



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Transport Worker Don't Want to Die at Work

July 17, 2006

Provisions for owner drivers in the upcoming Federal Government independent contractors legislation will save lives on our roads and protect Australian family-owned small businesses, Transport Workers Union National Leader Tony Sheldon said today.

Responding to comments by Federal MP Wilson Tuckey in today's Australian Financial Review, Mr Sheldon said it was critical for Government to stand together on issues of public safety.

"This is about protecting a minimum safe rate of pay and safe driving hours for transport workers which is in the interests of every road user and their families.

"Clearly Mr Tuckey is choosing to bicker about minor issues while everybody else is working together to ensure no Australian dies on our roads because of unsafe trucking conditions.

"152 Australians died last year in heavy vehicle incidents. So far this year 43 people have died just in NSW.

"We now have a chance to stop this unnecessary and tragic loss of life. There is no choice but to seize the opportunity and make our roads safer for everybody."

Owner driver for 21 years and father of three Tony Mathews said without the provisions in the new legislation there would be no rules and no level playing field for truck drivers.

"If there was no minimum rate of pay our safety would be compromised. We would have to work longer hours and there wouldn't be any time allowed for maintenance or repairs on the vehicles.

"The last thing we want is to see more of our colleagues not making it through their shift alive because they had to do another job and exceed their safe driving hours."

On May 3 this year, Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews announced owner drivers would maintain protections in the Independent Contractors Act 'because they have historically been recognised as having particular vulnerabilities and requiring special protections'.

Source: NSW Transport Workers Union

ABC boss meets Toowong staff today

BRISBANE, July 13 2006

New ABC managing director Mark Scott will today meet with staff at the Toowong studios in Brisbane's inner-west to discuss cancer concerns.

Almost 100 ABC staff members walked off the job last Friday demanding a relocation of the studios after a ninth woman in 11 years was recently diagnosed with breast cancer, according to the broadcaster.

But staff claim the mother of two in her 30s is the 12th woman to be diagnosed with breast cancer, seven of whom worked in the same room at the riverfront studios.

Mr Scott is due to talk with staff at the studios at about 12pm (AEST).

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) and ABC management are due to meet tomorrow. The MEAA has told ABC radio it has given ABC management until Friday to devise a strategy to deal with the problem.

A law firm is investigating whether the ABC has failed in its duty of care at the Toowong studios.

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MEAA state secretary Dave Waters said further industrial action was "likely" if ABC management did not commit to relocating the studios. AAP

Independent cancer panel to investigate ABC 'cluster'

BRISBANE, July 13 2006

An independent panel of cancer experts will investigate the ABC headquarters in Brisbane, after 12 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in 11 years.

Following an emotional meeting with around 150 staff at the Toowong studios in Brisbane's inner-west today, ABC managing director Mark Scott announced he would call in the panel to determine whether it was necessary to relocate staff.

Mr Scott said the panel - which includes renowned cancer researcher Dr Bruce Armstrong - will investigate the ABC site thoroughly to determine if there is a cause for the breast cancers. "We have arranged for free mammograms for all women working at the Toowong office and a free counselling service will also be available," said Mr Scott.

Staff staged a 24 hour walk-out last Friday after the latest case was revealed: an ABC staffer and mother of two in her 30s who has had to have a mastectomy.

ABC state director Chris Wordsworth has previously said it would cost up to \$40 million to relocate the ABC in Brisbane and that it would take up to seven years to complete the move. AAP

Bus driver dies after jack collapses

ADELAIDE, July 14 2006

A dying bus driver lay pinned under his vehicle for at least half an hour after a jack collapsed as he tried to change a tyre.

Distressed passengers eventually found the 39-year-old driver when they arrived this morning at the bus depot in Whyalla to catch the 5am (CST) service to Adelaide, some 300 kilometres away.

Investigators believe the accident occurred at the Premier Stateliner Depot in Moran Street, about 4.30am (CST). The driver died in Whyalla Hospital from multiple injuries.

Two investigators from the SA occupational health and safety agency, WorkSafe SA, today carried out a preliminary investigation into the tragedy.

"Indications are that the incident happened as the man was changing a tyre, as part of the preparations for the morning trip to Adelaide," a Safework SA spokesman said.

"The jack supporting the vehicle somehow failed, pinning the driver beneath the vehicle and inflicting fatal injuries."

The results of the SafeWork SA investigation will be included in a police report for the state coroner.

SafeWork said its compliance and investigation unit would also examine the file to determine if there had been any breach of industrial health and safety laws.

SA Unions secretary Janet Giles deplored what she described as a senseless waste of life.

