little knowledge or contact with the occupational safety world and sometimes struggle to come to terms with the industrial setting of occupational safety,” he said.

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Cristian Sylvestre is an OHS human error prevention specialist with over 15 years of front line experience with companies like Shell and ICI.
Dear Sir,

A number of articles in the March OHS Professional struck a chord with me and I just had to put pen to paper.

The first was your editorial, where your view that the root cause of the insulation tragedy was overlooked in favour of political beat-up was spot-on.

The second was the article on OHS executive salaries where blind Freddy can see that the first victim of a financial downturn is safety.

The third (which reinforces the second) tells of the UNSW’s Risk & Safety School closure and the comment that resonated real world truth with me – “that our current system ensures that workers, supervisors and managers have virtually no OHS knowledge or skills until they find out what they need to know”. This is certainly the case in QLD and the only way many supervisors and managers find out about safety is by accident!

The last article to wake up my thinking was that of Defence harnessing the “can do” attitude and this made me realise that this attitude is not restricted to Defence; it is out there in many operations and is clearly evident in my place of work, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

Here a great emphasis is placed on research and the Holy Grail is gaining additional funding from private enterprise – so in most cases, health and safety is seen, at best, as a hindrance to research progress and, at worse, as a direct threat to “academic freedom”.

I can clearly see a common thread in all four articles and I am hoping that others, particularly those in high places, can also see the common denominator.

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

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

The obvious answer should be while being educated and gaining their Degree at University – sorry not so! If that were the case we would have a much more OHS savvy community out there!

I have no doubt that there are some institutions of higher learning that have embraced Safe Work Australia’s guidelines for design safety and the principles of safe design for work but if I were a betting man I would lay money that they are few and far between. Even fewer are those institutions that include OHS obligations and responsibilities in the basic training of managers and supervisors.

It seems to me that many professional academics are more adept in embracing aesthetics and other more popular themes such as biodiversity, sustainability and environmental awareness – all of which have a place in the various curriculums, but should that be at the expense of teaching basic OHS principles that underpin our industrial landscape?

As for research, here the resistance to OHS protocols results from both an ignorance of basic OHS principles and a notion that OHS undermines and inhibits the researcher’s creativity and ability to probe new frontiers. OHS is seen by many (particularly more senior) researchers as being an affront to their academic freedom and an attempt to stifle initiative.

A common attitude amongst researchers is that the end justifies the means, thus caution is thrown out the door.

In addition, many researchers and research supervisors have no recent industry experience so have little knowledge of OHS responsibilities, risk identification or risk management and often resist attempts to impart this knowledge through extra curricula training conducted by OHS professionals. To compound this, the influx of researchers from overseas with zero knowledge of safety and a dubious understanding of the English language only serves to escalate the problem – but that is another story.

So what is the answer? I am certainly opening a can of worms here but the only way to get to the grass roots of this problem is to provide some incentive for our institutes of higher learning and senior educators to ensure that the basics of OHS management obligations, design safety and risk management are included in the teaching and learning curriculums of all relevant undergraduate and postgraduate courses. This will by no means be a quick fix but will pave the way for institutional and culture change that will benefit future graduates and ultimately result in better prepared managers and professionals in the workforce.

It would be nice to see this happen in my lifetime but changing deeply engrained academic culture is no easy feat!
The SIA speaks to Susie O’Neill, founding director, KIDS Foundation about safety education to prepare young workers for the workforce.

What are some of the key programs the KIDS Foundation is currently undertaking?

The key programs currently being undertaken at the KIDS Foundation include the implementation of the three-tiered safety education program covering pre-school – primary school and a new program in secondary schools (TeenSafe) – a student initiated approach to safety in the secondary school and workplace.

Can you tell me more about the TeenSafe program?

TeenSafe is a program that addresses all aspects of safety and risk education relevant to teenagers. We believe it will be extremely beneficial to the students and will give them a lifelong skill of being able to make risk assessments in all aspects of their life whether it be work or play.

The model covers personal safety issues which are of concern to teens. It also addresses the shift from a school environment to the workplace and the safety issues associated with this.

Guest speakers will be engaged to present topics that are relevant to the target audience, such as risk and safety education around road and driver safety; parties, drugs and alcohol; anxiety, depression and strategies on coping with the pressure of adolescents.

Careers educators will give advice and information on making informed choices and decisions regarding careers pathways. Corporate groups and Worksafe will discuss the issue of moving into the workforce. They will make students aware of the dangers and hazards in the workplace and how to make safety assessments.

We also hope to engage a positive role model who will engage the students at their level – demonstrating that it is possible to balance the thrill of risk taking and an adrenaline rush with safety. For example an extreme sports personality discussing the precautions they take, Jessica Watson speaking about how she achieved her dream, a stunt bike/skate team, etcetera.

How do you see a program such as TeenSafe influencing how young workers approach safety in the workplace?

The focus is to develop safety risk intelligence in children and young adults so when they enter the workplace, safety becomes an unconscious act, socially accepted and acknowledged therefore potentially reducing the amount of workplace injuries and deaths. The program talks to the participants directly in a way they understand initiated by students themselves.

One of the three key messages of the upcoming IF Day on 29 October is Safety is: common sense. How big a part does this play in how safe a young person is at work, and is this something that is taught from a young age through your programs?

We believe at the KIDS Foundation that safe practices reinforced at a young age have the potential to develop into safe habits that are unconsciously acted upon.

Imagine the difference IF everyday was Injury Free?

