



# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Supplied by SAFETY AT WORK magazine

## OHS is Getting Lost In IR Debate

### QUICKSCAN

- Concerns raised by the SIA that OHS is being lost in the debate over the Federal Government's workplace relations changes 1
- The TWU believes the Government has overlooked safety considerations in its new industrial relations proposals. 1
- The ACT IR Minister issues OHS Act Review Report 1
- A large quantity of explosives has gone missing from a Queensland mine. 2
- 43% of employees have experienced bullying from their current boss 2
- Australian Industry Minister launches the Sterile Blade Remover 3
- Mystery over the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor's unusually high dose of radiation 3
- One dead and one injured from separate hydraulic incidents 3
- WorkCover Inspectors will visit childcare businesses across the ACT as part of a major safety audit 4
- New guidance note aimed at preventing falls among scaffolders 4
- WA warns on harvest dangers 4
- First ASCC meeting is an important step towards national consistency for OHS and workers' compensation 4
- ADF launches new website for employers and employees about alcohol and work 5
- A person has been found unconscious in a shipping container after a chemical spill 5

23 October 2005

The Victorian President of the Safety Institute of Australia is very concerned that occupational health and safety is being lost in the debate over the Federal Government's workplace relations changes.

"People tend to forget that having sufficient rest is an important element to ensuring that individual workers are fit for work and have a reduced risk of being injured or harmed in the workplace," Mr Lovelock said. "All of the arguing about trading away leave entitlements and expanding the hours of work is ignoring the fact that fatigued workers are more likely to suffer injury at work."

"Fatigued transport drivers present an unacceptable risk to the public and themselves. Machine operators who may be impaired by fatigue have a higher risk of serious injury. Medical staff may have an impaired judgement as a result of unacceptably long working hours."

"If occupational health and safety (OHS) is not integrated into the negotiations of conditions by employers and individual workers, the SIA believes that the workers' compensation and social costs of increased stress, fatigue and other psychosocial hazards will cause a substantial financial and operational burden on small- to medium-sized businesses in particular.

"The SIA believes that the cost of increased workplace stress and harm has not been adequately considered in determining the benefits of the Federal workplace relations debate," Mr Lovelock said.

"It should of course always be remembered that any safety trade-off or downside can result in corporate and personal liability to prosecution - an employer would be foolish to forget this in the push for greater productivity. There can be a positive safety aspect to the changes. The flexibility that is promised may allow safety needs to be better accommodated. If the changes bring with them more discussion and consultation with individuals, there may also be benefits from better communication."

Many of the OHS events during Victoria's WorkSafe Week will have an undercurrent of uncertainty due to proposed Federal IR changes. The Safety Institute of Australia encourages the debate on these changes and asks that businesses, unions and individuals consider the potential flow-on effect of these changes on maintaining an appropriate level of occupational safety in Victorian workplaces.

Source: SIA

### Government overlooks safety in IR changes

11 October 2005

The Transport Workers Union believes the Howard Government has overlooked safety considerations in its new industrial relations proposals.

TWU Vic/Tas Branch Secretary Bill Noonan said today that penalty rates, meal breaks, rest breaks and annual holidays are not simply about money.

"These matters have been included in awards and agreements over the years to ensure that workers aren't obliged to work excessive hours to gain a reasonable income", he said. "Tired workers can be a danger to themselves and others".

"Truck, van or bus drivers who work excessive hours are clearly a public hazard and we have been campaigning for many years to control fatigue in our industry. Now along comes a government telling workers it's a good idea to trade in your holidays or your rest breaks for extra cash".

"When people are desperate to make some extra money to provide for their families, they may make poor choices, especially if they're being put under pressure", he said, " and you can easily imagine that a domino effect would operate in a workplace once one or two workers were enticed to trade in their breaks".

Mr. Noonan said that road transport was a highly competitive industry and current levels of enforcement are already inadequate to guarantee safety.

"The cowboys in our industry will be falling over themselves to try and squeeze extra work-time out of their drivers under these new laws. This stuff could set us back years and lead to more workplace accidents ... and don't forget that a driver's workplace is the road."

Source: Transport Workers Union

### OHS Act - Review Report Released

21 October, 2005

Minister for Industrial Relations, Ms. Katy Gallagher MLA, today released the final report of the review of the ACT's Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989 prepared by the ACT Occupational Health and Safety Council.

Ms Gallagher said that the report was prepared at her request and follows the Council's earlier report on the compliance and enforcement provisions in the OHS Act.

Continued on page 2





# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

Continued from page 1

In developing its report, the Council has been guided by three key objectives for the regulation of work health and safety in the ACT. The first is the need to modernise the legislation to:

- reflect contemporary employment arrangements and workplace risks;
- identify and codify duties and responsibilities to ensure workplaces are safe; and
- recognise there is a 'shared community of interest' to ensure safe workplaces and encourage consultation and participation in the workplace.

