**Virtual Seminar Series October 2014**

Walking the Talk – Leadership in Practice

Live Discussion Panel

**Michelle Baxter:**Hello. I'm Michelle Baxter. I'm the Acting Chief Executive Officer of Safe Work Australia. Thank you for joining us today for this live discussion panel, Walking the Talk – Leadership in Practice, as part of Safe Work Australia's Virtual Strategy Series and Safety Month.

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we are meeting, the Ngunnawal People. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. Recently, the Australian Government challenged the Public Service to be more innovative and to use technology to reach more Australians. I therefore decided that instead of a standard two day conference, that we would hold a virtual event with a series of online seminars accessible to people across Australia so that they can tune in wherever they live and whenever they like to hear from our excellent speakers. So I'm delighted to introduce you today to Safe Work Australia's very first virtual live panel discussion.

Our first panellist is Mark McCabe, the current ACT Work Safety Commissioner who will share with us his perspectives as a regulator. Prior to his roles in the Chief Minister's Department in the ACT Government, Mark was a senior executive member with Comcare in the Australian Public Service. Mark was Chair of the ACT Work Safety Council and is currently an ex officio Council Member. In addition, Mark is a member of the National Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council and the heads of work safety authorities.

Welcome Mark.

Our second presenter, Dr David Borys is an internationally-regarded work health and safety educator, researcher, consultant and author. David is currently at East Carolina University in the United States teaching applied safety management as well as assisting with supervising masters and PhD students in Australia. Prior to locating to the US, David was a Senior Lecturer in Safety Management with the Victorian Institute of Occupational Safety and Health at the University of Ballarat. David also wrote the Academic Handbook on Organisational Culture, so is central to today's discussion.

And our third panel member is Rod Maule, the Director Safety, Quality and Risk Management at Transdev, a leading public transport company delivering high quality transport services across Australia and New Zealand. Before taking on his role at Transdev, Rod was the General Manager of Health and Safety Australia and New Zealand for Fonterra, and before that, managed work health and safety functions within BP for six years. Rod's skills as a safety strategist, a risk manager and in driving cultural change and continuous improvement will give us an insight into the practical realities of workplaces.

Last, but not least, let me introduce you to today's facilitator, the internationally-renowned Professor David Caple, welcome David, who has over 30 years’ experience as a Work Health and Safety Consultant. David is an adjunct Professor at the Centre for Ergonomics and Human Factors at the Latrobe University in Melbourne and a Senior Research Fellow from the Federation University Ballarat. He is past President of the International Ergonomics Association and a member of the Human Factors Society USA. As a certified Ergonomist in Australia and the USA, David is a Fellow of the International Ergonomics Association, Human Factors and Ergonomics Society of Australia and the Ergonomics Society in both the UK and Sweden.

Please join me in welcoming our panellists and I would now like to hand over to David to start today's discussion. Thank you.

Audience applause

**David Caple:** Thank you Michelle and thank you for everybody joining us today in the auditorium and also for those who are participating online. We welcome you all and to our panellists, and the opportunity for those who are watching online is that you can Tweet in your comments or your questions as we're going. If you just use the #virtualWHS or you can use the live chat facility as well and we encourage your participation through the session and also to complete the feedback online at the end.

This is, as Michelle said, a first for many of us to do a virtual online seminar such as this and we're looking forward to the opportunity with our three distinguished guests to just explore the theme for the day of Walking the Talk – Leadership in Practice. And when you think about leadership in this area of work health and safety, in many organisations the people who are recognised as leaders may be fellow workers, they may be health and safety representatives, they may be the line supervisor or the manager, or the CEO or the board and I think we, in that context, need to refine our discussion today to just maybe look at the role of those in senior executive positions, particularly the CEO and the executive team, and to what extent they influence leadership in the workplace, and in particular, culture.

It's been interesting in my journey to reflect on my discussions with CEOs on the type of influence they feel they have on organisations, and many of them feel that they're committed to this area and they do what they think is appropriate. I like the theme of this conference or this seminar being "Do you walk the talk?", and so one of the questions I often ask is "So how would your employees know that you are passionate and committed to this area? What do you do or what do you say that makes them realise that you are committed to this space, rather than that you support it but you're happy to delegate it to others to provide that role?"

So, I think there's many experiences we've all had in looking at leadership and culture and I'd like to firstly invite David Borys to just reflect on the insights he's had looking at the contemporary research and practice in this area, particularly with his recent authorship of the OHS Body of Knowledge chapter on this topic. David.