The KIDS Foundation, a health promotion charity, is proud to announce Injury Free Day - IF Day – 2010. Since 1993, the KIDS Foundation has worked in the areas of injury prevention education and injury recovery.

IF DAY – Friday, 29 October – is a day when schools and businesses are encouraged to focus on safety in the home, school and workplace.

Working in conjunction with the Safety Institute of Australia Inc, and with the corporate support of Protector Alsafe, IF DAY is about:

- Looking out for your mates
- Knowing your limits
- Using your common sense

IF DAY is the culmination of the KIDS Foundation’s involvement in Safe Work Australia Week. All proceeds raised from the sale of IF DAY kits will go towards research and delivery of the KIDS Foundation’s unique community-based safety education programs.

Businesses are encouraged to purchase either a small IF Day kit ($100) or a large kit ($300) and can take part in an online competition by registering on the IF Day website: www.ifday.com.au

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Results from 100,000 health checks delivered as part of WorkSafe Victoria’s WorkHealth program found that 20 per cent of men, and 14 per cent of women who thought their health was very good or excellent were actually at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease.

WorkHealth director, Pam Anders, says such results highlight a general lack of health awareness among working Victorians, which is just one of the issues the WorkHealth program hopes to address.

Launched in May 2008, the WorkHealth initiative is part of the Victorian government plan to improve the health of Victorian workers and productivity in the workplace. The $218 million, five year program aims to educate workers and empower employers to take a proactive approach to health within the workplace, and explore the relationship between preventable chronic disease and workplace injury.

WorkSafe’s result (WorkHealth Checks, Analysis of Results 01 July 2009 to 29 March 2010) revealed that 40 per cent of workers are at high or very high risk of developing type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease, with significantly more male workers (48 per cent) at risk than female workers (32 per cent).

“The fact is that many people don’t know that they are at risk of chronic disease,” Anders says, “and this could be impacting on their quality of life, including their performance and engagement at work.

“With more than 240,000 workers now having undergone a WorkHealth check, these checks are providing workers with vital health information and are proving to be an important prompt for individuals to take action on their health.”

WorkHealth checks offer workers a quick, free and confidential health check, delivered in the workplace, which helps them understand their risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Within 15 minutes, workers learn about the state of their health and any risk of developing these chronic diseases.

To find out more, or sign your workplace up for WorkHealth checks, visit the WorkHealth website www.workhealth.vic.gov.au

“Many people don’t know that they are at risk of chronic disease, and this could be impacting on their quality of life, including their performance and engagement at work.”

Pam Anders, WorkHealth director, WorkSafe Victoria

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Elastic dog spikes and Sunday Roasts, Steve Cowley meets our longer serving member

Stan Porter was once told, “he could sell ice to Eskimos” and after just a few minutes of lively conversation I had no doubt that, at aged 88, he has not lost his touch. Stan is our longest serving member of the Institute, having been elected the inaugural president of Tasmanian division in 1955. In those days he was able to exercise his charm and smoothly talk his 12 members into handing him their dues in cash as he toured the state attending to his duties with the state railway.

Stan entered the safety profession in 1950 as the state railway fire officer and in 1956 the safety role was added to his responsibilities. He built a team of seven to tackle the day-to-day issues associated with the manual handling of wheels onto bogies in absence of mechanical aids and working around buffer stems on carriages in the dark (“2 foot candles”) for the purposes of coupling and uncoupling during shunting. After training in Sydney under Sam Himbury, Stan introduced kinetic lifting to Tasmanian industry in the 1960s.

Other challenges were posed by the derailments that “were more frequent than management cared for”. Stan attributes the increase in these to the increasing loads placed on the narrow 3’6” gauge track. On the tight curves that wound the permanent way across the state, the track spread, spilling loads of fuel or acid from overturned trucks. Stan thus became one of the pioneering HSE specialists taking on the responsibility for spill containment and protection of adjacent waterways and livestock. On one occasion he incurred the wrath of his superiors by instructing a local to leave his cottage and “go and stay with some friends” while they cleaned up. The local took him literally and checked himself and the job right and recognising people’s limitations.”

“You cannot afford to go wobbly on a subject, or they won’t listen”

“Hands-on” and “practical” are terms that Stan uses repeatedly to explain his success during his 43 years with the railway. He fondly remembers his colleagues referring to the “gentle touch of Stanley Porter” when explaining how he would persuade people to see things his way. Using the language of the industry and the tools to establish his credibility involved not only knowing what an elastic dog spike looked like but also what it did and how to fit it.

“You cannot afford to go wobbly on a subject, or they won’t listen,” he advises. However, there is a stubborn streak that led his manager to caution that he “will never be invited to Sunday dinners with the managers”. Stan took on anyone and as diesel fuel was increasingly used and the incidence of dermatitis grew he saw the doctor’s advice and the use of soap mixed with sand for cleansing as plain wrong. He tackled the problem from a scientific standpoint and, along with barrier creams and gloves, solved the problem.

The term “retirement” is used loosely by Stan who spent 10 years consulting around Tasmania and teaching safety at Launceston TAFE after leaving the railways. Never one to take life easy Stan spent 35 years serving with the Launceston volunteer fire service and was awarded the Queen’s Medal, the National Fire Medal and the Fire Brigade Commission Medal. He reflects on the change of practice from direct to indirect attack and recalls entering burning buildings without a respirator and having the walls collapse around him.

As President of the Tasmanian Division he served two 12 months terms and took his passion for fire safety out to the community and into schools, teaching children the basics such as how to put out fat fires on the stove. He continues to believe that “it’s not what’s done now, it’s what it will lead to in the future”. Under Stan’s leadership the Division built a tidy nest egg with which the team funded a broader promotion of safety in high schools.

