



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Review Of ACT Workers' Compensation Scheme

12 February 2007

Minister for Industrial Relations, Andrew Barr, today announced a local consortium has been appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of the ACT Workers' Compensation Scheme.

The review, which was foreshadowed in the last Budget, will be undertaken by a consortium led by Australian Health and Safety Services Pty Ltd along with consortium partners, Canberra office of national law firm Dibbs Abbott Stillman and Melbourne based actuaries Cumpston Sarjeant Pty Ltd.

"The Stanhope Government has provided \$400,000 over the next three years to review the private sector Workers' Compensation scheme. This has been prompted by the fact the ACT has the highest reported private sector workers compensation premiums in Australia," Mr Barr said. "The Government has allocated \$200,000 in this financial year to undertake the first part of the review which will involve an extensive process of dissection and examination of the current scheme along with broad consultation with all relevant stakeholders and interested groups.

"The review is critical to ensuring the continued viability of the scheme and a full review of the scheme, including an actuarial assessment, would enable the operations of the scheme to be considered in an informed, objective and thorough manner. "It is pleasing to see a locally based group put together such a strong and comprehensive tender to be awarded the task."

Mr Barr said the successful tenderer will be developing and issuing a detailed Issues Paper within the next few weeks.

"Its release will coincide with an extensive advertising program to draw attention to the Review to ensure the broadest possible input from the community," he said. "Submissions will be invited from interested groups and individuals wanting to provide input will be invited to attend one-on-one confidential interviews with the consultants. The consultant is expected to produce a Draft Report by the end of April 2007 with the target for completion of the final report to Government being June 2007."

The project will be led by consortium leader Mr David Segrott, Director of Australian Health and Safety Services [and President of the ACT Division of the Safety Institute of Australia], who for the duration of the review will stand down from his role representing business on the ACT Occupational Health and Safety Council, the Workers Compensation Advisory Committee and the Default Insurance Fund Advisory Committee.

"Mr Segrott and his group have an extensive background and involvement with the management and review of workers compensation not only here in the ACT but also in the Commonwealth and other States and Territories," Mr Barr said. "The Government is pleased to be able to appoint such a high calibre team to reviewing what is a very topical issue for both business and the community at large."

Source: ACT Minister for Industrial Relations

[Ed: Dave Segrott tells me that the information paper is available for download at www.ahss.com.au]

ADVERTISING

A limited amount of advertising has been approved by the Safety Institute of Australia.

If you want to advertise to over 3,000 safety professionals in Australia, please contact Joanne at the SIA Secretariat through natadmin@sia.org.au

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WA plans to legalise brothels

PERTH, February 15 2006

The West Australian government plans to decriminalise prostitution as part of a bid to regulate the industry.

WA Attorney-General Jim McGinty says he will introduce legislation into state parliament this year which would allow brothels to operate legally.

Mr McGinty said the move would protect the health and safety of sex workers and provide clarity for police.

"It is time we sorted out the prostitution laws in WA to deal properly with the sex industry, which has been a reality of life for a long, long time," Mr McGinty said.

He said the government had begun drafting legislation based on the recommendations of the Prostitution Law Reform Working Group.

The group recommended a decriminalised model, where approved operators of brothels and escort agencies would be regulated under a certification system.

Brothels would also be subject to local government planning approvals and controls.

"This will mean that for the first time, local councils and the WA Planning Commission can control where brothels are located and ensure they are not operating in inappropriate areas," Mr McGinty said.

Regulation of brothels would also remove the risk of police corruption in the industry, he said.

Currently, prostitution is not prohibited but it is illegal to manage a brothel and live off the earnings of prostitution.

AAP

Billson says health care to continue for F-111 workers

CANBERRA, February 14 2006

The government today assured former aircraft maintenance workers they would continue to receive free health care even if found ineligible for compensation for a variety of problems linked to F-111 deseal-reseal program.

Veterans Affairs Minister Bruce Billson said the government's final response to the F-111 deseal-reseal inquiry gave an assurance to affected workers that health care would continue indefinitely.