**David Borys:** Thank you David and as I reflect back on that process which I undertook over the last 12 months I think the first things that come to my mind was the frustration I felt when I reviewed the literature, bearing in mind that researchers have been writing about culture for the last 30 years, and over that period of time, and today we seem to be no closer to resolving what safety culture in particular is, how it should be defined and how it should be modelled. It seems to be an ongoing cycle of just more and more theorising and discussions about "What is safety culture?" and "How do we model it?" and "What are its aspects?" That's culminated in something like seven literature reviews that have been published in the scientific literature since 2000. It led me to the point of saying, "Well, is it time to actually question is this a useful concept to continue with?" because it seemed to me - because part of writing the chapter was also interviewing 17 key stakeholders both across academia and industry, that industry in particular, which is getting on with the job of having to manage safety and paying little, if any attention, to these ongoing, unresolved debates and dilemmas in the literature on the safety culture. So there's two things happening for me – industry's practice and almost the academics in their own little world get you into a wrestle with what this thing means.

I arrived at the point after much frustration and coining the phrase "the theatre of culture" with a little bit of tongue-in-cheek because it does seem to be an ongoing drama, perhaps a soap opera even, with no resolution to it, that it might be time to dispense with the continuing to beat the drum of safety culture as anything that really has direct impact upon safety in the workplace. And through the interviews and through continued reading of that literature you'll see there is a big push towards organisational practices, management practices which are things organisations can do, and I think you mentioned the word "do" before. I think doing things and organisational practices that do things that favour safety is what's important. So we could probably, in my words, I thought continuing to pursue safety culture is fruitless. We could put safety culture to one side and make sure we're doing things to actually improve safety in the workplace. That's probably where I got to and the last thing I'd say on the tail-end of that is if you do those right things which I think in terms of walking the talk, leaders play, not just the CEO can I say – we can talk about that later – but leaders certainly play a significant role in shaping those practices and what is going to be done and the learning work is attached to that. But, I think that if you get those practices right, then there's every chance that the culture will look after itself anyway. So, rather than trying to change culture, change practices.

**David Caple:** Okay, thanks David. I'll just flip to Rod. You've had extensive experience in the petrochemical industry and the food manufacturing industry and now in the transport and logistics industry, so how do you approach this area of leadership and culture in the conversations that you have and way that you look at this as a professional working in work health and safety?

**Rod Maule:** So, I'm very much of the view that it's about practices that count and practices of the leader in particular. Organisations I've been in that do it really well and leaders who do it really well really emphasise not only that it's a priority but they show by the actions that they take, that it's meaningful. Probably when I was at Fonterra to give you an example, a big New Zealand dairy company a lot of you will know, they have a factory that makes Tip Top ice creams in Auckland and that, out of all the factories I went to in the Fonterra business, had the most visible safety culture if you like, or safety practices, and it wasn't because it was the most, brand-new, up-to-date factory – it had gone through several changes of ownership where capital hadn't been spent for various things – but the workforce were very engaged. They had hazards. They put up hazards in their area that were on the wall. It was very visible. They all were identifying risks and trying to put in controls and make sure people knew how to work safely. I was talking to the workforce and I said "Well, what changed it?"

A lot of the people had been there from 16, 20 years and one of the staff there I interviewed said – or was chatting to – said, "You know what happened? Every manager we had would come up and say 'Safety is really important and it's more important than production,' and all that sort of stuff, but until we had a staff member who was working on a machine, she identified an issue where the machine wasn't working properly and she was worried her hand was going to get caught, she flagged it up for the first time and decided she would actually raise it as an issue and the management team actually stopped production on the floor," and it was the first time that factory had had production stopped, ever, for anything that wasn't sort of an electrical fault or something, and the management team – she was worried she was going to be sacked, and the management team took a stand, shut the production, identified the issue, fixed the issue, but also more importantly rewarded and recognised her for having the courage of her convictions, and it's that point that was about five or so years before I joined the company, that nearly every staff member who'd been there during that period refers to as the single moment where it went from theoretical to practical. I actually saw management walk the talk as opposed to just stand up there and say – and I think those sort of moments, if you can get them in your organisation, really impact the workforce significantly.

**David Caple:** Thanks Rod. Mark, I mean being responsible for the regulator in the ACT, do you see this area as accountability for the leadership of WHS and the culture basically as an incentive or a disincentive for leaders to address this matter?

**Mark McCabe:** Well look, I guess I would say ideally it's an incentive and I think in many cases it is and it will definitely become more of an incentive as time goes on. I think we're only in Australia a couple of years into new health and safety legislation which has embodied accountability at the senior level within companies and I think we're going through a phase where it's actually acting as a bit of a disincentive. I think we'll move through that, but I think some senior leaders are going into protective mode as a result of that and it's a good thing in one sense in that it's forcing them to address the types of systems they have in place, but it's also forcing them more into paper-based systems and lots of paperwork that their lawyers want, and a lot of people feed that innate desire to move into protective mode. Safety professionals will tell them that's what they need, the lawyers will tell them that's what they need, regulators when they go out, one of the first things they'll ask for is paperwork, and so that all is driving them to something that yes, that they need, but you don't want them to become awash with paperwork because it will act as a barrier to them moving forward into the future.