This led to Stan being seconded to the Education Department from 1966-68.

What was Stan’s motivation? “OHS was something new and I was in a position to do something, once I had assured my manager that the SIA was nothing to do with the unions!”

But Stan believed it was important to not stay too long, “young blood and enthusiasm are important”. What does he think are important messages today? His answers reveal a very clear understanding of contemporary thinking and undoubtedly his shunning of the computer-age and his periods relaxing with a rod and reel at his beach house on the East Coast have not limited his thinking. “Safety messages are not clear, they just tell people to ‘be safe’, people need to be told how to be safe… and it’s not about excluding individuals from work, it’s about getting the person and the job right and recognising people’s limitations.”

Stan is a Tasmanian treasure and graduates entering our mentoring program could do much worse that spend an hour or two with him in refreshing and lively debate.
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Q&A Around the table
What do you think safety culture is and how do you build and improve it?

Angelica Vecchio-Sadus, HSE leader, CSIRO process science and engineering

Q: What do you think safety culture is?
A: A safety culture is where: everyone takes responsibility for safety and pursues safety on a daily basis; there is visible management commitment (“walking the talk”) and visible leadership that motivates people to work safely; hazards and issues are addressed by staff in the work area; staff take charge of their own areas and ensure safety standards are maintained; and staff are recognised for their efforts.

Q: How do you believe organisations can build a safety culture within their workplace?
A: There are a range of things which contribute to building a safety culture: management practices are employee-centred and humanistic; leaders are accountable; employees are empowered and rewarded; communications are open and informal; and feedback is encouraged whether it is positive or negative, and is two-way.

Furthermore, methods to produce safety are built into job descriptions and standard operating procedures; results are closely measured and monitored; causes for variations are identified and rectified; and reinforcement is preferred over disciplinary action.

Q: How do you believe organisations with a poor safety culture can improve?
A: Management must be visibly committed to minimising risks in the operations, and complying with all relevant health and safety legislation. They must accept the responsibility for safety, and provide the necessary resources, and willingly become involved in safety, accept changes in work methods, and change attitudes to risk.

Furthermore, organisations must: put in place methods for controlling hazards; create trust and cooperation; and provide observation and feedback to enhance safe behaviours; and focus on achieving and not on avoiding failure – make safety a ‘value’ not an ‘add-on’.

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Kurt Warren, manager OHS & plant risk, Qantas Airways Limited

Q: What is a safety culture?
A: Articulating what constitutes a safety culture is particularly difficult to define. To quote Davies et al. (2003): “safety culture has been bandied about and is a common figure of speech in many organisations with limited reference to, or knowledge of, any of its various definitions.” However, considering the numerous academic references there are key themes that are commonly repeated: shared – beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and values. Having a positive safety culture is something that organisations like to think they have or are striving too.

Q: How do believe organisations can build a safety culture within their workplace?
A: I’m currently undertaking my Doctorate with my thesis on “What is essential for an organisation to be described by its employees as having a positive safety culture.” My aim is to understand the first person lived experience through capturing the essence of a positive safety culture. I believe there can be rich qualitative insights within organisations if we just spoke face-to-face with our employees, and truly listened with the intent of capturing their meanings.

Q: How do believe organisations with a poor safety culture can improve?
A: My first response is what is a poor safety culture? Nonetheless, every organisation has a safety culture, and where you sit in that grey spectrum is the first step. To assist that reflection I would suggest organisations make themselves aware of Hudson’s evolutionary model of safety culture – pathological, reactive, calculative, proactive and generative.

Dan Harte, OHS manager, DM M Pty Ltd

Q: What do you think safety culture is?
A: Safety culture is often regarded as being imperceptible – ‘just the way we do things’. In an age focused on momentous progress in the realms of technology, research, and development, there has got to be more impetus in the fact that there are tangible attributes to safety culture which are measureable indicators of both positive and negative safety performance.

At an organisational level, management must set out visual cues and ‘signposts’ – actual safety signage, the physical condition of the workplace, the OHS noticeboard itself, and the physical organisation of integrated safety oriented procedures and processes is a clear indicator of safety infrastructure.

Q: How do believe organisations can build a safety culture within their workplace?
A: The best illustration I have seen to visualise safety culture is of a topographic image of a traffic intersection. Where there are clear markings on the road for turning, no potholes or infrastructure damage, traffic signals working, signage indicating routes and distances, reflective lane markers, and occasional police monitoring you have an effective transport infrastructure.

I believe the same applies to safety culture – developing clear and direct rules and processes and having the physical infrastructure in place is the overt measurement of safety culture. The development of these processes must take account of collaborative ownership of safety processes through effective and ongoing consultation.

Q: How do you believe organisations with a poor safety culture can improve?
A: The adage that poor planning leads to poor performance rings so true for safety culture. Where worker morale and attitudes to safety are low, so too the OHSMS has failed to effectively engage the workers whose safety it governs. Organisations in this situation must firstly understand where they are now, where they want to be, and how they intend to get there - essentially an extension of the of the continual improvement process.
It is well established that organisational leaders at every level are responsible for shaping and building cultures of safety. Craig Donaldson looks at this process in practice and examines how OHS professionals can engage leaders to build cultures of safety.
Building a safety culture in any organisation takes time and effort. The process begins with genuine conviction and persistence on behalf of the Board, the CEO/MD and immediate leadership team, followed by an organisation-wide process that engages managers at all levels to live and breathe OHS in both policy and practice.

