



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Proudly Sponsored by the Safety Institute of Australia (Victoria Division)
National Office: PO Box 2078, GLADSTONE PARK Victoria 3043

Issue 24 October 17 2005 ISSN 1832-6714

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Supplied by SAFETY AT WORK magazine

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Fed IR Proposals are Anti-family and Unfair

October 11 2005

The federal government's proposed industrial relations reforms are anti-family and unfair, an Adelaide University labour studies expert says.

Barbara Pocock, a research fellow at the university's school of social science, said the government's industrial blueprint goes against international trends.

Describing the proposals as a "20-year-old vision with a poor fit to a 21st century working family", Dr Pocock said the changes would encourage longer working hours.

"These industrial relations changes are bad for families and our social fabric," Dr Pocock said at a University of Melbourne forum today.

"More and more Australian workers have responsibility for the care of others - these workers put their families first and cannot hold out for better conditions or higher pay."

Dr Pocock said individual bargaining had hurt Australian families.

"These (government) proposals will reduce the Australian work and family standard - already low by international comparison - to a bare minimum," she said.

"Instead, inequality will widen and many working carers will struggle to bargain for themselves to do better.

"These changes swim against the international tide, as many countries are lifting general work and family standards in recognition of the growing reliance on the work of those with family responsibilities. This plan is anti-family and unfair." AAP

Funeral directors among those to get anti-viral drugs

October 10 2005

Funeral directors, health care personnel and electricity and water supply workers could be among the first to get anti-viral treatment in the event of a pandemic influenza outbreak.

Only 10 per cent of the four million doses of the stockpile of the drugs Relenza and Tamiflu would be distributed to the general population with the rest to be allocated to essential workers, a News Limited report said today.

The workers are among key groups identified in the detailed Australian Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza, which outlines access to Australia's emergency stockpile of anti-viral drugs, the report said.

A spokeswoman for Health Minister Tony Abbott said the stockpile was designed for health

workers and people who would keep the country running.

An effective vaccine would need to be developed, but that could take up to three months from the time of identification of the flu virus.

If the bird flu currently sweeping Asia mutated to a human-to-human transmissible virus and affected 25 per cent of the population, the management plan estimates there could be up to 44,000 deaths if no vaccine or anti-viral treatment is available. AAP

Burns lead to conviction and fine for Blue Circle

October 7, 2005

A major cement manufacturer has been convicted and fined \$70,000 after two men were left with second degree burns to the face and legs.

The men were burned when an 850 degree Centigrade blockage of ground limestone and sand, known as cement meal, broke loose and escaped through an inspection hatch at Blue Circle Southern Cement Ltd's Waurm Ponds plant near Geelong on 12 July 2003.

Blue Circle pleaded guilty to three charges laid under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

WorkSafe told Geelong Magistrate Ian von Einem the men were trying to clear the blockage by using an air lance and a high pressure water gun through various portholes but neither were successful.

They then opened an inspection hatch which was mainly used for cleaning and maintenance. One of the injured men said he had opened this door before to clear a blockage and had seen others doing the same.

They were opening another inspection hatch when the lid blew open and cement meal erupted from the opening.

Both men were taken to the first aid room where treatment for burns began.

WorkSafe said although the plant had a potential for burns, the company's first aid facilities were lacking as there was a failure to:

- there was only one sink and one tap for running water in the room. This meant that while one man had his hand under running water, bandages for the other man had to be wet at the toilets;

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- there was no emergency shower in the first aid room, the closest was 15 to 20 metres away;
- the supply cupboard containing bandages was locked at the time of the incident.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said the case was another example where safe work procedures and risk assessment could have prevented the incident.

"Ideally risks should be engineered-out, but where that is not possible the means of dealing with foreseeable production issues must be put in place so they can be dealt with safely.

"The ability to open inspection ports during production needs to be closely monitored. Failure to understand this point is a common source of serious injuries in Victoria."

The charges related to the company's failure to provide and maintain safe plant and systems of work, failure to provide adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to employees and failure to provide adequate facilities for the welfare of employees.

