



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Minister Seeks More Feedback on OHS Act Review

22 December 2005

NSW Minister for Commerce, John Della Bosca, today announced the release of five Issue Papers as part of the review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000.

“We review our workplace safety laws on a regular basis to ensure they’re simple as we can make them for business, while remaining effective in reducing injuries and fatalities at work,” Mr Della Bosca said. “The incidence of injuries in NSW workplaces is at its lowest level in 17 years, but we must continue to work hard to ensure the trend continues. The release of the issue papers follows substantial public comment in response to the Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 Discussion Paper.

“Public comment on the discussion paper largely focused on the OHS Act’s objectives, general duty framework and enforcement approaches, and this information is being analysed by the review team,” said the Minister. Some responses indicated that there was a need for further consultation on a number of proposals, while other issues triggered very little public comment,” he said.

The Minister is seeking further public comment on the following Issue Papers:

- Clothing Outworkers
- Recognition between Safety Inspectorates
- Offences for Fraudulent Activities
- The Role of Codes of Practice in the Occupational Health and Safety Framework
- Controllers of Work Premises

The Minister welcomes submissions on any or all of the Issue Papers by Friday 10 February 2006.

Copies of the Issue Papers and further details of the Review are available from the WorkCover website www.workcover.nsw.gov.au on the OHS Act Review page.
Source: NSW Minister for Industrial Relations

NSW Govt’s plan to cut workplace injuries

January 16 2005

The NSW government is planning a three year strategy to improve health and safety in the workplace focusing on the prevention of manual handling injuries.

NSW Industrial Relations Minister John Della Bosca said today the safety campaign was in response to the recommendations of the 2005 NSW Workplace Safety Summit held in August at Orange.

He said manual handling injuries accounted for 24 per cent of all workers compensation claims and were often caused by lifting, pulling, pushing, bending, reaching and other physical activities.

“Each year manual handling injuries result in employees being unfit for work for more than 84,000 weeks and cost the workers compensation scheme more than \$244 million,” Mr Della Bosca said in a statement.

The safety campaign will include a public awareness program and the development of guides to assist industry identify and eliminate manual handling hazards. AAP

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Bird flu now a notifiable disease in SA

December 22 2006 -

ADELAIDE - Bird flu has been listed as a publicly notifiable disease in South Australia, to ensure any cases are identified and isolated.

SA Health Minister John Hill said the listing would force medical practitioners and laboratories to formally report cases, or suspected cases, of avian influenza to the state Health Department.

"It is critically important that the Health Department is notified as early as possible by both medical practitioners and laboratories who suspect they are seeing cases, so that contact tracing, surveillance and isolation can occur," Mr Hill said.

"While this move will result in additional regulation, it is more than justified in the interests of public health and safety."

NSW last week announced bird flu had been placed on its list of notifiable diseases.

While there have been no reports of bird flu in Australia, worldwide there have been more than 130 cases of avian influenza in humans and 70 deaths. AAP

High risk police to receive psychological assessment

SYDNEY, December 22 AAP - More than 1,200 at-risk police will receive regular psychological assessment under an expansion of an officer welfare program, the state government says.

Police Minister Carl Scully today announced the \$105 million expansion of the WellCheck programme, aimed at reducing psychological and physical injury for police officers.

NSW Police paid out \$19 million in WorkCover claims last financial year to officers who were assaulted, hit by cars, bitten by animals, fell from heights, were stabbed with syringes or came into contact with chemicals on the job.

One female officer was compensated for being kicked in the head by a mounted police horse whilst on crowd control duty.

Mr Scully said the psychological intervention program had been trialled in the child protection and sex crimes squad.

It would now be extended to include homicide, crash investigation, disaster victim identification, rescue and bomb disposal, forensic services, tactical operations and negotiations units, he said.

"Under this plan police will be regularly assessed to identify early officers who are in danger of burn out or of psychological injury," Mr Scully said in a statement. "Early intervention means at-risk officers can receive assistance or get transferred to other duties." AAP

Sawmilling at the cutting edge of safety.

