



Australian Government

**Australian Safety and
Compensation Council**

**MR BILL SCALES
CHAIRMAN
6 April 2006**

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN SAFETY AND COMPENSATION COUNCIL MEETS IN HOBART

The Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) met for the second time in Hobart today.

The Council is a partnership of governments, employer associations and unions established to lead and coordinate national efforts to prevent workplace death, injury and disease; to improve workers' compensation arrangements, and the rehabilitation and return to work of injured employees.

Australia is aiming to achieve the lowest rate of work-related traumatic fatalities in the world by 2009. While Australia's rate fell by over 15% between 1999-2001 and 2001-2003, the ASCC is committed to ensuring this trend continues. It therefore endorsed a methodology to compare Australia's position internationally against the best performing countries around the world.

The ASCC declared the OHS *National Standard for Licensing Persons Performing High Risk Work*. This is the first national standard to be declared by the Council since its establishment in October 2005. The standard will cover around 130 000 workers who apply for licences annually. Mr Scales stated, "this is a very positive outcome which will assist in minimising the risk of injury to all people involved in the operation of high risk plant."

The Council also agreed to publish a national *Guideline on Principles of Safe Design for Work*. Mr Scales said "the guideline is aimed at people who are directly or indirectly involved with the design and modification of products, buildings, structures and processes used for work. It will assist in raising awareness of the importance of safe design and how it can be achieved".

This year *Safe Work Australia Week* will be held nationally on 22-28 October. The Week is designed to showcase the importance and commitment to safety by governments, employers and employees. The ASCC agreed to a national advertising campaign, with all states, territories and Comcare participating.

In order to recognise excellence in workplace safety practice, the ASCC also agreed to participate in the *Safe Work Australia Awards* by including national award categories in all jurisdictional award schemes. Winners of the national awards will be announced in early 2007.

Other decisions of the ASCC are outlined in the attached communiqué.



6 April 2006

COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE AUSTRALIAN SAFETY AND COMPENSATION COUNCIL

The role of the ASCC is to provide:

- leadership and coordination of national efforts to prevent workplace death, injury and disease; and
- advice on directions to improve national workers' compensation arrangements, rehabilitation and return to work of injured employees.

Key issues discussed and matters agreed by the ASCC at its second meeting today are outlined below:

New Fatal Traumatic Injuries Measure developed

Australia is aiming to achieve the lowest rate of work-related traumatic fatalities in the world by 2009. In order to enhance its existing work aimed at achieving this, the Council discussed and endorsed a methodology to measure Australia's position internationally against the best performing countries – Sweden, Finland, the UK, Norway, Switzerland, Denmark and New Zealand. The ASCC agreed that this target will be published as a new indicator in the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council's *8th Comparative Performance Monitoring report*.

2006-07 ASCC Business Plan

The 2006-07 ASCC Business Plan (covering OHS and workers' compensation) was discussed and will be forwarded to the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council for endorsement in May. The business plan establishes an ambitious program of work which includes:

- reviewing and revising key national OHS standards and codes of practice including plant; major hazard facilities; licensing of persons performing high risk work (stage 2); panel erection, demolition and mobile plant for the building and construction industry; and manual handling;
- reviewing all national OHS legislation to identify priority areas that should be harmonised;
- leading Australia's implementation of the UN's Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals;
- developing nationally consistent approaches to workers' compensation arrangements in the areas of; claims for psychological injury; returning injured workers to employment; improving labour force participation for older and disabled workers; definitions of employee, and injury (including disease); self-insurance; and scheme design issues;
- undertaking research and data collection and analysis to underpin the ASCC business plan and the national OHS Strategy 2002-2010; and
- promoting best practice approaches to prevent workplace death, injury and disease.

National Standard for Licensing Persons Performing High Risk Work declared

In Australia the operation of high risk industrial equipment is governed by a system of certification or licensing that is designed to reduce both the incidence and the severity of workplace injuries through minimising the risk of adverse consequences associated with operational error. Even with this system in place, there were still 9 654 reported incidents relating to equipment covered by the Standard over the five year period 1998-99 and 2002-03 at an average cost of \$23 000 per compensation claim.

In response to these figures, WRMC agreed in 2004 that the existing Standard and Guidelines should be reviewed. The review identified a number of issues that have inhibited the effectiveness of OHS regulation in the area of operator certification / licensing. The new National Standard for Licensing Persons Performing High Risk Work aims to address these issues.

The new national standard covers licensing for scaffolding and rigging; crane, hoist, forklift, concrete placing boom and pressure equipment operation. A number of new measures will be introduced including; the requirement for training and assessment to be provided by a Registered Training Organisation under the Australian Quality Training Framework; provision for managing Registered Training Organisation assessors to ensure high quality and consistent assessment nationally; the introduction of photographic licenses; and the requirement for licenses to be renewed every five years.

Approximately 130 000 licenses are issued nationally each year. The Standard will be adopted across Australia by 1 July 2007 pending agreement by WRMC in May.

ASCC responds to HREOC's national inquiry into disability and employment

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) recently conducted a national inquiry into disability and employment. The final report of the inquiry, *WORKability II: Solutions* raised a number of employer concerns about OHS and workers' compensation for disabled workers, particularly the possible impact for employers on their workers' compensation management.

The Council discussed HREOC's recommendations and agreed to request the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities consider the issues raised and to work with the ASCC to provide nationally consistent advice to employers on these matters.

National participation in Safe Work Australia Week and Awards

The ASCC agreed that *Safe Work Australia Week* this year would be on 22-28 October. The Week is designed to showcase the importance and commitment to safety by governments, employers and employees. A national advertising campaign will be conducted, with all states and territories participating by connecting their own safety weeks with that of the national week. This will be done through the use of the agreed wording "in support of" or "supporting" Safe Work Australia Week 2006 on their promotional material.

The ASCC also agreed to hold *Safe Work Australia Awards* in early 2007 to recognise outstanding workplace safety achievements. All states, territories and

Comcare will take part by including the national categories in their respective award schemes.

Guideline on Principles of Safe Design for Work published

A Guideline on Principles of Safe Design for Work has been developed by the ASCC to support the National OHS Strategy priority – eliminate hazards at the design stage. The document aims to raise awareness of the importance of safe design and how it can be achieved and is not intended to be adopted in OHS legislation. It provides guidance and information to persons who are directly or indirectly involved with the design or modification of products, buildings, structures and processes used for work.

The ASCC agreed to publish the Guideline on its website www.ascc.gov.au. A series of “information sheets” will also be developed to provide practical examples of safe design.