"This decision allows civilians and serving and former members of the ADF who were involved in F-111 aircraft maintenance programs at Amberley RAAF Base to continue to receive treatment for conditions related to their involvement, even if the conditions have not been accepted under the statutory compensation schemes," he said in a statement.

"Some former F-111 maintenance personnel feel that their employment has contributed to their ill-health even though a causal link cannot be scientifically verified."

Mr Billson said this move ensured that their ongoing health care would not be compromised despite being ineligible for compensation.

He said it recognised the concerns of F-111 aircraft maintenance personnel and their support groups who indicated that the provision of ongoing medical treatment was the highest priority.

The F-111 deseal-reseal program was conducted at the RAAF base at Amberley in Queensland between 1975 and 1995 and involved civilian and defence personnel using chemical solvents inside aircraft fuel tanks.

A board of inquiry and health study found personnel suffered a range of health problems including lung disease,

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VICTORIAN SIA NEWS

The SIA Administration Manager, Joanne Mitrakas, reports that the new Members for Victoria Division for October 2006 were 8, for November 2006 5 and for December 2006 9. Total for the three month period was 22. YTD New Members for Victoria Division is 52

A notice was mailed out to 133 unfinancial members who have not renewed their 2006/2007 membership renewal. To present date 44 members have renewed.

Unfinancial members will also be contacted to discuss their SIA membership

In October 2006 the Victorian Committee assembled to outline a Strategic Plan. It was decided that the committee would focus on a few major projects rather than 20 Activities and the 43 Subordinate activities identified

Some time in the next 12 months the Victoria Division Office in Tullamarine will need to relocate. The committee is deciding on a set of specifications – parking, conference rooms, and offices. Preliminary discussions with National were scheduled for February 2007 and expert advice will be sought on finding a suitable location

The Committee decided that as it has been difficult for Kevin Jones to obtain interesting SIA content that NEWSlink information would be consolidated with the SIA SAW Bulletin, that the Committee would provide contributions and that the other Divisions be invited to do the same"

FROM THE EDITOR

One reader has kindly pointed out to me that there are alternatives to the "bloatware" of Acrobat Reader. For those of you seeking an alternate reader of PDF files, you may want to try Version 2.0 of Foxit. Search for "foxit" on the internet and you are sure to find it

I tried this on several computers and on none of them did the PDF of **SIA SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN** appear in the same way that it was designed. However, it was readable. I leave it up to

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erectile dysfunction, depression, anxiety and memory impairment.

The government agreed to pay lump sum compensation to eligible personnel, so far handing out \$21 million. Some of those rejected for compensation have launched legal action.

Mr Billson said the new arrangements announced today extended eligibility for a health screening program to personnel.

He said this program offered cancer screening and health information about the medical conditions found to be of a higher incidence amongst F-111 aircraft maintenance personnel.

Mr Billson said the Department of Veterans' Affairs would write to all affected personnel to inform them of new health care arrangements.

Liberal MP Cameron Thompson, whose electorate covers the Amberley base, welcomed the new arrangements.

He said concerns about ongoing access to health care featured prominently in his discussions with members of the F-111 Deseal Reseal Support group.

"Throughout vigorous discussions the need to have ongoing healthcare concerns addressed has been a key issue. The support group is to be commended for its strong advocacy and this healthcare safety net is a very significant outcome," he said in a statement.

AAP

Report warned of safety risk before Westralia fire

MELBOURNE, February 14 2006

The Defence Department was warned three months before the fatal HMAS Westralia fire that the vessel was in grave danger from faulty fuel lines, a newly revealed report found.

Four crew members were killed when a fire, caused by faulty fuel lines, erupted in the engine room of the HMAS Westralia off Fremantle in May 1998.

Defence has admitted that an official report, written three months before the fire by military and police investigators, specifically warned about the risks from "sub-standard and non-genuine parts" on the ship, News Limited newspapers reported today.

The minute of the investigation, dated February 6, 1998 and seen by News Limited journalists, followed interviews with a Wollongong maintenance company, Bailey's Diesel Services.