"The second objective is to develop a body of legislation which reflects national consensus in relation to the regulation of work health and safety and support the legislation with a well-developed body of standards developed in accordance with agreed principles. The third is to develop 'accessible' legislation which assists employers and workers to understand their responsibilities and provide guidance on how to comply with their obligations," Ms Gallagher said.

The report makes 46 recommendations including a call for the development of a new Act for the regulation of health, safety and welfare at work, to be developed to effect the reform directions identified in the report.

"The ACT Government will look closely at the report and will be developing a response to its many far reaching recommendations," Ms Gallagher said.

Copies of the report can be obtained from the internet at <http://www.psm.act.gov.au/ohscouncil.htm> Source: ACT Minister for Industrial Relations

## Explosives go missing from Queensland mine

October 15 2005

A large quantity of explosives has gone missing from a Queensland mine.

Queensland Police said 149 sticks, or 76 kg, of industrial explosives vanished from the coal mine at Glenden, near Mackay.

"Police were notified on Thursday that this stuff had gone missing and an investigation was launched immediately," a police spokesman said tonight. "The explosive isn't particularly powerful, it's just used to break up rocks in the mine."

The explosives were stored in a secure area before they disappeared. Police did not believe the theft was linked to any imminent terrorist plot, the spokesman said.

Premier Peter Beattie said the theft of explosives from a Queensland mine was being treated as extremely serious, but there was no need for any panic.

"We're advised by the experts in the mines department that the explosives involved

would most probably be taken by someone wanting to use them to remove tree stumps or split boulders," Mr Beattie said.

Mr Beattie said the Government takes all security issues very seriously.

"This includes having boosted security measures in relation to the explosives used in the mining industry," Mr Beattie said.

"For example, Department of Natural Resources and Mines has stepped up the number of inspections and audits of explosive magazines at mines."

The Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Henry Palacszuk said there was close cooperation between his Department and both Federal and State police and security organisations.

"We will look very closely at the results of the investigation into this security breach. Any lessons learned will immediately be incorporated into our security arrangements," Mr Palacszuk said.

Police Minister Judy Spence said police launched an investigation on Thursday, immediately after being contacted by the mine.

"Mackay detectives are working with Moranbah CIB and have issued a statewide bulletin to all police about the incident," Ms Spence said.

"Police are also working closely with the mining company's security."

Source: AAP and Qld Premier

## 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.

"The increase in reported incidents of bullying is partly because of the changes

Continued on page 3



# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page 2

in society and at work. People today are more stressed and therefore have lost resilience to the "hurley burly" of the job. Work is also more pressured leaving less time for the development of the healthy professional relationships that reduce both bullying and the perception of bullying.

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.

"The situation is not going unnoticed, with 63% of human resource professionals responsible for the welfare of personnel say that bullying is becoming a major problem in the workplace.

Source: LinkMe.com.au

## Australian Company Making World Hospitals Safer

14 October 2005

A world-class medical device, developed by the Brisbane company Qlicksmart Pty Ltd, that makes scalpel blades a lot safer was launched today by Australian Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane.

The device, called the Sterile Blade Remover, enables the safe removal, containment and disposal of used scalpel blades from their handles - avoiding the risk and cost of injury and infection to hospital staff.

"The Qlicksmart innovation is a terrific example of an Australian company thinking outside the box to deliver a medical device which has the potential to change safety practices in medical sectors world-wide," said Mr Macfarlane.

"It's always pleasing to see a product with such potential come through the entire innovation chain. Qlicksmart has taken a good idea and pushed it through the design, development and manufacture stages to start distribution world-wide.

"The medical devices sector is worth about \$824 million in exports to Australia annually and employs more than 5500 people so this sort of product realisation is a vital investment in the industry's future," he said.

Established in Brisbane in 1994 by Dr Michael Sinnott and Dr Neville Henry AM, Qlicksmart Pty Ltd is a small, cutting-edge medical device company which sells products in more than 43 countries.

Qlicksmart and its products are exciting proof of the success of the Australian Government's support of Australian innovation. Qlicksmart has been supported by the Government's R&D Tax Concession and an R&D Start grant.

Mr Macfarlane used the opportunity to also launch a unique staff and patient safety program at Melbourne's St Vincents and Mercy Hospital.

The Show You Care Program focuses on improving the hospital's safety culture by increasing reporting of incidents and 'closing the loop' by ensuring safety incidents are rectified and procedures changed to ensure it can't happen again.

