Transcript

Safe Work Australia

ANSTO

**Presented by:**

**Shaun Jenkinson**

Group Executive, Nuclear Business

§ (Music Playing) §

**Shaun Jenkinson:**

I’m Shaun Jenkinson, and my role at ANSTO is the Group Executive of Nuclear Business. We make many wonderful products, most importantly our nuclear medicines. The nuclear medicines are distributed all round Australia, and are critical in lifesaving diagnoses to help patients across Australia and globally.

In addition to that we have other products in minerals and mining, silicon and radiations and radiation safety. So that’s really the scope of my role.

Safety, health, sustainability, security, I guess they’re things we all hear about. Sometimes I often think about how important they’re all integrated together. I mean working in a facility that has a nuclear reactor, I’m sure everyone understands the need for security. At ANSTO we’re as vulnerable to slips, trips and falls as anything else, albeit we have to make sure we deal with radiation protection, and radiation we’re managing every day. We’ve got some fantastic approaches to how we manage that and make sure we keep our staff safe.

We do some wonderful things with science, but importantly we make products that are used by the Australian medical community. And we must be able to make those in a sustainable way. And what’s important for me with health and safety and quality and compliance is they all go hand in hand. If you’re an organisation that thinks about health and safety, you think about compliance and you understand quality, those things actually help your business. They help you become more sustainable. The whole concept of moving towards zero, zero injuries, zero defects, zero errors, that’s a quality movement that makes my business sustainable, and that’s really important for us when we think about everything we do, and of course health and safety as well.

I ask myself often how do I know that it’s working at ANSTO. Because people tell you, and you can see the way people work and interact with each other, and it’s just a small story I guess being illustrated.

When I first started here we seemed to work sometimes in a little bit of crisis, but the team were committed to getting the product to the customer. So their intention and motivation was excellent. But as we introduced that concept of quality and high reliability and mindfulness and thinking, we got into planning – plan A, plan B and plan C. And I think the way I measured that was on a Sunday morning, which is our biggest production day, I used to get maybe six to eight text messages before ten o’clock with all the challenges and problems. Now I don’t get any, because it works, there’s a plan, people work together, it’s integrated, and I know they’re operating in a very high reliable way and thinking about health and safety.

ANSTO as you know is on the cutting edge of innovation and science, but we’ve also got to think about how we maintain and stay on the cutting edge around safety at the same time. Because new scientific discoveries, they lead us into things we’re not sure we should be thinking about sometimes. So what’s important is that as we develop our innovation and our technology, we have to be thinking all the time how do we stay ahead and future proof ourselves and the way we operate.

But we’re very lucky at ANSTO in that from our CEO down through the organisation we’ve got a lot of people who are constantly thinking about how we improve. Because the compliance requirement continues to go up, but we want to continue to be ahead of that. So for us at ANSTO, what that means is making sure that as we think about the next cutting edge innovation, we stay ahead of it in our thinking.

And what that means in practical terms is that we have our plans. We do a lot of thinking around risk assessment and understanding what are the hazards that could actually happen, and then putting in those strategies to deal with it. And obviously the most important one is elimination. We want to eliminate hazards wherever we can and take account of all those potential concerns people may have when they’re dealing with something that’s new.

A good example like we did with nanoparticles. We’ve all heard of those. And so when you start working with nanoparticles you have to understand the implications in health and the environment, and that’s where we do our thinking.

When we talk about things like nanoparticles and new technologies coming along, we have to of course take that precautionary approach. We talk about that more typically as conservative decision making, making sure that we have a process, how we think about whatever it is we’re dealing with, whether it is nanoparticles or whether it’s just implementing a new machine within a manufacturing facility. We have to take the time to think about all of the extent of the risk that can happen, and think as far into the future as we can. You know what? We have to come back and check it again, because a conservative approach at this stage can save you an awful lot in the future.