Leaders must also demonstrate an ability and willingness to connect with their people and act on the accountability assigned to their role within the organisation, as well as more broadly within society, according to Millar Crawford, vice president of operations at defence contractor Thales Australia.

“Within Thales Australia, we encourage a ‘people first’ approach, complemented with specific guidelines around the health and safety environment (HSE) expectations for each level within Thales Australia, from the executive through to employees,” explains Crawford.

“We are preparing to implement a new training program solely based on HSE leadership skills – not about the law, but about how managers and supervisors can be effective HSE leaders.”

The training will be followed up with a specific action plan – a standardised check sheet of expected activities to enhance HSE leadership – for each participant to complete, as well as a personal and group coaching experience, says Crawford.

Debra Maiden, manager of safety strategy for Victoria Police, says leaders must genuinely care about their people, and this shows through in the way they operate in dealing with staff, making decisions and integrating safety into the way business is done. “If employees sense this genuine intent even when the outcomes are not perfect, they still feel valued and engaged with the organisation,” she says.

In policing, this can often be the case as Maiden notes that so many unpredictable variables are at play in the daily work with the community and addressing crime and road safety.

“The main frustrations [Victoria Police’s leadership] have had in this regard is finding the solutions to prevent injuries and return members to operational policing.”

Leaders must also have a zero tolerance to injury, plan a proactive approach to integrate safety into day-to-day business and demonstrate a strong ability to influence and communicate, Maiden says.

Similarly, Earl Eddings, board member in charge of risk for Cricket Australia, says the number one requirement for a culture of safety is open and effective communication. “By communication, I do not mean managers standing up at safety meetings lecturing the people on the importance of safety or declaring ‘Safety is our number one priority’,“ he asserts.

“I mean effective and often informal, one-on-one communication between individuals and teams; that is managers and employees. Without the correct communication our intent is not necessarily understood, and at worst, is mistaken, potentially as uncaring, dismissive, aloof etcetera.

“This is of course the easy part. Coaching many of our leaders to be effective communicators is the hard part and takes great effort and willingness to change the way they approach not only their job but often their life. So education, support and mentoring are necessary tools for effective leaders.”

Communication and leadership behaviours should come from the highest level of the organisation downwards, or even to the board, says Eddings says there can be a siloed approach to health and safety, with the outcomes largely dependent on the engagement of the local people leader. “For communication to be credible, it should be reinforced by relevant and visible actions and behaviours that are consistent throughout and across the organisation,” he affirms.

“Injures were reduced by 29 per cent, days lost to injuries reduced by 31 per cent [in addition to a] workers’ compensation premium reduction”

Debra Maiden, manager of safety strategy, Victoria Police

How can OHS professionals help?

It is important that OHS professionals find out what is important to leaders first in planning a strategic approach to safety, says Maiden. “What are the drivers for change and what would engage this top group of management?” she asks.

“No standard approach will fit all organisations. Providing guidance to leaders as to what their role may be in changing safety culture. We have found the safety coaching model is valuable in this regard.”

This process is not about safety training or legal compliance, but rather, Maiden says what matters is helping existing skilled leaders see the opportunity that exists and provide them with ways to take advantage of them. The provision and interpretation of data to base decisions upon is also a key service to OHS professionals can provide, she adds.

Crawford also says that OHS professionals need to view their own style, as historically OHS roles have been more reactive policing and process roles.

“At Thales Australia, we are working on continuously developing our OHS professionals to coach and mentor management, rather than take on the accountability, tasks and skills to tell people what to do,” Crawford explains.

“We encourage them to use data creatively and improve the visual appeal of OHS information, as well as innovative promotion activities. We also ensure they are aware of their stakeholders at each level and focus on the needs of stakeholders, and are starting to formalise this through specific engagement strategies.”

OHS professionals have to be engaging, positive and confident to assist leaders to effectively deliver their message, he adds.

They should also look for supporting functions within the business, to assist with message delivery and buy-
“Sometimes it is good to focus on the good things and engaged personnel to help shift along a team,” he notes.

OHS professionals should live the values, says Eddings, by active participation and demonstration of them with management on a daily basis. OHS practitioners can also help an organisation define its values around health and safety, build its OHS risk profile, as well as define clear board, management and line management OHS responsibilities and accountabilities that deliver on the key and effective control processes that are defined during the risk profiling process.

“Ensure that the organisation has a valid and relevant OHS management system [that] is active and understood by the organisation, and not just a bunch of ‘tomes’ sitting on a server or book shelf,” he affirms.

Safety culture results

At Thales Australia, Crawford says the executive team and CEO are constantly working on building HSE into the culture, using every opportunity to reinforce HSE messages within the business. “This has proven to be a very successful strategy for the business. In 2010 our LTIFR has halved and our HSE planned activity completion rates have increased,” he states.

Similarly, Victoria Police has committed to a major health and safety strategy called “protecting our people”. As the role of Victoria Police is to protect the community, this strategy puts attention on “protecting our own”, says Maiden.

“The first phase produced substantial improvements in performance. Injuries were reduced by 29 per cent, days lost to injuries reduced by 31 per cent [in addition to a] workers’ compensation premium reduction. Continuing this improvement through the second phase is our current challenge,” Eddings says that cricket has changed enormously in recent years. “We have enacted many systems and controls, in particularly working with the various government agencies and the Australian Cricketers’ Association to ensure the safety of all concerned is the number one priority,” he says.

