S.I.A. Safety Institute of Australia

Policy settings for healthier and safer workplaces

SIA Policy Agenda – 2017

Linking Policy and Practice

The Safety Institute of Australia is Australia's association for the health and safety profession.

Our vision is:
To have safe and healthy people in productive workplaces.

Our mission is:
- Advance the health and safety profession to give the highest quality advice; and to
- Be a voice for the profession to positively influence the development of health and safety policy and practice.

The health and safety profession has a unique voice. The Institute's members have high level expertise and a deep understanding of:

a) The critical importance of health and safety management to the health and safety of the workplace;
b) The use of an evidence base to eliminate or reduce the risk of fatality, injury, disease and ill-health in the workplace;
c) The role that healthy and safe business practices have to play in sustainable business success.

The SIA establishes policies and positions drawing practical knowledge and evidence from the best available research, the experiences of its members and other workplace health and safety (WHS) stakeholders, and the investigation of emerging new ideas.

The SIA is committed to seeking cooperative relationships with Safe Work Australia, jurisdictional policymakers, regulators and other stakeholders, to advance policy issues. As a part of this commitment, we recognise and support the Australian Workplace Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022.

The SIA's policies are also informed by our core beliefs, which include the following and are reflected in the positions we hold on health and safety issues:

- All people in Australian workplaces are entitled to a safe and healthy work environment;

- The *Health* of the workforce is just as important as the *Safety* of the workforce*;*

- The core objectives of all workplaces should include ensuring the healthiest and safest possible environment;

- Australian workplaces deserve the highest quality health and safety advice. Australian health and safety practices in workplaces should be the best in the world;

- Building healthy and safe workplaces is not just a legislated legal responsibility but an ethical responsibility as well;

- Exemplary health and safety practice is about far more than compliance. It is underpinned by sophisticated responses and interventions involving organisational leadership, culture, processes and systems;

- Exemplary health and safety practice involves co-operation at all levels of the company, including consultation with workers and their representatives;

- All workers have a responsibility for health and safety but accountability is vested in line management, with ultimate accountability and leadership with CEOs and Boards;

- The accountability that all people have for healthy and safe workplaces is aided by educated and trained practitioners and professionals, and it is critically important that company management has access to that advice;

- Systems and processes are important but focusing on people is also critical to providing health and safety solutions.

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Priority Policy Areas

The Institute develops position statements on a range of issues under the following priority focus areas

1. The Health and Safety Profession

Practice Framework
Every profession needs a clearly defined framework for practice, and the health and safety sector has lagged in this area. The SIA supports the adoption of the *Global Capability Framework for OHS practice*, developed by the International Network of Safety and Health Practitioner Organizations (INSHPO).

1.1 Knowledge Base
All developing professions need a valid body of knowledge based on evidence. Education and Continuing Professional Development based on that knowledge is critically important for a growing profession. The SIA strongly supports the ongoing development and maintenance of the *OHS Body of Knowledge*, and evidence-based practice, as well as fostering discussion and research on new ideas and emerging concepts.

1.2 Education
The SIA actively supports formal education for all OHS professionals, and is engaged in improving the quality and content of that education and training.

1.3 Certification and Continuing Professional Development
An international standard certification program for the OHS profession, which includes a structured Continuing Professional Development program, is critical to the delivery of sound and high quality advice to the Australian community, and the SIA is committed to delivering this program.

1.5 Health and Safety Practices
As a constantly evolving profession, there are a range of schools of thought and emerging practices. The Institute is committed to promoting both research and critical discussion of these theories, based on evidence.

2. Health and Safety policy, legislation, enforcement and standards

2.1 Health and Safety policy development
The health and safety profession recognises the role of regulatory authorities in the establishment of policy and sees itself as having a critical stakeholder role to play in the ongoing development of this policy.

2.2 Health and Safety law
Legislation reflects the minimum requirements for health and safety management, and establishes a benchmark of compliance. However, it should never be seen as the main reason for providing safe and healthy work environments.

It is critical that health and safety law in Australia is consistent, and is articulated appropriately to fit the times.

2.3 Health and Safety enforcement
Effective enforcement is an important component of the suite of measures which produce healthier and safer workplaces.

Regulators play a critical role in providing advice on, monitoring, and investigating compliance, as well as incident investigation, determination of causes of incidents, pursuing processes to establish penalties associated with non-compliance.

Organisations are responsible and accountable for meeting the legislative health and safety requirements as applied to their own organisations.

2.4 Health and Safety Standards
Setting health and safety related standards for industry - and monitoring progress toward meeting those standards - is critical. The health and safety profession has a role to play in the ongoing maintenance and development of standards.

3. Health and safety within industry

3.1 Health and safety in sustainable business practice
Although every industry has some degree of bureaucratic red tape, health and safety management systems, processes and practice should avoid creating unnecessary complexity and unjustified costs, being as streamlined as possible while maintaining clarity and effectiveness. Streamlined safety processes should contribute to a sustainably profitable and efficient organisation.

3.2 Education
We believe that all key stakeholders in health and safety, including the health and safety profession, employer groups, unions, regulators and other government agencies have an obligation to do their part to ensure that their own stakeholders and the wider community are educated about workplace health and safety and to encourage active engagement in reducing harm.

3.3 Health and safety performance and productivity
Investment in health and safety is an opportunity for greater business success, rather than simply a cost. Workplace health and safety is often perceived as a burdensome cost without understanding the safety and productivity benefits that the costs create. However, good health and safety management is good for business in many ways, including having significant potential to *increase* productivity. Equally, in enterprises, procrastinating on necessary safety changes can increase the cost and the perception of the burden. The safety profession advocates for a better understanding of the positive role that good health and safety management plays in creating more profitable and sustainable enterprises.

Business and government would greatly benefit from improved data sources, to measure health and safety performance.

SIA Position Papers & Position Statements

The SIA develops position statements, expressing the current view of the SIA board, under each of the focus areas of this policy agenda. These statements are developed after taking into account the views of its members, other stakeholders, available research, and with consideration to the current environment. We publish those statements at:

http://sia.org.au/about/ourpolicy

If you would like to email us about our policies, contact us at:

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