Bailey's staff said they feared a major breakdown on Westralia caused by non-genuine or sub-standard parts could cause serious damage and "even loss of life".

Three months later, atomised fuel leaking from non-genuine flexible fuel hoses fitted by contractor Australian Defence Industries sparked the fatal fire, News Limited said.

The report was signed by an investigator from the Defence Inspector-General's Division and AFP officer Peter Smythe, who told News Limited he had trouble comprehending the navy would run major seagoing vessels that way.

"But Bailey's had the evidence ... names and even describing the actual parts that had been replaced," he said.

A Defence spokesman told News Limited the report identified "no issues of concern" and was not passed to the Navy because the source of the complaint "related to the inability of a subcontractor to win work on Defence contracts".

Lyndon Pelly, father of midshipman Megan Pelly, said he held Defence and the Navy responsible for the four deaths and called for the WVA coronial inquiry to be re-

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readers to determine which reader meets their needs.

Don't forget we are allowed to distribute Acrobat Reader on CD if you would like it posting out. (There are about 5 requests in my mailbox for copies and they will be sent by the end of the week)

Another reader told me that she does not archive these Bulletins and sometimes she needs access to an article that she remembers reading but had deleted anyway. One of the really useful things about Adobe Acrobat is that it provides a full-text search of all PDF documents. That means that all of the **SIA SAW BULLETINS** can be searched on any word or OHS topic.

This can be very useful but is made easier if you save the email attachment to a dedicated folder in your PC. I keep the Bulletins in one folder, all the downloadable WorkCover publications in another, downloaded OHS legislation in another, legal Court judgements in another and my purchased Standards in another. I can then quickly search on control options or specific hazard through any of these publications. The speed of the search depends on your PC but it is not long.

The PDF search results profile a list of appearances on the right of the screen and when you click on one of the links, the PDF document opens with your search word highlighted in the body of the text.

SIA members who have kept the Bulletins could now have a permanent OHS research database of around 85 issues and 500+ pages of fully searchable OHS data.

Online databases are useful but you can collate your own at no cost other than your annual SIA membership.

If you are one of those members, or know of one, who doesn't see value in SIA membership, compare what OHS information you have on your computer to the accessibility of a purchased or subscribed online database and you may find the **SIA SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN** enough for your need.

Please let me know if this information helps

KEVIN JONES
EDITOR





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opened and for a royal commission.

"I'm really glad Defence has been caught out concealing evidence," Mr Pelly said.

The existence of the report was kept from a naval board of inquiry and the WA Coroner's inquest into the tragedy.

Both investigations found that the navy, ADI and hose maker Parker Enzed had failed in their duty of care to the dead and injured sailors.

AAP

Work Choices laws hurt wages - academic

BRISBANE, February 13 2006

The federal government's Work Choices legislation has hurt wages but helped improve company margins, a business researcher has found.

Professor David Peetz, from Brisbane's Griffith University, has completed a study into the first 10 months of the industrial relations (IR) laws and found female workers and employees in the retail and hospitality sectors were the biggest losers.

He found the real-time average wage for women had fallen by two per cent while workers across the board suffered a wage cut of 1.1 per cent despite record employment. "It is pretty remarkable that you would be getting a reduction in real wages when you've got the tightest labour market in 30 years," Prof Peetz said.

Professor Peetz's report *Brave New Work Choices: What is the story so far?* also found hospitality and retail workers suffered the most under the new laws because many Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA) contracts cut out conditions such as overtime. "Workers in both industries are reliant on penalty rates for night and weekend work, and these are susceptible to change under Work Choices," he said. The drop in earnings coincided with record company profits.

Prof Peetz admitted his research showed employment had increased since the legislation was introduced last year but believed this was more a reflection on the strength of the economy. He warned the long-term effects of the laws on workers were still to be determined, saying the real test would come when the economy began to slow down.