“All tours are subject to pre-tour inspections with senior members of Cricket Australia, along with representatives of the players’ association. If both parties are not satisfied the tour does not go ahead. So there has been a cultural transition towards a very strong collaborative approach to player safety and welfare.”
Organisational leaders should make their subordinate leaders’ jobs depend on helping to build a culture of safety, according to General Peter Cosgrove, former Chief of the Australian Defence Force. Speaking ahead of the Safety Conference in Sydney, General Cosgrove said preservation of your workforce as a leader is absolutely key.

“If a subordinate leader doesn’t do this well, then I don’t need them. They’re not in my organisation. That’s pretty absolute. It’s more to do with the walk the walk than the talk the talk,” he asserts.

“Then comes talk the talk. You’ve got to indoctrinate, exhort, encourage, command and remonstrate, in no particular order, but you do start by saying to people ‘make this part of your culture.’”

The next step in the process is putting a reportable KPI system in place, General Cosgrove says. “KPI is corporate speak, so I wouldn’t be using KPIs in the military context, but it amounts to the same thing as far as a formal assessment of how you’re doing your job in in the military. So your approach to safety would be a key indicator to me of how good you are.

“Don’t make safety faddish, don’t do it in the three months before the annual report, so you’ve got something to put in there. Rather, do it as a matter of caution.”

General Cosgrove gave an example of safety leadership from his operational experience, in the early days of peacekeeping operations in Dili, East Timor, on 21 September, 1999. General Cosgrove recalls moving into a large, multi-storey building which had been burnt out and ransacked. The building had to be assessed by engineers in order to determine structural integrity before it could be used as headquarters for the particular operation.

“I was walking to a vehicle and I happened to glance up, and on the corrugated iron roof I saw a young Lance Corporal from the Royal Australian Signals Core, who was walking gingerly around on this roofing line and starting to put satellite dishes up,” he recalls.

“Even though at that stage, I had a lot of demands of my time and a lot of things on my mind, but something hit me and I stopped and observed that he was not roped down with safety harnesses. If he’d have fallen from this rickety iron, either through or off the roof, it would have been a really bad accident.

“So I yelled out to him and I asked, ‘are you hanging on?’ and he said ‘yes I am’. I said ‘didn’t I promote you three days ago before we came here?’ and he said ‘yes sir’. I said: ‘I’ll have that stripe off your arm if you ever work at height without being roped up, so do it immediately.’

“A lot of people saw this, because the whole idea was that everybody is a safety monitor. Even under great pressure and great stress, we could and should have a safety culture,” he says.

Peter Cosgrove on safety leadership

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“I’ll have that stripe off your arm if you ever work at height without being roped up, so do it immediately”

General Peter Cosgrove, former Chief of Australian Defence Force
Falls from height are a common cause of workplace deaths. But falls from heights of less than two metres also cause debilitating injuries to thousands of Victorian workers every year. Are our workplaces doing enough to manage the risks? Trevor Martin examines whether workplaces are doing enough to manage the risks.

Falls from height are a common cause of death in workplaces across Victoria. But are we paying enough attention to falls from low heights?

While working at height involves obvious risks, low height work doesn’t always raise the same alarm bells, according to WorkSafe Victoria’s strategic programs director, Trevor Martin. “It’s easy to see that a fall of ten metres is going to cause serious injury, but it’s hard to look at a workbox and see it as a serious risk,” he says. “Yet these falls cause debilitating musculoskeletal injury, concussion, and even death for Victorian workers every year.”

Real risks
Low height falls most commonly involve stairs, curbs, ladders, work boxes, trestles, truck trailers, and other plant and equipment. Resulting injuries include broken bones, bruises, abrasions, sprains, or puncture wounds from falling on to an object. “These injuries can affect businesses in terms of lost productivity and costs of training new workers. They can also have a significant physical and emotional impact on the worker, as well as their workmates, family, and friends,” Martin says. “In the most serious cases, low height falls have left workers with brain damage from head injuries, and in some cases have even resulted in death.”

A cross-industry issue
While low height falls occur in workplaces across industry, they are most common in the construction and road transport industries. In the construction industry, nearly 20 per cent of compensation claims result from low height or same level falls, and 30 per cent of these workers need to take more than three months off work.

In July 2010, construction incidents notified to WorkSafe included a worker falling unconscious after falling off a 1.5 metre platform, and a worker breaking his wrist after falling just over a metre from a ladder.

In the road transport industry, 20 per cent of compensation claims by truck drivers are as a result of a fall – often from truck trailers. “Falls can occur when working on top of the load or the tray, or when climbing on or off the tray or cargo,” Martin explains.

“There’s also a risk of sprains and strains resulting from poor manual handling practices or jumping off the tray onto hard or uneven surfaces. These kinds of falls can even cause death. In 2008, three workers died after falling off truck trailers – two fell off the trailer and the third worker fell off a load on the trailer.

Controlling the risks
Employers and workers need to assess each job and come up with the control measures to best fit the situation before starting the job.

“WorkSafe’s ‘Right Tool for the Job’ campaign encourages employers and workers to stop, step back and think about how they’re going to do a job before they actually start,” Martin says. The campaign focuses on subcontractors, builders, site supervisors and apprentices working in the domestic construction industry – but the messages resonate across industry. “It’s a basic message – think about what you are doing and the equipment you’re using, and make sure that equipment’s...
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The Safety Show and Sydney Materials Handling will bring more than 300 specialist safety suppliers to the Sydney Showground from 26 to 28 October 2010. Occupational health and safety solutions from first aid through to forklifts and hoists through to health programs will be among the thousands on show.

One of the most lethal risks on Australian worksites – working at heights – will be addressed during a free workshop at The Safety Show by exhibitor, Workplace Access & Safety.