Source: WorkSafe

Coroner recommends licensing for adventure activities

October 10 2005

A teenager probably would have survived a 10-metre fall from a giant swing if he had not been trying to ride the contraption upside down at the time, a coroner said today.

Dale Walter Measey, 17, fell to the ground on his head when he was preparing to ride upside down on a giant swing called The Rip Swing on April 11, 2001.

The youth from St Kilda was attending the Delhantie Park Adventure Camp in Gippsland, a not-for-profit adventure activity centre, at the time of the accident.

He died at the Alfred Hospital a day later from head injuries suffered in the fall.

Coroner Jane Hendtlass said the park did not take appropriate safety precautions in relation to the known risks associated with the swing in an inverted position.

She said Mr Measey would probably have survived the accident if he had fallen in an upright position.

She recommended that the Victorian WorkCover Authority established a mandatory accreditation, registration and licensing scheme for adventure activities provided by not-for-profit organisations.

In a sort-of related way, WorkSafe Victoria, this week released a Guidance Note on

Preventing Falls from Flying Foxes.

AAP

QR says it's settling tilt train derailment compo claims

October 10 2005

Queensland Rail (QR) says it has settled more than 50 compensation claims from last year's tilt-train derailment near Bundaberg.

The Spirit of Townsville tilt train speared off the tracks 60km north of Bundaberg shortly before midnight on November 15, injuring 128 of the 157 passengers on board.

A report released last week by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) found the train had been travelling more than 50kph over the recommended limit when it derailed.

A co-driver was not in his seat when the accident happened, investigations also found.

QR told ABC radio it had received 110 compensation claims, including more than 50 formal notices of claim for personal injury.

A QR spokeswoman would not say how much had so far been paid out. However, by the end of June this year more than \$180,000 in compensation had been paid.

QR chief executive Bob Scheuber last week said the rail network accepted responsibility for the disaster and would accept each of the 11 recommendations from the ATSB's review.

Mr Scheuber said public confidence in QR had been shaken since the accident, with tilt-train patronage down five per cent and commuters calling to express safety concerns. AAP

\$200,000 for shearing safety research.

16 September 2005

The Minister for Workcover John Lenders today announced a \$200,000 WorkSafe grant.

Speaking at The Victorian Farm Safety Centre – Farm Safety Update Mr Lenders said "shearing is a physically demanding profession and there are far too many injuries in the industry".

The \$200,000 funding will be provided to Australian Workers Union, the Victorian Farmers Federation and Shearing Contractors Association of Australia to conduct projects over a 24 month period.

The project will seek solutions to shearing hazards. Topics to be investigated

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Unfinancial SIA Members

Recently membership invoices were sent to all SIA members for renewal.

There are many benefits to retaining membership of the Safety Institute of Australia, one of the least is that you continue to receive this weekly news bulletin at no charge.

Please don't hesitate to renew. Contact the SIA Secretariat at 03 8336 1995 or at natadmin@sia.org.au

Adobe Acrobat V7 Information

Some readers have expressed difficulty in upgrading to the latest version of Acrobat Reader with one of the problems being that the download can be over 25 megabytes - a substantial burden to dial-up internet connections.

Safety At Work publishers are now allowed to distribute the latest edition of Acrobat Reader on a CD. If you want a copy of Acrobat Reader 7.00 please email me at jonesk@sia.org.au and include your full postal address. A CD will be mailed to you shortly after.

The CD won't be pretty as it is a burnt copy of the software that Adobe permits us to distribute. It is not allowed to be given to anyone other than the person requesting the CD and all CDs will be checked with Norton Antivirus before distribution.



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RailCorp “deficient” in investigating complaints: report

October 13 2005

Nearly 75 per cent of RailCorp investigations into misconduct by transit officers are “critically deficient”, according to a report by the government watchdog.

The NSW Ombudsman’s annual report, tabled in parliament today, examined the conduct of a range of organisations, including RailCorp and NSW police, under its jurisdiction.