**David Caple:** Okay. Just as a reminder to those that are watching online, if you could just Tweet your questions through on the hashtag #virtualWHS and we'll bring them into the discussion as we're going along. I'd also just like to mention that the context of this morning's discussion comes back to the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy, and in this Strategy that Safe Work Australia and their members developed and it covers 2012-22, one of the seven planks for Australia is in this area of leadership and culture, and the Chair of Safe Work Australia, Ann Sherry, has spoken about an update on this Strategy as part of this virtual series and those who are online might like to have a look at what Ann had to say in her presentation about this last week.

David, just because you're now working in East Carolina and you've been exposed I suppose, to the international perspective on this, do you want to give some reflections about Mark's comment that we're in early days and maybe there's certain stages that we have to live through? How do you see that?

**David Borys:** I see the issue of culture if we reflect on America compared to Australia, as being no different. The issue of leadership and culture is discussed in the United States as much as it's discussed here and prior to coming to this virtual seminar today I actually looked at the last six editions of *Professional Safety* published by the ASSC in the United States, and every one of those would have had an article and reference to safety culture and positive safety culture, all sorts of language around this nebulous thing called safety culture. So, certainly within the safety profession in the United States, culture is alive and well, sometimes dare I say, misinterpreted in terms of being related to behaviour-based safety, and I'd probably like to make the point and it's a point certainly supported by the literature that culture is a group phenomenon, not an individual - so when we're talking about culture, we're talking about groups in the workplace, not individuals. So, sometimes we do confuse that and that's one of the dilemmas that we have. We start talking about culture and we're talking about culture as a proxy for controlling the behaviour of the individual working. There's some of that in the US, but not necessarily widespread, but you do see it even in some of those articles in *Professional Safety*.

So there's a conversation around, an ongoing conversation around culture. There's probably, like there is in Australia, any number of consultants willing to come and fix your culture and offer you the culture toolkit which will lead you to Nirvana – a little bit tongue-in-cheek I know, but nevertheless given there is very little evidence linking doing safety culture things and safety performance, I think they're probably misguided in terms of you scratch the surface of the evidence that's informing what they're doing, and certainly my involvement with East Carolina and also to a small extent the University of Alabama, I know both of those universities in the United states are trying to tackle the issue of leadership and culture in their graduate programs which are at the master's level.

But just last week I was up in Minneapolis working for a large organisation in the food industry in the United States and happened to sit through – we were talking about this last night Rod – a presentation by the CEO and they had experienced fatalities back in August and September and the CEO was very passionate. He was the leader. He was sitting in a room of perhaps 160 operational managers and safety people sort of like the sleeves rolled up and a bit of the question and answer, and I was very impressed. He said "You can ask me anything you want," but at the end of the day in his position of power - and culture at least in part is about power which we can't forget as well - that he started to articulate on the basis of his experience with the fatalities and having a vision of zero fatalities - two consecutive years of zero fatalities being the first CEO to have that – he started to articulate a vision as the leader as I saw it, of what that culture might look like, the values that they would wish to embrace which were around I suppose, what he called "humanising safety," "humanising culture," candour, being more agile in the way they do business, being more open, more trustworthy and more transparent. I thought "It's fairly hard to disagree with that."

So, I think you would find exactly the same being talked about in Australian workplaces, in Australian CEOs, but I think – and it would be very difficult to argue with those values - we've been talking about culture - but I just had to look around the room and wonder whether the audience believed that this was possible and what they would actually do to fulfil the zero harm vision that the CEO was portraying hand on heart, and I think there's a really interesting question there about values and beliefs, and practices. So, I think the problems are the same certainly in the US and Australia and I think it's no different in Europe and the UK as well.

**David Caple:** Okay, thanks. Rod, just in that context of the CEO talking about his vision and the changes and goals that he sets, is this something that you've found takes a while? How does this change process work? You talked about the seminal moment there when that production line was shut down, but how long do you feel it takes for these types of changes to become sustainable?