December 21, 2005

Victoria's sawmilling industry has joined forces to overcome the single-biggest cause of work injuries, hazardous manual handling

A new 28-page booklet 'Manual handling solutions in the sawmilling industry' has just been released following three 'Sawmilling Solutions' workshops in June.

The director of WorkSafe's Manufacturing Logistics and Agriculture program, Trevor

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

Back in 1992 I had in-principle agreement to introduce both UK NEBOSH and US BCSP professional safety certification to Australia with appropriate changes to reflect Australian OHS law.

The idea was dropped because the SIA began to consider setting up its own, which it did in 1997 with the Chartered Fellow.

This has four parts – qualifications, minimum period of practice, professional practice reflective journal, and essay. In the mining arena the International Society of Mine Safety Professionals has been offering professional certification for two years. This too requires qualifications, minimum period of practice, a professional practice portfolio, passing an Australian mine safety law exam and peer interview.

Now the Industrial Foundation for Accident Prevention has announced plans to introduce the US BCSP professional certification to Australia, which uses 10 hours of exam, after qualifications and minimum period of practice have been accepted. At this stage it is not clear if the exam will be modified to reflect Australian OHS law and practice, and how this fits in with the SIA's moves to achieve reciprocal recognition from NEBOSH and BCSP.

Clearly there would be a number of areas to consider. eg. There is a view in the US that the system approach to machinery safety in the EU's new machinery standard is superior to the current US approach. Secondly there is the Australian consultative approach to OHS backed by enabling legislation which doesn't exist in the US. It doesn't have PNs, INs or PINs and has a different penalty system. Australian Standards, the sixteen sets of Australian OHS regulations and Codes of Practice may or may

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Martin, said the workshops were able to identify issues and solutions which formed the basis of the guidance material.

“This approach uses the existing knowledge of the industry and demonstrates that making improvements to safety need not be difficult. In this case it was simple consultation that identified the problems and solutions. The process ensured the industry has ownership and a high level of commitment to the process and the final product. The task now is for the industry to use the information it has to put improvement measures into effect,” Mr Martin said.

Hazardous manual handling is the primary cause of musculoskeletal injuries which account for more than half of all workplace injury insurance claims in the sawmilling industry which employs hundreds of people across the state.

“The industry understands the human and financial costs and was keen to do what it could to improve safety. Apart from the pain and suffering experienced by injured workers, there have been more than 550 standard injury claims* in the sector between July 1997 and September this year. The total cost of treating these injuries exceeds \$13-million”, Mr Martin said.

‘Manual handling solutions in the sawmilling industry’ is well-illustrated with solutions to real-life manual handling issues ranging from handling green and dry timber to the correct use of saw benches, strapping packs of timber, pushing trolleys and handling and sharpening saw blades. The guide uses the ‘traffic light’ system of identifying high risk work practices (red), reduced risk solutions (yellow), and preferred solutions (green). This approach is now commonly used in WorkSafe publications. This makes it an easy-to-use guide which we’re confident will improve safety by reducing injuries in Victoria’s sawmills,” Mr Martin said.

Copies of ‘Manual handling solutions in the sawmilling industry’ are available free from WorkSafe Victoria offices, WorkSafe Publications on 03-9640-1333 or online at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au.

*Standard claims refer to injuries where the person has been off work for 10 days or more or where medical or other treatment costs exceed \$500. Source: WorkSafe Victoria

Cross border agreement on workers compensation

22 December 2005

NSW Minister for Commerce, John Della Bosca said new cross-border arrangements for workers compensation policies would benefit NSW businesses conducting interstate work.

“From 1 January 2006, the majority of NSW businesses that operate interstate need pay only one workers compensation premium, because their policy will now cover employees who work interstate for a short term,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“The arrangements are the result of a cooperative effort by state and territory governments to develop an agreed national approach to the issue.

“The new arrangements will allow staff to work interstate for the same employer for up to six months and be covered by the one policy,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“Currently, some employers, particularly those in border cities such as Albury, Queanbeyan and Tweed Heads, have to separately insure their workers in all jurisdictions where their employees undertake work, even for short periods.

