



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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QUICKSCAN

<i>New funding for violence in health care research</i>	1
<i>Harsher penalties wanted for assaulting police officers</i>	1
<i>On Railcorp corruption found after internal audit</i>	2
<i>New operational and safety equipment for Tasmanian police</i>	2
<i>New safety plan for trucking industry called for</i>	2
<i>Rigger dies after falling from a cherry picker</i>	3
<i>Women hit by pallet falling from moving truck</i>	3
<i>Unqualified boy used as a safety observer</i>	3
<i>Safety risk from Circular Quay structure</i>	3
<i>Railcorp says pylons are structurally sound</i>	3
<i>Commuter train derails but system is safe</i>	4
<i>Tasmanian Sex Industry bill introduced</i>	4
<i>New guidance on fixing and assessing noise</i>	4
<i>New NZ report into fumigation risks</i>	4
<i>Businesses fined for breaches of fire safety regulations</i>	4
<i>ACT audits of mid-size retailers</i>	5
<i>Safety upgrade for Queensland courts</i>	5
<i>Queensland upgrades level crossings</i>	5

Study to Reduce Aggressive Behaviour Towards Health Professionals

June 6, 2005

The Minister for Workcover John Lenders today announced a \$485,000 WorkSafe grant to improve the safety of health care workers exposed to the risks of violence and aggression.

Visiting Maroondah Hospital today, Mr Lenders said in the past three years almost 500 workers have made claims for exposure to workplace violence in the health care sector.

"Health care staff often work in emotion-charged environments that can boil over," Mr Lenders said.

"We want to equip health management and staff with the skills and procedures to reduce the risk of violence.

"This project will help to contribute to a greater understanding of the impact of occupational violence and strategies that can best prevent it."

Mr Lenders said the funding would enable Melbourne Health to employ a full time aggression prevention project manager and a part-time aggression prevention project officer at North East Health Wangaratta.

"The project will explore all areas of violence within the health care sector. When complete it will assist not only employees and employers but also the patients and the community," Mr Lenders said.

The aggression management research will:

- lead to safer workplaces, environments and work practices for employees;
- improve staff recruitment and retention;
- increase information, training and instruction and
- improve safety, service and communication for patients.

Mr Lenders said the project demonstrated a growing awareness of OHS in the health sector.

"It also reflects the aim of the new Occupational Health and Safety Act - bringing employees, employers and their representatives together to find solutions to workplace hazards," Mr Lenders said.

Source: Minister For WorkCover

Police: New Equipment and Safer Workplaces

June 3 2005

Judges need to take the safety of police more seriously and jail those guilty of assaulting officers, a police union says.

Harsher penalties would help cut down on abuse faced by police, who were regularly punched, kicked, bitten and spat at, Queensland Police Union spokesman Peter Garrels said today.

He called on the judiciary to enforce Queensland's maximum penalty of six months' jail for assaulting or obstructing police.

"The courts must send people to jail to let others know the police are not punching bags," Mr Garrels said.

"It appears that there is the law there, but the courts are not enforcing it.

"People are getting off all the time with \$150 fines and you can get more for speeding."

A nationwide spate of assaults on police in recent months included a motorist accelerating his car and knocking down a central Queensland police officer, and a 50-strong crowd battering and bruising two Northern Territory police.

Other incidents included a man firing shots at police during a 68-hour siege in Tasmania.

And three officers on the NSW central coast were repeatedly kicked and punched as they tried to break up a street brawl.

Mr Garrels said an increasing number of assaults on police boiled down to a lack of respect in addition to alcohol, drugs and domestic violence situations.

"In the early days if you touched a police officer you went straight to jail ... respect levels for police have dropped off over the years," he said.

"Many people who assault officers know what the system is about because they have been through it several times and know what they can get away with."

Police officers deserved the right to feel safe on the job, he said AAP

Continued on page 2





SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Railcorp: Internal Audit Proves No Test Corruption

By Vera Devai - AAP

June 8 2005

An internal audit conducted early this year found no corruption in the NSW train driver testing process, the state's rail body said today.

The NSW Opposition yesterday claimed learner train drivers were being given "cheat sheets" before sitting exams they must pass to work on Sydney's rail network.

Opposition Leader John Brogden yesterday displayed a CD-ROM in state parliament which he claimed rail sources said was given to the trainees, containing precise exam questions.

The Opposition has referred the matter to Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator.

RailCorp CEO Vince Graham today said similar allegations were made in February and disproved.

"We undertook an internal audit investigation which is now complete," Mr Graham told reporters. "That identified no evidence of corruption in the testing process."