**Rod Maule:** Well I think in my experience you can get good action relatively quickly by changing your priorities being - clearly articulating with management practices. You know - if the CEO suddenly starts taking an interest in fatality and serious harm events that may have happened, that has a very different approach to if he's looking at only lost time injuries or if he doesn't look at anything. So definitely what your boss is interested in interests me. So that does have an effect and you can have some traction. To make it sustainable though, I think it does take in my experience several years to really embed it where the first 12 months you can get some good wins, but if you suddenly had another priority come up, it might divert or a change in leadership, but I think if you – to get the mass of the leadership and the practices in the organisation embedded so that you've had a track record of year-on-year for example, looking at serious harm events and the controls you need to do to do that – you know – it's much harder to actually change that practice if it's sort of the way we work, than if it's just the flavour of the month that we've done. So that would be my experience. There's probably – you know – good traction in the first year, definitely, but to embed it probably three to five, to really start to embed it where it becomes business as usual.

**David Caple:** So I suppose Mark with your experience in saying "Look, we're a few years into it," and Rod's comment, "It takes sort of three to five," we've still got a bit of a way to go before we'd be confident that it's an embedded culture?

**Mark McCabe:** Yes, but look, picking up on something David said, the Australian Capital Territory is a small business town, primarily. So, leaders like talking about culture. It's language that they're used to. My experience has been for small businesses that when they talk about culture in the safety sense, they don't really have a good sense of what they're actually talking about. They've got this broad sense that they want to improve their culture. I attended a meeting recently with a company where they were talking about culture and when I presented them with the Hudson Model, that was a bit of an eye-opener to them and they thought that was a really useful way of actually being able to quantify and understand that a bit better. They were a bit deflated when I pointed out to them that organisations usually rate themselves at least one step higher on that model than an independent outsider might do, but nonetheless it gave them a framework for understanding where they might be on that journey and where they might want to go to and that then of course is a bridge for how you get there. So, I think the model is really useful, especially for small businesses.

Bigger businesses, they tend to have people within their organisation who might have a better understanding of that. Smaller businesses don't always have that, and that gives them a useful framework for understanding how they might as leaders, contribute to that.

**David Caple:** Just for those that are watching online Rod – sorry, Mark mentioned about the Hudson ladder model. Patrick Hudson from the Netherlands is actually presenting two separate series presentations in this program, so you might like to look out for those and learn a bit more about this culture ladder. Now, we actually have a Tweet. So, if we could just have a look and have a look at that. So it's from Jason. So Jason asks, "How do I get leaders to walk the talk?" Thanks Jason. That's a very challenging question. Rod, do you want to comment on that?

**Rod Maule:** Now, I think it's – you know – it's about in my experiences, giving them a framework on – leaders quite like structure in my experience. So sending off a leader and saying "Go out and talk to the workers," can be quite confronting for some people. Some people do it easily and some are quite nervous because there's quite a disconnect between CEO level and frontline staff level. So, walking the talk as in getting leaders out talking to people which is what we do in a lot of organisations, I think it's giving them some structure and I always like to give them structure around fatality serious harm type things that they should look for rather than sort of PPE type things. That's quite good and just the legal framework is where that does come in handy, is there are some good guidance in there on what good leaders should be doing, verifying that controls are in place and really you need to articulate to the guys, "What are the things that are serious issues in our business and how do we control them?" and "What can you as the leader do to ask some questions and check that they're in place either in management meetings or out in the field?"

**David Caple:** Okay, thanks and thanks Jason. Actually, we have another question that has come through on the Tweets. So, this one's from Ian and I'll read it. It's quite a long question. "I've heard a lot about paperwork over the last two days and there seems to be a consistent idea that this is bogging safety down. What are the ideas on how not to use paperwork?" I think Mark, you mentioned that as a response to this?

**Mark McCabe:** Yeah, look we've been doing some work here in the ACT on Safe Work Method Statements. They're the bug-bear of the construction industry and typically organisations will have many of them. The worst one I've seen is one for how to walk on uneven ground which I always say "I mastered that at age 2." But we've been fighting the fight on trying to get these down to something that's reasonable and that can be actually useful in the organisation, and we have had some success. I've got this interesting story from last week where a subcontractor rang us and said "Is it true I only need these documents for high-risk work?" and when we said, "Yes," he said "That's fantastic. I've just been able to drop the number of these documents from 40 to two." That's going to have a significant impact on his business. So, we are getting that message out there.

The problem about paperwork is there's a lot of comfort in having the paperwork. So surprisingly there's been pushback from safety managers who, they actually feel comfort in having these long documents. What we try and do is challenge them about what are they going to do with them, because we know they'll sit in the cupboard until we as a regulator for example turn up, but I often say to them, "What's going to happen when your worker looks at that 30‑page document? They'll just ask you where to sign it off and that's a bit pointless. You've wasted a hell of a lot of time." So, it is a big issue, but it can be overcome.