Speaking ahead of the workshop, height safety expert Carl Sachs said NSW employers were likely to face the greatest changes under harmonised regulations.

Culture change

Despite the number of incidents notified to WorkSafe, there’s a common perception that working at low height is low risk. “This perception can be dangerous and it’s one which WorkSafe wants to change,” Martin asserts. “When it comes down to it, employers and workers can’t afford to be complacent about working at any height. The safest workplaces are those that encourage open discussion about the risks and the solutions.”

Information on how to control risks from work at low height is available on WorkSafe Victoria’s website: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au, including a health and safety solution called Unloading flat-bed truck trailers.

The potential for serious injury cannot be over estimated and workers need to be aware that in some environments, incidents can have critical consequences and long-term effects.

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Comcare on falls from heights

Falls are among the most common causes of non-fatal injuries to Commonwealth employees, according to Comcare’s Guide to Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls.

There are many ways to minimise the risks associated with falls, according to the guide. Effective solutions are often simple, cost-effective and lead to both immediate and long-term benefits such as: reduced level of risk; reduced workplace injury; reduced compensation costs; improved communication channels between management and employees; and increased productivity.

The guide notes that the potential for serious injury cannot be overestimated and workers need to be aware that in some environments, incidents can have critical consequences and long-term effects.

Common incidents

Work environments and employee activities differ from workplace to workplace, according to the guide, yet common incidents occur when: there is an unobserved obstacle or impediment; an individual is unaware of a potential hazard; or the type or condition of the surface represents a potential hazard.

Falls can occur either on the same level or from a height. Falls on the same level are more common and are primarily caused by slips and trips, while a fall from a height is likely to be more dangerous because it can cause serious injury or even a fatality.

The guide notes that “hot spots” for potential falls are: ladders; roofs; vehicles and equipment; towers, masts or observation posts; steps and stairways; or a sharp drop, such as a cargo delivery ramp.

Furthemore, common hazards occur from: losing the grip on a ladder or hand-rail; overbalancing; not being aware of sharp drops or uneven ground (such as a cargo loading dock); ob-

Case in point: Falls from heights

A 48 year-old man recently died after falling approximately 18 metres from a boom lift at a Wheelers Hill primary school construction site in Victoria.

It is understood that the boom lift – an aerial work platform that consists of a platform or bucket at the end of a hydraulic lifting system – was being operated by the worker on a temporary track, when the ground gave way on one side of the machine, causing him to fall to the ground.

“Falls from height are one of the biggest workplace killers in Victoria,” says WorkSafe Victoria’s acting construction director, Allan Beacom. “We know that the risk of injury from a fall increases significantly for falls above a height of two metres."

Beacom says if there’s no alternative but to work at height, employers must have effective fall protection or some other backup system in place. “Don’t assume that because you’re never had an injury you’re working safely. It might just mean you’ve been lucky,” he says.

Since the start of 2009, seven Victorian workers have died after falling from height – three of which have been this year. In June, for example, a 59-year-old worker fell approximately 2.2 metres from a timber plank at a Northcote construction site.
Control measures
The guide explains that generic control measures target known hazards that are common to many workplaces or situations. Control measures that apply to preventing falls in many organisations are:

1. Restrict staff access to areas such as rooftops or high walkways.
2. Secure dangerous areas with railings, fencing, caging or barriers.
3. Eliminate drop-points in docking areas by using mechanical substitutions such as tailgate loaders in trucks or ramps that store flat when not in use.
4. Use mechanical hoists rather than in-ground pits, for work on machinery or vehicles.
5. Use automated processes to retrieve items from a height or provide stable step-ladders to avoid using chairs.

Product News
TrussSpacers an onsite winner
Builders and contractors don’t have to take risks when installing trusses any more, thanks to a simple, yet extremely effective temporary truss spacer developed by MiTek – the TrussSpacer. Crawling around on the roof, hanging on to a nail gun and trying to negotiate a truss, plus the timber spacer can be a real balancing act. However the TrussSpacer gives you a free hand – so safety has to be better. With OH&S becoming more important on-site, the TrussSpacer is fast establishing itself as a real favourite on site. TrussSpacers come in two standard lengths (600mm and 900mm) and are available from most MiTek fabricators and leading hardware suppliers. To find out more about the TrussSpacer or any other MiTek products, call your local state office or visit: www.mitek.com.au

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Warehouse Safety Solutions
Did you know WorkSafe has released a new document called People and forklifts don’t mix? This document contains the expectations for separation of pedestrians and forklifts. The document states that there must be at least 3 meters distance between a pedestrian and forklift or a suitable permanent physical barrier must be installed and that companies develop a full and written traffic management plan.

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Fall prevention
To prevent falls from a height for specific tasks, the guide recommends that agencies can:

- Use fall protection equipment wherever possible, such as harnesses, safety barriers, cages around permanent stairs or ladders, rope access systems or temporary work platforms.
- Engage experienced contractors to perform work that is unusual or ‘one-off’ for the agency in terms of working from heights (it is essential to ascertain the contractor’s level of safety knowledge prior to engaging their services).
- Employ modern technology to remove the need to work from heights – for example, if scientific or research data must be collected from a height.
- Update equipment so that the data can be obtained through a remote ground station.
- Supply stair ladders for staff that access material from high shelves on a regular basis. They are relatively easy to move and provide a more stable work platform.
- Make sure that staff performing specialised tasks, such as dogging, rigging or scaffolding have the appropriate level of competency and training.
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Alcoa’s Australian operations represent the world’s largest integrated bauxite mining, alumina refining, aluminium smelting and rolling system. With around 6000 employees, Alcoa of Australia has one of the lowest lost workday injury rates in the country, a figure which is better than the construction, agriculture, forestry and fishing and even retail trade industries.