Ombudsman Bruce Barbour said the report studied a sample of 72 RailCorp investigations into the conduct of transit officers during 2003-04.

It found RailCorp failed to pursue obvious lines of inquiry, identify key issues, contact complainants or check the complaint history of officers involved.

Mr Barbour said RailCorp was looked at closely in response to an increasing number of complaints about the behaviour of transit officers. He described the quality of RailCorp investigations as “extremely disappointing”.

“Although many of the complaints related to serious issues such as assault, use of excessive force and grossly inappropriate conduct, 53 of the investigations (75 per cent) undertaken by RailCorp were critically deficient,” Mr Barbour said in a statement. The report recommended the need for systemic changes, clarification of officers’ powers and external oversight of investigations.

Mr Barbour said RailCorp had responded positively to the report’s recommendations. His report also found evidence of misconduct by police, with 81 officers charged with 155 offences, including assault and drink driving, in the past year.

AAP

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include Back Harness supports subsidies, the use of ram tranquillisers, Exercise programs for shearers, fail safe hand piece subsidy programs and Shearing shed safe design.

“This project demonstrates WorkSafes commitment to encourage employers, employees and their associations in different industries to cooperate and consult to help lower the number of injuries that occur in Victoria every year.

Earlier at the event Mr Lenders congratulated regional Victoria on the plummeting rate of deaths on farms in Victoria.

“Since the beginning of this year no farmers have died while working on farms.

“The reduction in fatalities follows a major campaign launched by WorkSafe last year to improve the occupational health and safety on farms in partnership with the farming sector.

“The figures demonstrate that farmers are listening, talking about and getting involved in how to improve their farms to make them safer and better workplaces for not only themselves but also for their families.”

Mr Lenders also encouraged farmers to take up the offer of free health and safety consultancies.

The three-hour health and safety consultancies conducted by independent safety experts build on a previous allocation of 200.

To date 160 farmers have used safety consultancies to identify work-related safety and health risks on farms and the other 40 consultancies have already been allocated.

Source: WorkSafe

Centralized Management Of Asbestos Claims

11th October 2005

Federal Parliament has passed the Asbestos related claims (Management of Commonwealth Liabilities) Bill 2005.

The legislation will allow Comcare to manage all asbestos related claims brought at common law against the Government. It will achieve this by transferring liability for such claims from the Commonwealth and Commonwealth authorities to Comcare.

The centralisation of asbestos claims made against the Commonwealth will provide a more streamlined approach, more consistent decision-making and more equitable and efficient outcomes.

The long latency period for asbestos diseases justifies special consideration for

the management of resulting personal injury claims.

A centralised approach will:

- help ensure consistency in management of the Commonwealth’s asbestos related disease liabilities;
- offer a single point of contact for statutory and common law claimants;
- facilitate better management of the process overall, potentially reducing settlement expenses and other legal costs resulting from efficiencies of centralised processing;
- facilitate prompt settlement which is important for litigants close to death;
- foster a better understanding of the nature of claims; and
- provide more transparency about the costs of asbestos claims.

Apart from claims in relation to Commonwealth employees, Comcare will have authority to manage common law claims against the Government by contractors, tenants and bystanders.

Comcare will also have the authority to manage claims from former waterside workers whose asbestos claims are currently managed by the Stevedoring Industry Finance Committee. Source: Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

Black box recorders for some Sydney ferries

October 11 2005

Some Sydney ferries will get black box recorders and new GPS in a \$1.9 million safety upgrade, the NSW government announced today.

The announcement comes after the Manly ferry Collaroy, with 200 people on board, hit a wharf as it was berthing at Circular Quay on September 19.

Two people suffered minor injuries in the accident.

NSW Transport Minister John Watkins said the state government would spend \$1.9 million on a safety program that would include new global positioning system devices and black box recorders for some vessels in the Sydney Ferries fleet.