**David Caple:** Okay, thanks and thanks Ian for that question. So, hashtag #virtualWHS if anybody else would like to Tweet in. Mark, just while you're talking there, can I just take you back to the safety culture ladder and the progress up those steps because you indicated that a lot of managers think they're further up it than they really are. So, what are the barriers to moving up that ladder?

**Mark McCabe:** I think one of the biggest barriers quite frankly is the comfort associated with the middle step of those five, the calculative step. The calculative phase is characterised by lots of systems and therefore lots of paperwork, and a lot of organisations strive to get there but then become totally captured by it. It's very hard to abandon those systems once you've got them and there's a lot of factors at play forcing you to stay there. Your lawyers will force you to stay there, your regulator will force you to stay there, safety professionals will force you to stay there because they'll only be too happy to give you more systems, and when you get to the point where you've got checklists on your checklists, that's when you know you've got to step back from it and start thinking about, "What's going on here?" It's a pretty bold step to move from that paperwork and start to question whether all of it's adding value and maybe abandon some of it or cut back on some of it. That's a very hard step.

**David Caple:** Yep. Rod, just in terms of if we just talk about semantics for a minute, a safety culture versus organisational culture, do you want to just give us a bit of an insight on how do you see the difference or are they part of each other or what's the language we should be using in this space?

**Rod Maule:** Look, as a safety professional there is no difference in my view between organisational culture if you like, and safety culture. I think it gets back to – you know – "What do we as a group do?", "What are the practices we do?" and that reflects our – that's really what our culture if you like, in my view, is. So, I don't see any difference. I think safety – where safety does fall over as a general rule is where it's seen as a standalone thing. So, the less we can talk about safety culture than just culture, or the less we can talk about safety practices than just practices – it's like I use an analogy in my conversations with people like "You don't have a way of driving a car, that is I'm going to do all the things to drive a car and the safe things are braking and seatbelts. It's just the way you drive, right? You put your seatbelt on, you drive, you brake, you steer," and I think if you can get that working in a business where instead of having safe work instructions, there are just work instructions that are safe and you don't have work instructions for everything, just the things that add value. I think that's where safety moves to and I think it is in my experience, a real step change for the profession to move from – from relying on systems to making the systems relevant to work and then getting engagement with the business to make it just the way we work. That's really the way to go.

**David Caple:** David, do you want to comment on that and maybe weave in safety climate because that's another terminology that's woven in here?

**David Borys:** I'll do my best David, and certainly this is one of the issues that emerged during the interviews for the chapter on organisational culture and I think both the researchers and industry professionals are all adamant that the higher water concept was organisational culture. Now it was expressed in slightly different ways that it's a subset of, or it's in fact not relevant. Organisational culture's the relevant concept, not safety culture. So, there seems to be quite a move in accepting that and what we should be talking about is an organisational culture that either favours, I think in Andrew Hale's words, or focuses on safety, and that's all you need – an organisational culture that favours safety through the practices that are enacted by the leaders of the organisation. You don't need anymore than that. But of course we've got more than that.

We do have the language of safety culture. Not only that, we have four things – we have organisational culture, organisational climate, safety culture, safety climate and how do you reconcile all of those and again, that's another one of the dilemmas and debates that has not been resolved as what's the difference between organisational culture and organisational climate. Some say "They're one and the same." Some say "No, no, no. They're two different concepts." It's exactly the same when it comes to safety. Some, I think Frank Guldenmund might be one out of Delft who says "They're one and the same thing. You can treat them as being synonymous – safety culture and safety climate," whereas Professor Dov Zohar who I interviewed from Israel who's done most of the seminal work on safety climate will say "No, it just illustrates the lack of understanding and fuzzy thinking in those researchers that are looking and studying safety culture. They don't get it. They are quite separate concepts," but no one's really been able to model and articulate the relation between the two, and although I can't give you a definition on safety culture except for that popular one is "The way we do things around here," and I think Zohar's definition of safety climate is quite pervasive in the scientific literature which is the perception, the worker's perception of if you like, the policies and procedures that an organisation puts in place to improve safety.

So, it's a snapshot in time of how workers perceive those management practices or those organisational practices, and that's an interesting one because whereas before I said there's little evidence or maybe some coming out of the Netherlands in terms of linking safety culture and safety performance, there seems to be a stronger line of evidence in the relationship between safety climate scores and safe behaviour and accident rates if I can use the word "accident" in inverted commas.

The way workers perceive their interaction, their social interaction if you like, with their frontline supervisors and more immediate managers, it influences their propensity to follow whatever rules you might have in place or not. So, if they see a disconnect between what the organisation's saying at one level and what their local managers are doing at another, they kind of lose motivation. So if they don't – this is my words – if they don't care, why should I, and there you may sort of get that unravelling of the behaviours if we want to use that word, or the practices of the workers. That's what I was alluding before.