All theory tests were closed book exams and supervised, Mr Graham said. "Even if drivers had access to past papers that would require them to learn the questions and the answers to approximately 160 separate questions," he said.

Transport Minister John Watkins said the government was more than happy to go to the corruption watchdog over the matter. "I am very happy at any stage to go down to the ICAC about any matter," he said. "I hope the leader of the opposition has sent any material he has down to the ICAC. I am confident after being briefed by RailCorp overnight that procedures put in place are absolutely adequate."

AAP .

Keeping Police Officers Safe and Well-Equipped

3 June 2005

Police and Public Safety Minister David Llewellyn (pictured below at the launch) announced that Tasmania Police would soon begin using a range of new equipment to keep them, and the Tasmanian public, safer.

"Tasmania Police will soon have 530 new ballistic vests, which meet all the appropriate standards," said Mr Llewellyn. "These new vests, purchased at a cost of nearly \$500,000, will mean most operational police officers will have their own vest. This is an important step in ensuring individual police officers have a vest that fits properly."

These ballistic vests provide soft armour protection against a wide range of projectiles. A ceramic plate can be slipped into a pocket in the front giving even greater protection.

"Police will soon have an extra 70 Lion Brand SD400 breath-testing units, costing nearly \$100,000, available for screening motorists," he said. "Drivers should expect to be breath-tested more often – those who are contributing to the rate of crashes in our community by drinking and driving stand a greater chance of being caught."

"A recent traffic operation on the Eastern Shore of Hobart saw police carry out more than 5000 breath-tests, and charge 32 people with driving offences including exceeding .05. So far this year, Police have intercepted nearly 450,000 vehicles for random breath-tests. With this new equipment, they have set a target of doing nearly 554,000 random breath tests next year.

"This Government is serious about road safety and every road user's right to travel safely on our roads. People who disregard the law will be caught – this new, state-of-the-art equipment will help police to do that."

Tasmania Police also has new road safety cameras and lightweight hand-held laser cameras.

"Tasmania Police will replace some existing cameras with new laser cameras. Police already have four laser cameras, they'll have four more in a couple of weeks, and negotiations are underway for another four radar cameras.

"Police tell me that the best deterrent is being pulled over by a police officer at the time of committing the offence – so we have purchased new hand-held and car-mounted speed-measuring devices. All of this new equipment means Tasmania Police officers are as well equipped as they can be to do their difficult job as safely as possible and to enforce the laws of this State as efficiently as they can."

Source: Tasmanian Minister for Police and Public Safety

Queensland Calls for National Plan For Trucking Industry

June 6 2005

Queensland Transport and Main Roads Minister Paul Lucas has called for national cross border action to tackle dangerous driving practices in the trucking industry.

Mr Lucas told his State and Territory colleagues at the recent Australian Transport Council meeting in Alice Springs, that Queensland would soon have cutting edge vehicle identification technology to improve road safety by tackling heavy vehicle driver fatigue.

Mr Lucas said measures to reduce driver fatigue were contained in Queensland's proposed Intelligent Transport Strategy (ITS).

The ITS, which Mr Lucas raised at the meeting, outlined a number of measures to put Queensland Transport at the forefront of new technology.

The Minister strongly endorsed the need for national action to use modern satellite and electronic technology to better monitor trucks for important safety and business benefits.

"More and more concerns are being expressed about the need to manage heavy vehicle driver fatigue," Mr Lucas said.

"I'm advised that up to 2000 fatigue-related accidents involving heavy vehicles cost the community about \$300 million a year."

"Queensland is leading the country in Chain of Responsibility legislation with a number of major prosecutions.

"Recently a company was fined a record \$165,400 after pleading guilty to 306 charges for breaching driving hours regulations."

Mr Lucas told his ministerial colleagues there was no place in the industry for fly-by-night truck operators who put the safety of other road users at risk, and undercut decent truckies who did the right thing

"In the past we have had to rely on log books, phone records and the like to prosecute rogue truck operators," he said.

"The 21st Century needs modern technology and that's why I believe it is so important to look at technology such as mandatory global positioning systems (GPS) on trucks."

He said Queensland had already rolled out this type of technology to its commercial fishing fleet.

Source: Department of Transport & Main Roads

Continued on page 3



Continued from page 2

Rigger dies on building site in Sydney's west

June 3 2005

A rigger has been killed after falling from a cherry picker on a construction site in Sydney's south-west.

Mark Gallance, 26, died while working on the construction of factory units at Governor Macquarie Drive, Chipping Norton about 2pm (AEST), a union said.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) said Mr Gallance was crushed between the cherry picker's bucket and steel roofing beams and fell several metres when the bucket was lowered.