Operational safety procedures would be reviewed and \$1 million would be spent upgrading controls on the 1988-built Collaroy, new berthing movements, an external risk review, and extra crew training.

Sydney Ferries’ drug and alcohol testing program would also be reviewed in conjunction with the Transport Ministry.

Former Sydney Ferries chairman Matthew Taylor resigned after Collaroy incident

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because there had been inadequate drug and alcohol testing of the ship's master and some crew hours after the crash.

Mr Watkins said the safety upgrade would improve safety for ferry passengers and crew. "This government is committed to improving the safety and reliability of all our public transport services - trains, buses and ferries," Mr Watkins told NSW parliament. "These reforms are a comprehensive and dynamic response to the incident." AAP

Legionella scares prompt stringent measures

October 13 2005

Authorities are pledging to carry out more stringent checks of air-conditioning units at a Queensland police station to prevent further Legionella scares.

Staff will today return to the Yamanto police station at Ipswich, west of Brisbane, after the state government's health department gave the building the all-clear.

The building was evacuated on Tuesday for the second time in a fortnight after traces

of Legionnaire's disease, the illness caused by the Legionella bacteria, were again detected in the station's air-conditioning system.

Two staff members have tested positive to a possible strain of the illness.

Queensland Police Union spokesman Ian Leavers today said regular checks would be undertaken in a bid to prevent future problems.

"The building's been declared safe by officials from the health department and workplace health and safety and as a result of this regular checks are going to be conducted," Mr Leavers told ABC radio.

"Initially there will be tests conducted on a monthly basis and after that I believe it will revert to (a) three monthly basis - it just depends on the recommendations from the government departments on what should or shouldn't be done."

The government came under fire from the opposition following the first evacuation on September 27, which was ordered two weeks after an officer was found to have the disease. AAP

ADVERTISEMENT

Customised Safety Publications

Recently the publishers of *Safety At Work* magazine completed the production of a guide on manual handling for one of the fire services in Australia.

Manual handling is the major hazard for firefighters and the Brigade needed a plain English guide for the firefighters to read, follow and understand.

The guide is over 30 pages and includes



photographs of hazards and control measures of the firefighters during their daily tasks.

The control suggestions are in line with current Australia manual handling regulations and have been verified by a qualified Ergonomist.

At the launch of the guide, a WorkSafe representative said the guide was

"fantastic, nicely presented...it makes people think through the process".

The guide was written by an OHS Safety Practitioner in detailed consultation with Fire Brigade representatives.

If your company or industry could use a guide that includes photos of real tasks in your workplace with text and a format that your employees will understand, contact Kevin Jones of Workplace Safety Services P/L through

www.safetyatwork.biz or directly at jonesk@safetyatwork.biz

Bullying Bosses Booming

October 17 2005

A massive 43% of employees are reporting that they have experienced some form of bullying from their current boss according to research by LinkMe.com.au, Australia's first peer driven online career networking site.

This is an astounding increase since 2001 where a similar survey concluded that 18% of employers bully their staff.

Dr Glyn Brokensha of LinkMe.com.au says most commonly cited forms of bullying in the workplace are constant criticism, subversive behaviour, verbal abuse and humiliation.

"82% of mid level or junior managers claim to receive constant criticism and 42% of senior managers say they are undermined by subversive behaviour. "52% of Government workers are the brunt of bullying bosses too, also citing constant criticism and subversive behaviour."

Dr Brokensha likened bullying bosses to tyrants such as Pol Pot or Kim Il Sung. "Tyrants prosper when they can create a culture of division, fear, arbitrary attack and cronyism. In the workplace, this translates into a formula for the destruction of workplace culture leaving a trail of devastation that outlives them and lingers long after they have moved on.

Source: LinkMe.com.au

SIA Safety At Work Bulletin
Issue 24, October 17, 2005
ISSN 1832-6714

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Designer/Publisher:
Workplace Safety Services Pty Ltd
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This weekly news bulletin is produced on behalf of the Safety Institute of Australia (Victoria Division) by Workplace Safety Services P/L.

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