I think it was again Dov, Dov Zohar who said that we could talk about leadership but it's a "dripping model" I think is the way he expressed it. Yes, the CEO at the top of the organisation can drip down an idea about what's important to him or her in relation to culture, a bit like my example in the US last week, the candour and humanised culture and safety and all those sorts of things, but then it's got to drip down across the organisation and increasingly these days, organisations are distributed often across the globe in different national cultures. So by the time this drip effect from the CEO goes down through the various organisational levels, it gets to the line supervisor out in a factory or a plant or a construction site somewhere on the planet, well then the reality is that that poor supervisor is operating under is probably dealing with multiple goals. This is just another one.

**David Caple:** Mark, just with that drip system, I'd just be interested in your comments about that in the context that a lot of these clichés that are used that "We're committed to safety," "It's the number one priority in our business," what's your reaction as the head of a regulator on that?

**Mark McCabe:** Yeah look, I must confess, I always cringe internally where I hear an organisation say "Safety is our number one priority." I take it as a given that the number one priority for most businesses is survivability and I think most of us accept that. I'm sure there are some organisations out there that put safety ahead of absolutely everything, but most of them, surviving as a business is they key and we hope that they do that in a way that puts safety right up there as a very high priority. So, people tend to jump for that one of safety is their number one priority. I think we should judge organisations on their actions, not their words and certainly their work as well, and that's what I think David's picking up on is I call it, excuse the language, the bullshit meter that workers have. They'll recognise when what their managers are saying are just words and when they really mean it, and if they detect that they don't really mean it, they'll pay lip service to it.

You know I'm conscious of an organisation we went to where they had a checklist for their plant and equipment that the person using that had to sign off every day and they had to check a whole range of things. One of those was that the fire extinguishers were there and were operating and all that kind of thing. We went in and did an audit and found 60 percent of the fire extinguishers were empty, but they'd been checked off every day, and I think the bullshit meter had kicked in. People knew they had to fill in the form, but no one really cared whether it was right or not. So, leaders have got to be careful. I would say don’t go into that space of saying those things unless you really mean it and that's where leadership becomes so important. The workers will detect whether leaders mean it or not.

**David Caple:** Sure. Now we have a couple more questions that have come through on the hashtag #virtualWHS. This one is from a guest. "What comes first, values or practice?" That's an interesting one. Who'd like to have a go at that? David.

**David Borys:** I'll have a go at it David, thank you, given the eyes were looking at me. This is yet another one of those debates that have been raging for quite some time and you can – sorry, I'm channelling Susanne Tepe at RMIT at the moment – you can peel the orange any number of ways on this one and I remember having this debate down at the Safety Institute in Melbourne a couple of years ago when we wrote the first chapter on the organisation for the body of knowledge and we had Andrew Hopkins arguing that what comes first is changing practices and we held it with John Toohey from the Business School at RMIT saying "No, no, no. It's actually about changing values and the practices will follow the values."

You can argue that, as we did, for a whole day back and forth, but I think there's some other evidence and you're probably familiar with the fact that James Reason has certainly come out and drawn on Hofstede's work saying that values are things that we learn early in life and are very difficult to change your individual values, whereas we can change your practices in the workplace. That's something that we can influence to a degree. So, you could argue from that perspective that it's about changing practices first, although the two are hand-in-glove and the values will follow along through the process of cognitive dissonance. So there's that aspect to it, so I'm probably going to favour the change practices rather than changing values.

**David Caple:** Rod, do you want to make a comment?

**Rod Maule:** Yeah, I would on this because this is a really key one. I think using the bullshit meter sort of thing, everyone says "Safety is a priority," or "Safety is a value," or whatever – you know. In Australia you can't be in business, in a large business and not have some statement around that intent. Everyone has a safety policy etc., but I think – and my experience is people are decent. Most people, the vast, vast majority of people are decent people and don't want to kill people or seriously harm people or injure people at work. So it's not changing the CEO or the CFO or whoever's values to suddenly, "They didn't like safety yesterday. I'll make it a value for them today," because – you know – their 30 years of experience for most people in the workforce at senior levels, they very rarely deal with fatalities, often, or serious harm events, and certainly often not directly, and so their experience is, "We've been doing this for a long time. We don't kill people or if we do, we couldn't do much about it, so therefore it's not that I want to. What can I…" – you know – "My experience is what I've been doing's fine."