CFMEU spokesman Dick Whitehead said an initial investigation revealed Mr Gallance was not wearing a safety harness as he fell onto a concrete slab.

"When the platform was moved to free him, he fell to the concrete slab and was killed," he said.

"It appears that he was not wearing adequate safety equipment, including a harness, to protect him from such a fall, and the CFMEU has serious concerns about possible safety breaches that may have resulted in this death."

Mr Gallance was employed on the site by Sydney Metro Cranes Pty Ltd.

WorkCover and the CFMEU are conducting an extensive investigation into the incident. AAP

Woman Hit by Falling Pallet

4 June 2005

Police are appealing for information after a fallen timber pallet hit a 50-year-old woman while she was walking in Meadowbank. About 7.30am yesterday (3 June), the woman was walking along Constitution Avenue when a pallet dislodged from a moving truck, hitting her in the neck and head. The woman remains in a critical but stable condition in Royal North Shore Hospital. Inquiries are continuing with police to interview the driver during the weekend. Source: NSW Police

Unqualified teenage boy on site to be investigated

June 5 2005

An independent investigation will be held into why an unqualified teenager was found working as a safety observer on a suburban railway line on Sydney's north shore.

The 16-year-old was filling in as a corridor protection officer for a contractor working for the Lane Cove Tunnel Company at Artarmon, RailCorp spokeswoman Helen Willoughby said.

The job involves monitoring rail traffic to ensure the track is clear of workers and equipment when trains approach.

The teenager was the son of the private contractor, she said.

RailCorp transit officers discovered the safety breach last Monday night and called for a halt to the work.

"Under the agreement they (the Lane Cove Tunnel Company) need to provide a corridor protection officer (who) is responsible for the safety of the people who are employed on that job," Ms Willoughby said.

"And, effectively, it was the subcontractor who they had employed as the protection officer who committed the safety breach."

The matter will be investigated by the Office Of Transport Safety Investigation - the independent safety and reliability regulator, she said.

"We also obviously will take the matter up with the company.

"The person who's committed the breach here is the subcontractor and I would imagine that any action would be taken against him and his company."

The incident had no effect on rail line operations, she added. AAP

Safety could be at risk from Circular Quay 'concrete cancer'

June 7 2005

Concrete cancer is eating into pylons supporting rail lines at Sydney's Circular Quay raising concerns about passenger safety, the NSW opposition says.

Opposition transport spokesman Peter Debnam today asked the NSW transport safety and reliability regulator to answer questions regarding "ongoing" damage to a series of pylons supporting Circular Quay railway station.

Concrete cancer is the common name for weakness caused when rust destroys steel reinforcing in cracked concrete.

"I've raised this issue this morning with the safety regulator and said what action has been taken in the last week to determine the extent of the concrete cancer in these pylons," he told reporters.

Passers-by brought the damage to Mr Debnam's attention, and work to uncover the problem began late last week, he said.

One of the real concerns was that damage had been evident on the pylons for some time and maintenance checks had not picked it up, he said.

"You've got to ask what sort of damage is there across the rest of the infrastructure ...," he said.

Continued on page 4

Circular Quay Rail Pylons Safe

By Vera Devai - AAP

June 7 2005

Huge cracks in pylons supporting the rail line at one of Sydney's biggest tourist areas did not pose a safety threat, authorities said today.

Opposition transport spokesman Peter Debnam today asked the NSW Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator (ITSSR) to answer questions regarding "ongoing" damage to a series of pylons supporting Circular Quay railway station and the Cahill Expressway.

Passers-by brought the damage to Mr Debnam's attention, and work to uncover the problem began late last week. "I've raised this issue this morning with the safety regulator and said what action has been taken in the last week to determine the extent of the concrete cancer in these pylons," he told reporters.

But RailCorp, which has joint responsibility for maintenance and inspection of the structure with the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA), said the pylons did not have concrete cancer and were structurally sound. "Inspection reports confirm that the cracks that appear near the top of three piers do not in any way affect the structural integrity of the infrastructure," RailCorp said in a statement. "Work to repair these cracks is expected to begin next month and will be completed before the end of the year."

ITSSR said it was in the process of reviewing repair plans. "ITSSR have been advised by RTA engineers that RTA testing has shown this is superficial or surface cracking of the pylon and there is not threat to safety," ITSSR CEO Carolyn Walsh said. "We will continue to undertake our own inspections on the pylon."

RailCorp also said the pylons were inspected regularly, but Mr Debnam said the damage had been evident on the pylons for some time and maintenance checks had not picked it up. "I think what you've got here is a clear demonstration that the infrastructure of NSW is crumbling," he said.