Managing radioactive materials can be challenging, and obviously it’s imperative that we manage the safety of our workforce and then visitors that come on site. We have I suppose a deeply embedded culture of safety that starts at the top, at the CEO, and resonates through the senior management team and is reinforced daily and hourly at meetings and interactions.

In the manufacturing side we start every day with the toolbox talks to ensure that we’ve got those most up to date pieces of information, we’re communicating them clearly. At every meeting across the organisation we start with a safety discussion, and that safety discussion of course takes into account safety aspects, but more importantly we’ll talk about what is our safety focus for the current two months. And that switches every two months to keep it fresh, keep it current, and make sure that we can have some real life stories from people in the organisation to help us learn and improve.

And at the moment the focus is really around the positive things we can take out of our investigations so that we do improve. So it’s a really good focus on the good things, understanding what happens, not blame, but understanding why things have happened so we can put them right in the future.

At ANSTO we’ve got many wonderful scientists, engineers, technical people. But I have a fundamental belief that I’ve always worked with, is you can’t outperform your leadership. So if your leadership is a constraint on what you’re doing, that’s a challenge. So as leaders we have to understand those really important skills of situational leadership, engagement of people, understanding and committing to actions, courses of actions around topics such as health and safety, so that we’re seen to be not just talking about it, but embracing it and living it.

So I often talk to the team about the inability to outperform leadership, and I make sure our leadership is improving all the time so that we can raise the performance across everyone.

When it comes down to talking about the individual teams on a team level, what we do is we probably attempt to over-communicate. You never can of course, but it’s you take multiple opportunities in meetings, with one to ones and staff forums on the intranet to reinforce messages. The most important message though is the time you spend with someone one to one to coach them, support them and help them do that across all of their areas of development, but doubly important for health and safety.

We’ve got highly technical and scientific staff on site, and what is critically important is that we help and support everyone to be better communicators around everything we do. So for us it’s providing leadership to demonstrate communication in teams, and it’s also importantly about encouraging people and putting in processes that drive I suppose a routine regular communication and a monthly cycle of meetings and events whereby this rolls along every month and people get information that is then cascaded out to the organisation. So that more systematic and embedded approach is a really good way of getting the communication. It takes discipline. So that discipline to keep it going and have the meetings, ensure the communication happens, that’s absolutely critical for a successful organisation.

ANSTO wants to be the leading edge of safety. So part of my role, I’m fortunate that I get to travel and visit other facilities overseas that have similar landmark facilities that we do, so we get to see how they operate, benchmark and compare ourselves. And many of my colleagues also get the opportunity to travel, look at other facilities, bring back opportunities and best practice.

We also have many visitors that come to us, and one of the things we always ask them to do is when they come into ANSTO is view us with fresh eyes. What do they see as they go round that we might be missing because we’re so close to it and we see it every day? And their insight can often be fantastic in helping us improve.

Obviously have as much reporting as possible, and take out of that reporting as early as possible those key trends for something we can improve on, and making that a routine part of our practice so that we identify something, then we put a real focus on that for a short period of time, look for improvement, measure it, see if it’s actually becoming embedded in the way we operate, then go back and start again and see if we can improve it again.

The take home message, you’re all here to support your colleagues. Take care of your colleagues and the way they interact. I’d urge people to be courageous. Bite the bullet. Have the discussion in a really positive way. We back that up by using the philosophy of asking all of our staff to assume good intent when they’ve been given feedback. So if someone’s giving you some feedback, assume they’re doing it with good intent. They will take that well. The interaction will be more positive and we’ll find we improve people.

Last words of advice? First of all if you’re fortunate like I am to work in an environment and a work area that you love, that’s fantastic. But don’t take it for granted that people have invested time and effort to make the environment not just a good place to work, but a safe place to work. So all of those people on a daily basis that take time to take care of your safety in an organisation, take the time to go and thank them, because they’re thinking of you and you need to make sure you think of them as well every day to make the environment a safe place to work.

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