So the values isn't the issue that drives them necessarily from one to the other unless they've personality had impact from a fatality. But I think it's about getting them to change their practices. So, part of the job of the OHS profession is to give them a framework and educate them on the practices we're doing. We're exposing our people to risks that are – you know – stopping focusing on a lot of the minor risks that really CEOs often don't get – understand that well, to things that nearly kill people. In my experience if you can get onto those sort of issues that's much more salient for the guys and rallies them around. So -

**David Caple:** Okay, Mark?

**Mark McCabe:** Well I'll just go back to that example about the fire extinguishers. They had the practice in place. They were filling in those checklists on their plant, on dangerous plant and equipment but were they quality practices without the values behind them? I think you need both. You can get the practices, but can you sustain them if you haven't got the values? That's what I would ask.

**David Caple:** Okay. Thanks for that. We'll just go for another question that's come through from the hashtag #virtualWHS. This is from Emma. "What are worker's duties and can they be pinged?" That must be for you Mark?

**Mark McCabe:** Yeah.

**David Caple:** Thanks Emma.

**Mark McCabe:** We're not in the habit of pinging them but we have initiated in a recent case a prosecution against a worker under the new legislation. It's not often that that happens because often the fault lies somewhere up the chain of command, but workers do have responsibilities to act in accordance with safety instructions, to take reasonable care of their own safety and the safety of others. So it can happen, but I think as a regulator we've got to be careful to not let the blame lie with the worker if it actually lies elsewhere. I often say to people almost every accident happens because a worker does something wrong, because the managers aren't the ones at the coalface doing the risky work, but you have to ask yourself "Why did that worker do it wrong?" and it may be because they were wilful and did something that they really shouldn't have and all the systems were in place to stop that but they ignored it. But quite often there's fault somewhere up the line.

**David Caple:** Sure.

**Mark McCabe:** No one is really checking or you've got this culture where you've got forms in place, checklists in place, but no one really values them. Is it the worker's fault then? I don't think so. So.

**David Caple:** We might come back to that. Rod, just about corporate social responsibility, can you just make a bit of a comment about the influence that that has as a health and safety professional and managers in this space?

**Rod Maule:** Yeah. I think with – well first of all corporate social responsibility is almost another way of looking at it is licence to operate stuff and as an organisation you need to make sure that you don't lose your licence to operate with your stakeholders, and that can be through a safety incident. So a major safety incident could clearly cause your licence to operate to be questioned by shareholders, by regulators, by people who licence. In our business I'm in at the moment, public transport – you know – the Department of Transport in the various states could easily pull the contract if we had a major issue that they thought we weren't managing the safety well. But equally, you can lose your licence to operate for environmental issues.

Orica have experienced that in recent years where they've had that challenge through things that have happened in their business. You can have it lost through just – you know – on a wider scale you're losing your customers. So if your customers suddenly don't like you anymore, then that can – you know – cause you to lose your licence to operate.

So I think my reflections on this and experiences are that you do need to have a balanced scorecard approach. Part of your job as a safety professional with your safety hat on is to make sure that that gets an appropriate voice at management, but also it's not all about safety. It's not all about financials. It’s not all about environment. It's not all about stakeholder management. It's all those things need to be balanced and if you want to see someone who's – you know – one of the really great thinkers that I've come across in this space, it's my current CEO Jonathan Metcalfe. He happens to be doing an interview with a fantastic interviewer – myself – on the 20th of October which will be going live as part of this seminar series, but he’s been in a very senior role, had a really big impact on safety practices in the business and – you know – if you want to see someone in practice who's lived this, I think listen to that interview. It's really informative.

**David Caple:** Okay, thanks, and I think for those who are not aware, Jonathan was the Safety Ambassador for Safe Work Australia last year. Now we've got a couple more questions have come through. So this one's from Claire-nada. "I see your primary failing along our middle management (depot/office supervisors in particular) within safety, incident reporting and injury management. How do you recommend we best engage this tier of management toward a better safety culture?" So this is about the engagement of middle managers in this space. Rod, do you want to just talk about that in your experience?

**Rod Maule:** Very common issue and if I talk to my safety colleagues at very senior levels, nearly every organisation has the same challenge, and I think why that is is – you know – frontline supervisors and middle management, they've got lots of competing agendas. You're trying to manage the budget. You're trying to get the production keeping tracking along. You've got staffing issues where you're the one dealing with the people who are ringing in sick or whatever. You're the one trying to operate the equipment or make sure it operates well or you know your service levels are at that level they need to be. So I think it's a really challenging role, that middle management role. And what helps the best in getting those guys focused is clearly you need to provide tools etc., but you really need clarity from the senior leadership and this is what I find is when the senior leaders are very clear on the practices they expect and reward and recognise those practices rather than just say "It's important," and then reward you totally on whether you keep the machine running, or is it a balanced approach where you're rewarded on a – and recognised. I think that's the clearest thing. So getting your senior guys to really be clear and to put in practices that make it clear to everyone else, and the other thing is – I mean there are other things you can do, but I think in my experience that's probably a key way of engaging those guys. They have a very challenging job at that level.