"A lot of people are being insulated from Work Choices by the state of the economy," he said. "We've got this big resources boom going on and monetary policy has been a lot more stable than it was in the 1980s. One day the economy will slow down and once things slow down the number of people who have been adversely affected by Work Choices will increase." AAP

Prosecution after discovery of forklift 'licence' scam

16 February 2007

A woman has been fined \$2000 for her involvement in a scheme involving dodgy licenses for people wanting to operate forklifts. The scam was uncovered as part of an investigation by WorkSafe, with two further people yet to face court on related charges.

Maryann deFrutos, 40 of Brunswick West, was a certified assessor of people who had done forklift training. She was working at Civic Workplace Training, a Footscray West license training and testing business.

During a search of the premises on 17 November 2005 investigators found four completed certificates of assessment in Ms deFrutos' possession. All were dated for that day and carried incorrect information.

WorkSafe on Friday told Sunshine Magistrate McIndoe that on 8 September 2005 and 17 November 2005 seven people attended Civic Workplace Training to be assessed for their forklift licence.

The assessments by Ms deFrutos generally took less than 15 minutes and some were estimated to have taken as little as seven minutes. Tests typically take about 50 minutes.

WorkSafe's licensing section subsequently refused to issue certificates to approximately 80 other people tested by Ms deFrutos who resigned as a certified assessor on 19 December 2005.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said the permit system in place for particular types of equipment was a vital part of ensuring workplaces were as safe as possible.

"WorkSafe's warning to other assessors, or people seeking a certificate of competency, is that failing to play by the rules has serious legal and safety consequences. We are serious about identifying fraud and will take steps to eliminate it." Source: WorkSafe

WorkSafe investigates death of worker

February 14, 2007

WorkSafe is investigating the work-related death of a 77-year-old man at North Perth this morning. The man was believed to have been operating a lathe at a service station in Angove Street when his clothing became caught and he was drawn into the machine. Inspectors arrived at the site soon after the incident, and will continue to investigate.

WorkSafe thoroughly investigates all serious work-related injuries and deaths in WA with a view to preventing future incidents of a similar nature.



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WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said any work-related death was a tragedy, and relayed her sincere condolences to the man's family.

Source: DOCEP

Prosecution of on-hire firm a cautionary tale for others, says peak body

14 February 2007

The recent prosecution of an on-hire employment firm for failing to meet its Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) obligations is a timely reminder to the industry that there are ongoing and fundamental responsibilities which simply cannot be ignored, the recruitment and on-hire industry's peak body said today.

MAD Recruitment, which is not a Member of the RCSA (Recruitment and Consulting Services Association), was last week fined \$10,000 by WorkSafe Victoria for failing to meet its safety obligations, with the result that a worker was injured in a forklift accident.

Julie Mills, CEO of the RCSA, says the case highlights the critical importance of OH&S for on-hire firms. "Employee safety should be a number one priority for every employer, and this is why the RCSA is focused on providing a high level of support to the industry, so that every Member has the tools and knowledge to get it right. We urge every operator in the industry to check and re-check their OHS management systems, and make sure they are being implemented and monitored," Ms Mills said.

Source: Recruitment and Consulting Services Association

Thiess sack first aid officer

16 February 2007

Thiess have sacked the first aid officer working on the Marcus Clarke Street site after he gave permission to a worker to leave the site and seek medical help after being involved in a potentially fatal workplace accident.

A worker fell through a void on the fifth storey of a Thiess construction site on Marcus Clarke Street at approximately 1:00 pm on 8 February 2007. The worker fell onto ducting that was being installed. The ducting broke his fall, saving him from falling a further 6-9 metres. Had this ducting not been there, the fall could have been fatal.

Thiess did not lodge an incident report with ACT WorkCover straight away. Instead they issued a formal warning to the first aid officer on site after the officer allowed the injured worker to leave the site the following morning before notifying the foreman to seek formal medical treatment. The formal warning was later withdrawn after Thiess management came under pressure from workers on the site.

On 15 February 2007 Thiess sacked the first aid officer.

Source: ACT Branch CFMEU, Canberra

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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