In 2009, the company recorded a rate of zero lost work days injury rate in Victoria and 0.46/million person hours in Western Australia. Its total recordable injury rate in Victoria in 2009 was 14.45/million per hours and 11.3/million per hours in Western Australia, while the company’s all injury rate was 98.795/million person hours in Victoria in 2009, and 70.345/million person hours in Western Australia.

Alcoa’s key OHS pillars have been developed around process safety, behavioural safety and systems safety, according to the company’s director of safety, Carl Phillips. Integrating these three pillars, together with safety leadership visibility, is critical, he says. “This includes leadership from all areas of the business – internal peers, frontline managers, supervisory staff, functional managers, general managers and the managing director,” he explains.

Process safety is about ensuring assets are within maintenance plan and standards, while behavioural safety is about improving the way employees go about their everyday tasks and systems safety ensures corporate knowledge is retained and continuously reviewed, Phillips explains.

Alcoa of Australia has a significant number of OHS programs and initiatives in place, including standardised work routines which focus specifically on the safest method of performing tasks, pre-task risk assessments for non-routine work and robust investigation procedures to understand causes and contributing factors for every incident (and ensure corrective actions are implemented).

Additionally, Alcoa has daily visual management systems in place to maximise visibility and awareness of safety issues and maintain commitment to improvement, clearly defined safety ex-
A major study of several OHS aspects in NSW’s mining and extractives industry in 2007 found that about one-third of the industry is proactive as far as these issues are concerned, according to Norman Jennings, chairman of the NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council.

“In other words, there are pockets of excellence throughout the industry. Of the rest, about 40 per cent were ‘transitional’ and 30 per cent were ‘reactive’,” he says.

“While some NSW mining companies and sites are world-class OHS performers in some aspects, I believe it is fair to say that none is a world leader in every aspect.”

Jennings believes it should soon become unnecessary to reward good safety performance with safety bonuses and the like. Rather, with a world-leading OHS culture, he says safety should be the core of all work.

“Moving from lagging indicators like LTIFR towards leading indicators, such as proactive measures taken, will take time but I am convinced that the industry is ready to move in this direction,” he asserts.

“This is also a culture issue. With better communication and consultation at all levels and trust between individuals and different groups, people will not feel constrained or nervous about speaking up about any OHS issue.”

Once there is a demonstrated commitment at all levels that OHS is authentic and innate, and when everyone has a leadership role in OHS, he says all people should be competent and have the authority and resources to complete the job safely. “This is part of a vision for world-leading OHS developed in 2008 at the first ever meeting of mining and extractives industry CEOs (from companies, unions and government) on OHS,” he says.

The performance and measurement reporting

Alcoa of Australia uses traditional OSHA lagging indicators of injury classification types, such as LWD and recordable injuries, Phillips says. “We also have a strong emphasis on daily risk notifications,” he adds. “Year-to-date, Alcoa employees have proactively raised just over 9000 daily risk notifications (that is, injury free events).”

“Our leadership responsibility and accountability to our people is to act on their notifications and close out those risks – and we close out 80 per cent of those risks within 30 days. As with any proactive measuring system, Alcoa has seen a direct correlation between the high number of notifications and the reduction of injuries to our employees,” Phillips says.

SafeSpine

One of the biggest challenges facing Alcoa is an aging workforce. As such, most of the company’s recordable injuries relate to sprains and strains, Phillips says. To combat this, the company actively works to educate employees about protecting their bodies at work and at home through a program called SafeSpine, part of an ongoing ergonomics program.

“While some NSW mining companies and sites are world-class OHS performers in some aspects, I believe it is fair to say that none is a world leader in every aspect”

Norman Jennings, chairman, NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council

SafeSpine is a musculoskeletal health and wellbeing education program specialising in injury prevention on worksites Australia-wide, Phillips explains.

With the help of consulting company Onsite Health Solutions, he says Alcoa has implemented a program which encourages employees to stretch every 20 to 30 minutes using personalised stretching designed for the tasks they’re performing.

Workshops are also available to employees which teach them the importance of regular stretching on the prevention of musculoskeletal injury.

“Feedback from employees shows that 94 per cent of those who have been through the SafeSpine program have increased their intension to perform prevention exercises at work,” says Phillips.

Expectations for employees at all levels as well as identification of best practice approaches that are already being used which can be deployed throughout different parts of the site.

“All our programs help to identify and eliminate unsafe work practices, heighten employee awareness and directly involve workers in identifying and addressing unsafe behaviours,” says Phillips.

“We also implement initiatives to achieve our goal of employees returning home healthier than when they came to work. Healthy workforce initiatives include medical screenings, health-risk reduction programs, health education and employee assistance.”
Educating for a living safely culture

The Victorian Division of the Safety Institute of Australia Inc recently held its Education Awards Dinner to recognise excellence in OHS across a number of categories.

Educating for a living safely culture was the theme at the recent Victorian Education Awards Dinner held at the Melbourne Museum, Birrarung Gallery on 26 August 2010.

Acknowledging excellence in OHS across six categories, and an inaugural award, the Victorian Division of the Safety Institute of Australia Inc continues its program to award OHS graduates who have demonstrated high levels of achievement and initiative in the area of OHS.

Nominated by their educational institutions, these awards recognise students who have consistently displayed high academic standards, practical skills, commitment and involvement in OHS.

