

Stephen Pasfield

### **OHS Harmonization Laws – The argument for compulsory supervisor training**

The proposed harmonization laws reinforce the use of Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) and Designated Work Groups. I note there is also a move towards broadening the scope of consultation but to what extent is unclear at this stage.

In my view HSRs do not have sufficient influence in a workplace to have any real impact unless the employer they work for is willing to listen.

It is true that HSRs have powers under the current legislation and will have under the new. However in truth it is inevitable that HSRs are reluctant to issue a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN) on their own employer for obvious reasons.

In any workplace it is the supervisors who direct workloads and affect the way employees/workers carry out tasks. Therefore it is the supervisor who also needs to know about basic OHS principles. Many supervisors view OHS as being something that is undertaken by HR Personnel or safety officers or the HSR.

The new legislation needs to make the training of supervisors in basic OHS principles; i.e. supervision, information training and instruction. Supervision of workers in ignorance of any one of these principles can lead to injuries of any type, physical in an industrial environment or non physical in an office environment.

A supervisor placed in this role without such knowledge has probably been placed there without observance of these principles by senior management and this causes a flow on effect and must have a bearing on the overall workplace culture.

Supervisors also need to know about Australian Standards and Codes of Practice relating to their particular industry and be aware of basic risk management principles.

I am suggesting legislation which mandates a one day training course for all supervisors. For most Commonwealth Departments and Licensees this could be undertaken by in house OHS personnel to avoid any additional cost.

For private enterprise there may be a need source outside expertise, however in most jurisdictions the relevant Regulator could provide guidance in this regard and be cost effective in terms of reduced workplace injuries and compensation claims.

For your consideration,  
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