"Our hearts go out to the man's family and friends, as well as to the bus passengers who endured this tragedy," she said.

Ms Giles said in the past financial year 18 South Australian workers had been killed in industrial accidents, including eight in the past three months.

"SA Unions will continue to work with the state government to improve workplace safety, especially in high risk industries such as transport, construction and manufacturing," she said.

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OPINION:

Who Decides the OHS Priorities?

By Kevin Jones

Recently WorkSafe Victoria released two new publications - a guidance for real estate agents who work "out-of-office" and a draft guide for Crowd Controllers, "bouncers" in the old language.

Both of these publications have a very narrow industry focus and I think we are justified in asking why these two industries have been given priority over other industries and other workplace hazards.

The real estate guidance was initiated in direct response to a murder of a female real estate agent in a vacant property. The guide was developed in partnership between WorkSafe and the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV). I cannot understand why WorkSafe has applied so narrow a focus when the murder case, as has many other deaths in workplaces, clearly indicates the risks associated with working alone. Why has WorkSafe not developed a guide focussing on the hazard of working alone rather than on one specific industry? What about the deaths of pizza deliverers, escort workers, taxi drivers, salespeople, and home-based business operators?

By publishing a guide for real estate agents, they have segregated many other small businesses, desperate for OHS information, that share the hazards of working alone.

The crowd controllers' guidance is similarly confusing and, I suspect, only came about after the death of David Hookes after an altercation with a bouncer, even though the hazards in this industry have existed for years.

I can't see that real estate agents or crowd controllers are particularly high-hazard industries where multiple

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"This tragedy reinforces the need for employers to adopt a stronger focus on workplace health and safety and for tougher penalties for those who fail to do so." AAP

Demolition workers treated after industrial accident

ADELAIDE, July 13 2006

Five building workers needed medical treatment after an industrial accident in Adelaide today.

The demolition workers were using oxy-acetylene equipment to break up an air-conditioning duct at the old Reserve Bank building, in central Adelaide, when surrounding insulating foam started giving off thick acrid smoke.

Three workers were taken to hospital, while two others were treated at the scene for smoke inhalation.

The incident occurred shortly before 10.30am (CST) while the workers were engaged in a process known as "hot cutting".

SafeWork SA has now banned hot cutting at the site until inspectors are satisfied it can be done safely.

"There are some very worrying aspects about this incident," SafeWork SA executive director Michele Patterson said. "We have asked the contractors to devise a new risk assessment program for any future hot cutting work."

"This could have been a tragedy and, as it is, several workers have had a lucky escape. Even so, the firm's schedule has been disrupted, and it proves our point that safety at work is not an add-on, it is core business and cannot be compromised." Source: AAP & Safework SA

Funding boost for Victorian country training centres

MELBOURNE, July 13 2006

Nearly \$7 million will be channelled into Victoria's country training tracks next season to assist with the maintenance and operation of facilities used by trainers.

The funding of \$6.7 million from Racing Victoria's Training Tracks Maintenance Fund (TTMF) to country racing clubs is an increase of \$1.5 million on last season.

A further \$1.9 million increase is planned over the following two years for both metropolitan and country training venues.

Earlier this year, an extensive review was undertaken by Racing Victoria, which included consultation with trainers and clubs, into the costs and issues associated with the current and future needs at the state's 39 training centres.

The review identified a need to increase funding to clubs who currently operated training facilities to achieve the minimum maintenance standards required.

The additional funds would be directed towards funding the supervision of training at all country venues to the recommended standard, identified by WorkSafe as a key area of focus in its safety development program for the racing industry.

A \$27 million capital investment plan for upgrading training facilities in the state over the next 10 years has also been developed.

Racing Victoria's acting chief executive Stephen Allanson said ensuring that the standard of facilities and their operational safety were maintained at the highest possible levels in country areas was critical.

"The vast majority of horses racing in the state are prepared at non-metropolitan racecourses," Allanson said. "It is essential that we strive to continuously improve the standards of the facilities and services available for trainers and riders at these centres."

Country Racing Victoria chief executive Scott Whiteman said country racing was the backbone of racing. "More than 670

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fatalities occur annually. I don't see them featuring in the claims data that John Merritt shows at OHS conferences.

Surely WorkSafe should be providing guidance material based around hazards that exist in a broad range of workplaces. Where are the guidances on workplace stress and fatigue? The recent OHS Act formally recognised psychosocial hazards for the first time and yet WorkSafe has provided nothing about these hazards. They can't keep trading on the bullying guidance for much longer. And I haven't even mentioned "Safe Design".