Susan Heron, CEO Australian Institute of Management (VT) opened proceedings, acknowledging the importance of employee engagement to an organisation’s long-term growth and profitability.

“We are now in a situation where our employees are more important than they ever have been. The resource we have been able to rely on is now becoming harder to attract, harder to retain and the need to strategically develop them is greater,” she said.

“Smart companies understand that employee engagement is critical to the company’s long-term growth and profitability. There is no point in commencing an employee engagement strategy unless you understand that the basis for any organisation is to ensure that it provides its employees with a safe working place.”

It is appalling, Heron said, that for a country like Australia that is educated, capable and home to some very innovative people that we have such a large number of workers going to unsafe workplaces each day. “We are at the forefront of great opportunity for leadership, with the ability to influence corporate long-term growth and profitability,” said Heron.
The evening displayed a new wave of passion and enthusiasm for the OHS industry, said Ian Forsyth, deputy CEO of WorkSafe Victoria.

“WorkSafe is proud to sponsor events, such as this, where it is great to see the future generation of health and safety professionals that is very much on display through those nominated and award winners tonight.

“For us, to see the up and coming people in this industry says great things not just for the industry but for the state of Victoria in occupational health and safety.

“We are confident that in the years to come we will look back at this time as a defining moment for professionals in this field.

“Through the work and leadership of groups such as the SIA, those people that have the OHS body of knowledge, the years of experience and strong reputations will increasingly

AWARD WINNERS, COMMENDATIONS AND SPONSORS:

Category 1 Certificate IV OHS - TAFE sector
Sponsor: Zeal Group Pty Ltd
Winner: Sonja Buble (The Gordon TAFE)
Commendation:
Craig Walter (The Gordon TAFE)
Tracey Malloch (Swinburne TAFE)

CATEGORY 2 DIPLOMA AND ADVANCED DIPLOMA - TAFE SECTOR
Sponsor: Piper Alderman
Winner: Dan Harte (Swinburne University TAFE)
High Commendation:
Graeme Arnold (Wodonga TAFE)
Julie Anne McKenzie (RMIT TAFE)

CATEGORY 3 UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE AND GRADUATE CERTIFICATE – UNIVERSITY
Sponsor: WorkSafe Victoria
Winner: Christopher Newnham (RMIT University)
High Commendation:
Phillipa Maloney-Walsh (LaTrobe University)

CATEGORY 4 GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN OHS OR HAZARD MANAGEMENT – UNIVERSITY
Sponsor: Noel Arnold & Associates
Winner: Kevin Taylor (University of Ballarat)
High Commendation:
Bill Fitzgerald (RMIT University)

CATEGORY 5 MASTERS OF OHS MANAGEMENT – UNIVERSITY
Sponsor: WSP Risk Solutions
Winner: Herb Sirca (RMIT University)

CATEGORY 6 PHD AND DOCTORATE PROGRAMS - UNIVERSITY
Sponsor: Douglas IPT
Winner: Rwth Stuckey (Monash University)
Doctor of Philosophy, Phd Thesis occupational light vehicle use

SIA OHS Professional of Excellence Award (Inaugural)
Sponsor: Enhance Solutions
Winner: Kelvin Blackney, Social Operating Systems
Project: Engaging communities in living safely culture for bushfire risk areas
High Commendation:
Tony Smith, East Gippsland Water & Victorian Water
Project: OHS network to develop industry solutions to OHS issues
High Commendation:
Paula Alan, St John of God Health Care
Project: Developed and implemented Safety, Health and Wellbeing programs in all areas.
Commendation:
Paul Leon Dover (Monash University)
Project: Developed and implemented safety and health programs in the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences to maintain certification to AS/NZS 4801 and ISO OHS 18001
be recognised as true professionals and valued business partners,” said Forsyth.

Dan Harte, winner of the Diploma in OHS, said: “I am very proud and honoured to have been nominated and to have received this award. For me OHS is a passion, not just a career. These awards will take me a long way into my future.

“The diversity of the people in attendance shows a new wave of passion and energy for the profession and that there is still much to be learnt from the professional body of knowledge.”

Amongst the awards, and for the first time, was the SIA OHS Professional of Excellence Award (Inaugural). The winner was Kelvin Blackney for his work on engaging communities in living safely culture for bushfire risk areas.

“Looking back on the tragic events that occurred on Black Saturday, 6 February 2009, we understand these events to have been foreseeable, and preventable.

“Knowing these things means that somewhere along the line, we failed to convey what we knew about those preventive elements,” Blackney said.

Communication and engagement of people is key said Blackney. The engaging communities in living safely culture for bushfire risk areas – community fire safety culture process is an initiative that developed as a result of the SIA’s submission to the Bushfire Royal Commission based on a “living safely culture”.

Summing up proceedings and the theme for the evening, educate for a living safely culture, Professor Malcolm Sim, director of the Monash Centre for Occupational & Environmental Health, said that education in OHS should progress from cradle to the grave.

“One of the challenges we face is trying to attract bright young people into the field. It’s really pleasing tonight to see such wonderful projects presented and shows me that OHS is alive, well, and has a good future,” he said.

Sim feels that some people take a view that OHS is old hat, but that we face greater challenges today with emerging technology and the interaction between safety and chronic disease.

Seeing encouraging signs to enable us to deal with this increase in complexities, Sim said: “I see Victoria as a real leader in this area, and as we have seen tonight, by the diversity of the institutions where these students are coming through, there is such a variety of disciplines that reinforces this leadership role nationally.”
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