AAP



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Rail Tracks Safe Despite Derailment

By Rosemary Desmond - AAP

June 7 2005

The Queensland government has played down Opposition claims the state's rail network is unsafe after an early morning commuter train derailment in Brisbane today.

The wheels of the Citytrain's front carriage jumped the tracks at 5.36am (AEST) as it was approaching platform two at Central Station in Brisbane's CBD.

Around 250 passengers on the train, which was travelling from Caboolture to Beenleigh, were evacuated to the nearby platform but the carriage remained upright and no one was injured.

In state parliament, Opposition transport spokeswoman Fiona Simpson questioned whether the incident was linked to the tilt train derailment in Bundaberg last year and if the government was cutting back on expenditure for the state's rail infrastructure and maintenance.

More than 120 of the 157 passengers on board the Spirit of Townsville tilt train were injured when it left the track 60km north of Bundaberg, shortly before midnight, on November 15 last year.

But Transport Minister Paul Lucas said an inquiry, headed by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), was still underway and was receiving the government's full cooperation. Mr Lucas said Queensland had only one third the Citytrain derailments of New South Wales and Queensland led Australia in its spending on rail and infrastructure.

He said there have been seven Citytrain derailments in Brisbane since 1997, all of them at low speed. The derailed carriage was hoisted back onto place at Central Station by lunchtime today.

An investigation into the incident was underway.

AAP

Continued from page 3

"I think what you've got here is a clear demonstration that the infrastructure of NSW is crumbling but clearly these are the main supporting pylons for the Circular Quay rail line.

"What risk is there to the rail line and the passengers, and I've asked the government to deliver that answer urgently within hours.

Concrete cancer is a widespread problem, especially in bridges, buildings and structures built between the 1940s and 1980s, when a less dense mix of concrete was used. AAP

Sex Industry Regulation Bill 2005

7 June 2005

Tasmanian Attorney General Judy Jackson today introduced into the House of Assembly the Sex Industry Regulation Bill 2005, which will both legalise and regulate the sex industry in Tasmania to protect both those who work in it and the wider community.

Mrs Jackson said the proposed legislation was long overdue and was designed to provide protection to sex workers, prevent children from being exploited and improve public health.

"The Sex Industry Regulation Bill 2005 is modelled on the ACT's registration system, which regulates the industry without being so draconian that it is driven underground," Ms Jackson said.

"The legislation has a particular focus on protecting children, sex workers, and public health.

"Self-employed sex workers and all commercial operators of sexual services businesses will have to register their name, home address and the address of the premises where the sexual services business operates with the Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading.

"Registration details of self-employed sex workers will not be publicly available.

"People who have committed a disqualifying offence are barred from operating a commercial sexual services business.

"Sexual services businesses will be covered by normal planning laws.

"The Bill creates a range of sex-industry related offences, such as:

- Causing or permitting a child to take part in prostitution;
- Permitting a child to be present on the premises of a sexual services business;
- Forcing a person to be a sex worker by use of force, threats, assaults, intimidation, supply of a drug, misrepresentations, or threats;

- Soliciting in public (an offence for both clients and prostitutes); and
- Failure to promote or adopt safe sex practices.

Source: Tasmanian Attorney General

Assessing And Fixing Noise In Workplaces

WorkSafe Victoria has released a new guide on assessing and fixing noise in workplaces.

The "guide for assessing and fixing noise problems at work" outlines practical noise guidance such as effects on hearing, noise exposure standards and measures to reduce noise. The guide includes a summary of the noise regulations, a "buy quiet" purchasing guide and types of people who can provide audiometric testing.

It is available from WorkSafe or at <http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au/vwa/publications/docsbyUNID/B1F6718CFF7A3716CA25701800076078?Open>

New Zealand Methyl Bromide Fumigation Report

Residents and businesses adjacent to the Port of Nelson had raised concerns about the potential for exposure to methyl bromide during fumigation operations nearby. Some have attributed health concerns to the practice of releasing the fumigant into the general environment, and have described various odours and health symptoms immediately after the covers are removed from the fumigated sawn timber stacks.

The report makes several recommendations concerning a change in design, increasing flue height and the use of PPE.

The full report is available at <http://www.osh.dol.govt.nz/publications/research/MeBrReport0505.pdf>

Building owners warned to heed fire safety regulations

June 8, 2005

Queensland building owners have been warned to heed fire safety regulations after two businesses were fined a total of \$60,000 for breaches.