"Hospital staff live with the constant threat of 'sharps' injuries and anything to reduce the risk of such injury, which in the extreme can be life threatening, gets my vote. I hope other hospitals will look closely at adopting a similar program," he said.

Source: Minister for Industry Tourism and Resources

## Lucas Heights worker records unusually high radiation dose

October 18 2005

An investigation by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) has failed to determine why a maintenance worker at Sydney's Lucas Heights nuclear reactor has recorded an unusually high dose of radiation.

However, ANSTO executive director Ian Smith said today a radiation leak was the "only explanation".

During a routine monthly health check, the worker's radiation monitoring badge registered a dose of 66 millisieverts, when the maximum dose allowed per year was 50 millisieverts.

But an additional monitor designed to alarm when in a radiation field did not show unusual radiation exposure, ANSTO said.

None of the other workers recorded unusual doses of radiation.

An investigation was launched to determine whether the reading was false, which can occur if a monitor is put down in a radioactive area and left for a period of time.

It confirmed routine safety procedures were followed but could not verify why the worker recorded the higher dose, ANSTO said.

The Australian newspaper today reported the worker had been working on a hot cell used for producing radio pharmaceuticals.

"The only explanation would be there was some point at which radiation was leaking in to the hot cell from adjacent hot cells," Dr Smith told the paper.

Blood tests showed the worker had not received a dose more than 100 millisieverts, the maximum dose allowed by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency, over

Continued on page 4

## Man dead in farm accident

October 18 2005

A man has died in a farm accident in Victoria's south east.

The 41-year-old died when hydraulic equipment he was repairing fell on him, police said. The incident happened sometime after 1pm today on a private property in Garfield.

"WorkSafe officers attended the property and police will be preparing a report for the Coroner," Senior Constable Kendra Jackson said.

AAP

## Man injured in coal mine accident

October 18 2005

A miner has been injured in an accident at a coal mine in the NSW Southern Highlands.

The 47-year-old Woonona man was working underground at the Tahmoor Colliery mine, near Picton, when he was struck across the head and neck by a hydraulic hose about 6.15pm (AEST).

He was airlifted to Liverpool Hospital with neck and shoulder injuries and is in a stable condition.

AAP





# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

## Safety Audit in Child Care Industry

13 October 2005

ACT WorkCover Inspectors will visit childcare businesses across the ACT throughout October as part of a major safety audit in the industry. Approximately 111 early childhood and childcare centres, playschools and centre-based children's services will be visited during the inspection program.

"The childcare sector employs over 1700 people in the ACT and has a surprisingly high rate of workplace injury, reflected by the number of accepted workers compensation claims," ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

The aim of the audit is to promote awareness of health and safety in the sector and ensure employers are meeting their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989.

"Inspectors will be checking for risk management processes, manual handling procedures, reporting of injuries and dangerous occurrences and the level of safety training in the workplace," Mr Janssen said.

Key hazards associated with the childcare industry include slips, trips and falls and manual handling injuries such as muscular stress from lifting, carrying or putting down objects – including children.

"Inspectors will also audit for factors specific to child care services such as disposal of nappies, hand washing facilities, sandpit and wading pool hygiene and policies for dealing with children or staff with infectious diseases," Mr Janssen said.

A letter outlining the details and intent of the audit program has been sent to all childcare businesses, and Inspectors will supply information packs during their visits on site.

Source: ACT WorkCover

Continued from page 3  
five years.

The worker will be assigned duties in non-radioactive areas of the organisation, but his health was not at risk and he was not concerned about the situation, ANSTO said.  
AAP

## WorkSafe issues fall prevention guidance note for scaffolders

October 13, 2005

WorkSafe Victoria has released a new guidance note aimed at preventing falls among scaffolders.

"Fall prevention for scaffolders" recommends employers and workers apply the highest reasonably practicable level of fall protection.

WorkSafe's Construction & Utilities Program Director, Geoff Thomas said the guide would help anyone working with typical scaffolds constructed from prefabricated modular scaffolding systems.

"OHS Law requires that all employees are protected from risks of falling, scaffolders included. This guidance note will help employers of scaffolders, employers of scaffolding contractors and scaffolders meet their legal obligations."

The Guidance Note was developed with the Victorian Scaffolding Safety Committee which includes representatives of the MBAV's Scaffold Association of Victoria, the CFMEU's Victorian Contract Scaffolders Group, and WorkSafe.

The president of the Scaffold Association of Victoria, David De La Coeur, said extensive consultation arrived at the best possible solution for providing a safe working place for scaffolders.

"The Scaffold Association of Victoria has worked with WorkSafe, the MBAV and the CFMEU to develop a safe working method for scaffolders.