“These companies will see significant savings as a result of this collaborative initiative,” Mr Della Bosca said. “Workers will also be clear which jurisdiction they come under and what their entitlements are. Importantly, this legislation ensures employees do not

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not gel with OHS standards cited in the US Federal Register. We operate with Hazchem, while the UK has reportedly adopted the EU’s Kemler/HIN and the US has the DOT Hazmat. Our chemical classification, labelling and MSDS are based on European Union directives. The US has federal OHS enforcement – we don’t, and Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews doesn’t intend to introduce it.

These issues all need discussion before we introduce yet more professional safety qualifications to Australia. One of the biggest outstanding issues is that health and safety personnel are generally invisible in Australian OHS legislation. (WHSOs in Queensland are probably the only safety personnel recognized by OHS legislation in Australia.)

Yours sincerely

Geoff Taylor

Life Member

Logger Killed In Northwest Tasmania

HOBART, January 9 2006

A Tasmanian logger has been killed by a falling tree while working in the state’s remote north-west.

The 31-year-old tree feller was working in a Forestry Commission coupe in South Forest near Smithton today when the incident occurred, a spokesman for Tasmanian Ambulance said.

The Circular Head man was dead by the time paramedics reached the scene, the spokesman said.

Police said the coroner had been notified and the Workplace Standards Authority was investigating.

On October 31 last year, a man died when he was struck by a tree while working in a logging coupe near Rawson in central Gippsland, Victoria. AAP



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fall into the current gaps in coverage between the various state and territory schemes.”

Under the new provisions, NSW employers will take out coverage based on a number of factors, including the location of their business and where their employees usually work.

Mr Della Bosca said a number of compliance mechanisms would be in place to help ensure the effective delivery of the reforms during the program’s initial six-month implementation. “South Australia and Northern Territory are yet to legislate the changes, although they have agreed in principle to the changes. All the other jurisdictions are on board,” Mr Della Bosca said. “Employers with workers undertaking interstate business should still check their insurance obligations to ensure they have appropriate coverage.”

Source: NSW Minister for Industrial Relations

Contract workers injured on wind farm

HOBART, December 22 2006

Two contract workers have been injured while erecting a wind-monitoring facility in Tasmania’s north-west.

Renewable energy developer Roaring 40s said the contractors were working at its Woolnorth Studland Bay wind farm this morning when the accident occurred.

The workers were taken to Smithton Hospital, then transferred to the North West Regional Hospital in Burnie.

No further details on the workers or their identities was available, managing director Mark Kelleher said.

Roaring 40s and Workplace Standards Tasmania are currently on site. AAP

Man dies in grader rollover

MELBOURNE, December 23 2006

A man died when the grader he was driving rolled over in Victoria’s high country yesterday. The 33-year-old from Dargo, 375 km east of Melbourne, died when the grader overturned on an unsealed road near the township sometime after 3.30pm (AEDT) yesterday, police said.

A WorkSafe Victoria spokesman said the operator refuelled the grader at Dargo about 3.30pm yesterday but did not return to the depot by nightfall. He was found crushed under the machine, which had fallen down an embankment, about 9am today.

The death was the ninth workplace fatality in Gippsland this year, the spokesman said. Of the 19 workplace deaths in Victoria this year, 16 had been outside Melbourne, he said.

WorkSafe is investigating along with local detectives, who will prepare a report for the coroner. A major safety campaign targeting East Gippsland businesses will begin in February, the spokesman said. The man’s death took Victoria’s road toll to 338, four more than at the same time last year. His name has not been released. AAP

Minister reports major progress in OHS and workers compensation

23 December 2005

NSW Minister for Commerce, John Della Bosca, today announced substantial progress in implementing reforms in occupational health and safety and workers compensation.

In tabling the WorkCover NSW Annual Report in State Parliament, the Minister said the State is currently exceeding the targets set at the 2002 Safety Summit to reduce workplace injuries by 40 per cent and fatalities by 20 per cent by 2012.

Man Dies After Fall From Tower

BRISBANE, January 10 2006

A man has died after falling from a rainforest canopy research tower in far north Queensland.