And as they procrastinate, small businesses are experiencing an industrial relations revolution that fundamentally changes the relationship between employer and employee. This basic relationship is changing and it will have OHS impacts - increased stress through new workloads and industrial conflict, fatigue through increased hours, increased unionism.

WorkSafe has taken its eye off the ball and yet the recent OHS Act and Maxwell Report promised so much.

Managers and safety professionals should not have to look outside their own State for OHS information but we are increasingly looking to NSW and WA for practical guidance on workplace hazards. WorkSafe Victoria has increased its online resources over the last few years but they started from a severe handicap and are still way behind the other States.

The two publications referred to above are not enough to give Victorians hope that WorkSafe will provide good broadly-applied OHS information. What WorkSafe needs to provide is a list of the projects that they have in place for the next few years. Then we can see where they are heading and maybe it is in the right direction.



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trainers are located in country Victoria, who collectively trained 7,850 thoroughbred horses last year," Whiteman said.

He said the operation of facilities to meet these requirements was becoming more costly for country clubs and that the TTMF increases and capital program would help improve the circumstances for clubs and the users of training facilities.

The current system of capitation fees charged to trainers by a number of country clubs would be replaced by a training facility Fee.

The levy, payable to Racing Victoria, would be based on the number of starters a trainer produces and the category of training facility they utilise.

Australian Trainers' Association chief executive John Alducci said the abolition of the capitation fee concept should result in a fairer user-pays system for trainers with the introduction of the training facility Fee.

AAP

Foreign truckies to drive on Australian roads

CANBERRA, July 13 2006

Up to 100 foreign truck drivers will be brought to Australia under a pilot program targeting semi-skilled workers.

Australian Trucking Association chief executive Stuart St Clair says the program is a response to Australia's increasing freight demands.

"We were not prepared as an industry to sit back and do nothing," Mr St Clair told AAP. "We are going to have to compete for labour globally." Mr St Clair said as many as 100 drivers could take part in the trial.

The program has the backing of the immigration department, which already operates a skilled worker program, he said.

Immigrants applying for work under the program would have to have a strong understanding of English and be able to complete local licence testing procedures, Mr St Clair said. "There are 180,000 people in the trucking industry and we're going to need more people (so) let's have a look at bringing in this temporary agreement," he said.

Comment was being sought from Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone and the Transport Workers Union.

The Australian newspaper reported today that the guest worker program would also be opened to farmhands to address chronic labour shortages. The workers would enter Australia on temporary migration visas under the terms of a special labour agreement.

AAP

Train driver struck by rock

SYDNEY, July 14 2006

A Sydney train driver is recovering in hospital after he was hit in the face by a rock thrown through the open window of his cabin.

The train was travelling at a low speed at about 10.30pm (AEST) yesterday near Doonside Railway Station, in Sydney's west, when someone hurled a rock through the open driver's side window, police said. The 28-year-old trainee driver suffered facial and head injuries but managed to stop the train.

A supervising driver gave first aid to the trainee until ambulance officers arrived. The injured man was taken to Blacktown Hospital where he remains in a stable condition.

A short time later, police arrested an 18-year-old Whalan man at nearby Blacktown Railway Station.

He was charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm and will appear in Blacktown Local Court today.

AAP

Farmers warned to fit Power Take-Off Guards to avoid injuries

6 July 2006

WorkCover NSW today urged farmers to have Power Take-Off (PTO) guards fitted to their tractors and equipment following another serious farming incident this week.

A 60 year old Nyngan farmer suffered multiple fractures to his arms and legs and possible spinal injuries when he became entangled in an unguarded PTO shaft.

The man was transported to Dubbo hospital by helicopter and later transferred to Royal North Shore Hospital.

WorkCover NSW Chief Executive Officer, Jon Blackwell, said "there are far too many serious injuries on farms that could be avoided by simply taking the time to have safety devices fitted to farm equipment".

"I again urge owners of equipment driven by PTO, to have the PTO mechanisms fitted with guarding to avoid serious injury," he said. "WorkCover is offering a rebate of up to \$200 against the full purchase price of PTO guards to encourage farmers to have them fitted.

"By purchasing and fitting PTO guards farmers could save themselves, their employees or a family member

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from potential serious injury," said Mr Blackwell. "There is no longer any excuses for taking unnecessary risks when safety devices are readily available and can be fitted simply and cheaply. Each year some 16 workers are injured by PTO mechanisms, with a total workers compensation claim costs averaging \$260,000," added Mr Blackwell.

For more information on the PTO rebate scheme and how to apply for a rebate, go to www.workcover.nsw.gov.au or contact WorkCover on 13 10 50.