"We believe the process we have gone through has produced a practical document that we can all use."  
Source: WorkSafe Victoria

## Warning on harvest time dangers

October 2005

Western Australia's agriculture industry has one of the state's highest rates of work-related injuries and fatalities, prompting a call from WorkSafe to farmers to take all possible safety precautions as the harvesting season gets under way around the State.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today hazards and risks are

particularly high especially when farmers are facing great pressure to get the harvest done quickly," Ms Lyhne said. "In these circumstances it is especially important they pay attention to their safety responsibilities.

"Many deaths and injuries in the farming sector involve machinery, machine guarding and fatigue.

"Ensuring that equipment is well maintained, properly guarded and serviced regularly and workers adequately trained in the use and servicing of equipment is crucial. Of the 18 tractor related fatalities in WA since 1988, WorkSafe believes half may not have happened if tractors had been fitted with roll-over protective structures or protective cabs."

Ms Lyhne said it was also important to make sure that machinery operators have adequate rest breaks in order to reduce the risk of fatigue. Long working hours and the associated fatigue are significant occupational safety and health issues that require particular attention during harvest time.

The Occupational Health and Safety Commission is currently developing a working hours code of practice.

In order to support farmers in developing safe systems at work the Government has provided funding for independent rural safety advisers who are currently working in the rural community. They are holding farm walk throughs, doing demonstrations to highlight best safety practices as well as conducting risk assessments.

These services are offered free of charge under the Government's farm safety strategy introduced last year by Consumer and Employment Minister John Kobelke.

For further information on farm safety and farm machinery regulations call WorkSafe on 9327 8777 or visit the website on [www.safetyline.wa.gov.au](http://www.safetyline.wa.gov.au)

Source: DOCEP

## ASCC To Establish National Approach To Workplace Safety And Compensation

20h October 2005

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Kevin Andrews, has welcomed the inaugural meeting of the Australian Safety Compensation Council (ASCC) in Perth today as an important first step towards promoting greater national consistency for occupational health and safety and workers' compensation.

In 2004, the Productivity Commission lamented the lack of consistency in Australian workers' compensation arrangements. The Commission also found fundamental differences in occupational health and safety arrangements. In response, the Howard Government made a commitment to establish the Australian Safety

Continued on page 5



# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page 4  
Compensation Council.

In the spirit of partnership and cooperation, the ASCC membership, which is made up of Commonwealth, State, Territory, employer and employee representatives, will establish a national approach to workplace safety and workers compensation which currently does not exist in Australia.

The ASCC will also coordinate research and provide policy advice to the Workplace Relations Ministerial Council – which comprises the Federal Workplace Relations Minister and State and Territory counterparts.

'I look forward to the ASCC being a key forum for greater national focus and coordination while respecting states' jurisdictions over workplace safety and workers compensation', Mr Andrews said

The Australian Government will provide the entire funding for the ASCC, clearly demonstrating its commitment to the ongoing promotion and enforcement of nationally consistent OHS and workers compensation regimes. Source: Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

## ADF launches new website for employers and employees about alcohol and work

This morning the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) launched a new website with information about alcohol and work - what everyone should know, now available at [www.alcoholandwork.adf.org.au](http://www.alcoholandwork.adf.org.au). The alcohol and work project is a partnership between the ADF and the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) and is funded by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation Ltd (AER).

Daryl Smeaton, CEO of AER Foundation said, "AER is pleased with the results of its \$300,000 grant which has helped create an informative and user-friendly tool for employers and employees to deal with issues arising from workplace culture and alcohol use. Research by the National Drug Research Institute suggests that more than 25% of workers will experience an alcohol-related problem in any one year."

The development of the initiative is an important part of the Victorian Alcohol Strategy Stage One Report said Victorian Health Minister Bronwyn Pike.

"As well as the important information that is now available to employers and employees, a number of groundbreaking partnerships have been forged in developing this initiative," Ms Pike said. "The hard work that has gone into developing these partnerships will need to continue to ensure the momentum from this initiative continues in the years to come.

For more information go to [www.alcoholandwork.adf.org.au](http://www.alcoholandwork.adf.org.au)

## Person unconscious after chemical spill

October 20 2005

A person has been found unconscious in a shipping container after a chemical spill at a container terminal in Sydney's west this morning.

Firefighters were called to the container terminal on the Great Western Highway, Arndell Park, at 6.30am (AEST).

The crews found a person unconscious inside one container "overcome by fumes from the hazardous substance", a NSW fire brigade spokesman said.

The person was being treated by ambulance officers but their condition and the circumstances of the incident were unknown. The area was being decontaminated, the spokesman said.

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](http://www.safetyatwork.biz) or directly at [jonesk@safetyatwork.biz](mailto:jonesk@safetyatwork.biz)

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