The 63-year-old man’s body was found by his wife at Cape Tribulation, north of Cairns, about 2.15pm (AEST) yesterday.

Police believe the man, from Cape Tribulation, was carrying out maintenance work on the viewing crane when he fell about 50 metres. James Cook University uses the tower to research climate as well as other rainforest features. AAP

Electrical Worker Injured By Lightning Strike

BRISBANE, January 10 2006

A lightning strike has injured an electrical worker fixing a power pole in south east Queensland.

The Ergon Energy employee was working on the pole at the beachside suburb of Bargara, Bundaberg, when lightning struck nearby early this morning, a Queensland Ambulance Service spokesperson told ABC radio. The 44-year-old man was rushed to Bundaberg Base Hospital to be treated for injuries which police said were not believed to be life-threatening.

Ergon crews have been working to repair the region’s electricity network, which was battered by severe storms at the weekend. AAP

Forest Worker Killed by Branch

HOBART, December 21 AAP - A forest worker is dead after a tree branch fell on him in northern Tasmania today.

The 34-year-old was working in remote bushland at Bridport when he was hit by the branch about 8.30am (AEDT), a police spokeswoman said. The man’s identity has not been released. AAP

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"The NSW government's reform program and the efforts of employers and workers are paying dividends for all concerned," Mr Della Bosca said. "It is very pleasing to report that injuries and fatalities are continuing to fall, premiums have been reduced by five per cent across the board and benefits for serious spinal injuries are being enhanced. There can be no better indicator of success than a continuing reduction in the incidence of injuries and fatalities in the NSW workplaces. The reduction in injuries is great news for workers and their families and it enhances the productivity of business through reduced costs and lost time."

The annual report notes that workplace injury incidence rates in NSW have fallen dramatically, from 19.4 per cent in 1997-98 to 13.6 in 2003-04. This represents a 16 per cent reduction in the number of major workplace injury claims, from 44,654 in 1997-98 to 37,330 in 2003-04.

"A substantial contributing factor to these improvements has been the co-operation of workers, employers, industry groups and unions who have worked in partnership with the Government and WorkCover," Mr Della Bosca said. "Improvements in return to work rates, a reduction in tail claim liabilities and strong investment performance have resulted in a major improvement to the financial position of the workers compensation scheme. This has enabled the Government to recently pass on a five per cent reduction in workers compensation premiums, and further cuts will occur as scheme performance continues to improve."

"At the same time, we have increased the compensation payable for serious spinal injuries by five per cent," the Minister said. "Implementation of the new workers compensation scheme arrangements and the recent appointment of new scheme agents on performance-based contracts will lead to further improvements in return to work rates and better outcomes for injured workers and their employers," Mr Della Bosca said.

The Minister said improvements in occupational health and safety had enabled WorkCover to take a stronger advisory and supporting role with small and medium sized businesses, assisting them to understand and implement safer work systems. "The formation of the Business Assistance Unit has enabled WorkCover to reach businesses which do not have ready access to information or the resources to improve workplace safety systems on their own," said Mr Della Bosca. Source: NSW Minister for Commerce

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 for viruses before distribution.

WA OHS Awards Process

The Department of Consumer and Employment Protection invites entries to the inaugural Work Safety Awards Western Australia. Entries close 5pm, 30 June 2006. The award criteria, conditions of entry, and entry form can be downloaded from <http://www.safetyline.wa.gov.au/pagebin/wswagenl055.pdf> AAP

From the Editor

The change of format to a portrait A4 has been welcomed by many readers. We will continue with this in the future but, as with the previous format, the Bulletin relies on your comments and suggestions.

Currently we must keep the Bulletin to a manageable page size and file size so we need to be selective in the issues we cover. However, if there are OHS subjects that you wish to have included please contact us through jonesk@sia.org.au.

Kevin Jones, Editor

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Editor Kevin Jones
Editorial Inquiries +61 (0)3 9478 9484
jonesk@sia.org.au

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Workplace Safety Services Pty Ltd
849 High Street, Regent VIC 3073 Australia
A.B.N. 68 091 088 621
www.safetyatwork.biz

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