Source: NSW WorkCover

Careflight In Dubbo For Fall Man

July 14th 2006

The Central West NRMA CareFlight helicopter is in Dubbo this morning to assist with the treatment and care of a critically injured Walgett man following a mining fall at Lightning Ridge.

The 44-year old male fell twenty metres into a mine shaft late yesterday suffering multiple injuries including massive internal bleeding, compound fractures to both legs and serious spinal damage. He was flown by fixed wing overnight from Lightning Ridge to Dubbo and the plan now is to now fly him by CareFlight helicopter to Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney.

The nature of the man's massive injuries makes this a complex transfer requiring the expertise of the CareFlight medical trauma team and local hospital staff. The patient remains in an extremely serious condition.

Source: NRMA CareFlight

Reduction in the number of armed robberies

12 July 2006

The Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology, Dr Toni Makkai, today released the results from the Australian Government's most recent report from the National Armed Robbery Monitoring Program (NARMP), 2004 National armed robbery monitoring program annual report.

'This report shows an overall decrease in the number of armed robberies in 2004, compared with the previous year', Dr Makkai said. 'Armed robbery is both a property crime and a crime of violence and can have serious psychological effects on the victim.'

A wide array of small businesses were organisational victims. These included: service stations (22%), licensed premises (11%) and 31 percent as unspecified retail premises. 'Greater understanding of this crime through the analysis of data may assist potential victims to develop strategies to minimise their risk of attack,' Dr Makkai said.

The NARMP began collecting data on armed robbery in 2003 with the assistance of police services in all Australian states to identify factors driving trends in armed robbery.

Analyses of the 2004 data shows:

- knives made up half of the weapons listed as involved in victimisations; firearms were involved in 15 percent of robberies - a smaller proportion of firearms compared with 2003
- seventy percent of robberies involved only a single armed robber
- males made up nearly three-quarters of all individuals victimised, and around two-thirds of male victims were aged less than 30 years of age.

As was found in 2003 armed robberies appear to span a continuum from:

- low-yield, unplanned and essentially opportunistic, using easily obtained weapons, such as street robberies or in locations such as service stations, to
- high-gain, using weapons that were more difficult to obtain, occurring in certain retail sites.

Because of the perceived increase in the number of armed robberies at licensed premises this year's report includes a detailed analysis of armed robberies at clubs and hotels. The findings indicate these robberies were more organised and seek higher gains. The offenders tended to be older, to act in groups and to use firearms, especially handguns. Most robberies took place during the night time/early hours of the morning.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology

Blitz On Fencing Of Construction Sites

July 10 2006

ACT WorkCover issued a warning today for builders and construction workers to keep children off construction sites during the school holiday period.

"To children, construction and demolition sites look like great places to explore and play. Unfortunately, the consequences of playing in these environments can be serious or fatal for the child," ACT WorkCover Commissioner Erich Janssen said.

Risks include serious injury from falls from heights or machinery, electric shock from "live" cables, drowning, suffocation from collapsing material or coming into contact with hazardous substances.

People who exercise control over a construction worksite have a duty under the Occupational Health and

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Safety Act 1989, to protect third parties, including children, from the hazards associated with worksites.”

“An important safety duty under the OHS Act is to take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent unauthorised persons gaining access to a construction site,” Mr Janssen said.

Measures that can be taken include:

- fencing off the site
- fencing off holes and
- generally ensuring the site is secure when unattended.

ACT WorkCover Inspectors have been visiting construction sites in residential areas over that past week and will conduct a major blitz in the first few days of the school holidays specifically aimed at fencing of building sites in residential areas.

“Construction workers are also reminded that children should not be taken onto work sites during the school holiday period – these workplaces are hazardous, especially for children – and other care options should be provided,” Mr Janssen said.

Source: ACT WorkCover

Two cops stood down after testing positive for grog at work 14 July 2006

Two Sydney police officers have been stood down after returning positive tests for alcohol on the job.

The Constable and a Leading Senior Constable were subjected to breath tests today at the Police College at Goulburn.

Police say both officers are formally based in Sydney and will be subjected to standard New South Wales police disciplinary processes.

AAP

Two pilots charged after to turning up to work drunk 15 July 2006

Two army pilots have been charged with turning up to work under the influence of alcohol.

The Australian Defence Force says two aircrew from the 161 Reconnaissance Squadron in Darwin have been charged ..and two others cautioned ..over an incident during a training exercise in 2004.

Fairfax newspapers report a Defence Force statement saying four aircrew turned up to work unable to be authorised for flight duties ..due to fatigue and the residual effects of alcohol.

AAP

Adobe Acrobat V7.08 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 20 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 7.08 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.

For those readers who are unconcerned about download limits, the latest version of Acrobat Reader is available for free from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

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