Emergency Services Minister Chris Cummins today said the businesses, based in Kingaroy in the state's south-east, were punished for a lack of emergency lighting, insufficient exit signage and no fire and evacuation plans in the event of a fire.

Mr Cummins said Kingaroy Blanching and G Crumpton and Sons Peanut Shellers last month pleaded guilty to 25 charges and were fined \$50,000 and \$10,000 respectively.

"These fines are a dire warning to building owners who neglect fire safety to the detriment of their workers and the public," Mr Cummins said in a statement.

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Continued on page 5



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Continued from page 4

Safety Audit of Mid-Size Retailers

June 7 2005

ACT WorkCover Inspectors will visit medium size retail businesses this week as part of an audit of retail employer compliance with the requirements of the ACT Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989 (the Act).

Over 250 businesses will be visited during the audit between 8 and 10 June to promote awareness of occupational health and safety and ensure employers are meeting their obligations under the Act.

"Inspectors will be checking that businesses are meeting general OH&S requirements such as having a current OH&S policy, facilitating employee involvement in workplace OH&S and providing employee access to OH&S information," ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

ACT WorkCover Inspectors will visit medium retail businesses in Cooleman Court, Erindale Centre, Gungahlin Marketplace, Jamison Centre, Kippax Fair, Lanyon Marketplace, Manuka Plaza and Southlands, Mawson.

"An OH&S policy is a key indicator of a business's commitment to workplace safety and Inspectors will be providing advice on OH&S policy requirements," Mr Janssen said.

Businesses to be audited include supermarket and grocery, specialist food, clothing and soft goods, furniture, home wares and appliances, recreational goods, household equipment repair services, motor retailing and vehicle services.

"Inspectors will also be looking for evidence that businesses are using risk assessment systems, have incident registers and understand their injury reporting obligations," Mr Janssen said.

Source: ACT WorkCover

Court security to be upgraded

June 7 2005

The Queensland Government has committed State Budget funds to a significant security upgrade in the state's major courthouses.

Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Rod Welford, said ten of Queensland's busiest courts had been earmarked for an immediate security upgrade.

"We have committed \$1 million in the 2005-06 Budget to start the program, with a similar amount in the following year," Mr Welford said. "It is vital that all our court users, whether judges, magistrates or the general public, feel safe when they are in our courthouses.

"Although our courts are among the world's safest, this new funding will enable us to strengthen safeguards even further. We're starting with our busiest courts and there will be additional security guards employed and metal detectors installed. The courthouses earmarked for 2005-06 are Beenleigh, Cairns, Townsville (Magistrates and Higher Courts), Ipswich, Southport, Maroochydhore, Rockhampton, Mackay and Western Districts

(Richlands).

"This program not only responds to the growing volume of court matters involving domestic violence, but also addresses community concerns about personal safety. These new measures will play a significant role in making our courts safer for judicial officers, legal counsel, witnesses, staff and the public."

Mr Welford said all new courts were being designed with greater security features, including secure cells to ensure defendants were kept well away from victims, witnesses and the public.

"We are also continuing our program to protect vulnerable witnesses in our courts, with closed-circuit television and video-conferencing facilities to be installed at courts in Bowen, Roma and Emerald courthouses in 2005-6," he said. "Special vulnerable witness waiting rooms will also be added to courts in Biloela, Bowen, Charleville, Charters Towers, Goondiwindi, Kingaroy, Proserpine, Stanthorpe, Weipa and Yeppoon."

Source: Queensland Attorney-General & Justice

Rail Safety On Track

June 9 2005

The Beattie Government is continuing its commitment to rail safety with \$5 million being spent in 2005-06 to upgrade the state's public level crossings.

Transport and Main Roads Minister Paul Lucas said that although Queensland has one of the best rail safety records in the country, Queensland Transport had established a Level Crossing Safety Steering Group to assess the upgrade program.

The Minister said crossings across the state were currently being assessed and upgrade works were being prioritised as part of the five-year program.

"Queensland has not had a passenger or train crew rail fatality since 1985. And building on our already strong rail safety record is a priority for the government."

Mr Lucas said the main rail safety role for Queensland Transport was to develop and implement rail safety accreditation schemes, conduct rail safety system and field audits, participate in or review incident investigations, monitor rail safety, implement level crossing safety programs and review rail industry security arrangements.

He said a key focus this year was to influence the national rail reform agenda through the development of national model legislation to improve rail safety across the country.

Last year, Queensland derailments were down 30% on 2003. From 2001 to 2003, Queensland has had 107 derailments compared with 179 for NSW.

He said further safety measures would be considered following the final report into the 2004 Tilt Train derailment. That report is due to be released later this year.

Source: Minister for Transport & Main Roads