**David Caple:** Thanks. Did you want to make a comment Mark?

**Mark McCabe:** Yeah, I think that's exactly right. The performance indicators that organisations set for their middle managers will drive their behaviour and quite often their performance indicators are about production, and little else, and if that's the case, that's what they're going to respond to and so you've got to embed other performance indicators into it as well. Construction industry faces that all the time. Everything is about meeting that deadline, avoiding the costs that are associated with missing deadlines and it's a very hard expectation then to say to a site manager, "And do it in a safe measure – a safe way," unless you've got performance indicators they need to meet in relation to that as well.

**David Caple:** I've recently seen one in the health industry where the feedback from the middle managers was on the clinical requirements from the nursing staff to have patients ready for the theatre list. Now whether they did or didn't use the lifting equipment to transfer the patients was secondary to the feedback, then you were late for the list and it's that mixed message of what do they talk about.

**Mark McCabe:** And this is where this issue of organisations saying "Safety is our number one priority," but the measures they set for their business actually embody production being higher than safety.

**David Caple:** Sure. Now we have another question that's come through on our Tweet. A question for Mark. “How can a regulator influence community attitudes?" which was one on my list as well.

**Mark McCabe:** Yeah. Well I don't tend to think of – in our context I haven't actually thought of us trying to manipulate community attitudes, more to tap into community attitudes, but I guess if I'm honest with myself we do try and manipulate them even though I just said that. Community attitudes can be a really powerful motivator for businesses. The community is their market and so – and the community does have high expectations that the workers are coming out of the community. The community has values that often aren't there in the businesses.

It also – it can be a double-edged sword but, as well because when you get to things like prosecutions for example, you would like all enforcement activity to be driven by what's going to get the safety outcome, but the reality is when you get serious injuries a whole layer of other expectations come into play and the small 'P' political aspects, the community expectations – if there are bodies on the ground there's an expectation someone's going to be prosecuted quite frankly and that has to be managed. So it can be a very powerful motivator, particularly at the industry level if you're tapping into the community. I would actually call it their market I guess. But it's a very tricky issue because there's not a high understanding of "Well yes, but they're trying to run a business," so we've got to actually balance community expectations about how they do that in a business context. It's a complex beast.

**David Caple:** Sure. Thanks for that question. I think what we might do is just open to the floor and just see whether we have any questions from those with us in the auditorium and at the same time, those who are watching online, just please feel free to continue the hashtag #virtualWHS. Any other – sorry. Any questions from those with us here in the auditorium today? Who'd like to ask one? No? Sorry, yes we do. We have one. We have two actually. So we'll just start with this one over here. Would you like to just introduce yourself so that the people online know who you are?

**Audience Member:** Yep. Wayne Creaser. Currently a student at ANU. You talk a lot about integrating practices – leadership practices across various areas of the functions of the organisation like safety and environment, but our legislative framework is still very separate and I suppose almost siloed. How much is the legislative framework driving or preventing our ability to merge those practices together?

**David Caple:** Thanks Wayne. I think that was you Rod, mentioned that?

**Rod Maule:** Yeah. Look, I think the regulatory framework is helpful, but you don't want to be a slave to it. I think people – and I think Mark and I were talking before - often we all have trouble with our frontline troops, be they inspectorate or be they in the business where they interpret what your intent is totally differently to what you actually mean. So, you might have the intent of the legislation is very clear. Some of the prescriptive parts of it maybe driving you down a path that's not relevant and I think that's in my job. Part of my job is to say "Look, when things are in conflict, what should I do?" I do the things that are safe, whether it's – you know – whether it's actually in the regulations or not.

I've been in businesses where we've had conflict between safety regulations and environmental regulations. The safest thing just to do a certain task a certain way, but of course some minor, very minor environment things that were in breach, potentially in breach of environmental legislation. And I said to the CEO, I said "I can tell you which one I'd rather stand up in court and face. I'd rather say why we had a minor environmental issue rather than why we had a fatality."

So, I think part of our job is to advise as professionals and if you're in businesses, get consultants to advise you, but you should be saying – you know – we're to guide people on what the intent of it is and how best to meet that intent, and sometimes the regulation or the way it's enforced isn't always helpful or isn't always in line with it. So that's part of the skill of being a good professional, be it environment, safety or whatever.

**David Caple:** Mark?

**Mark McCabe:** It's a very complex issue for a regulator. If you think about what we've been talking about here today, it's a nuanced issue surrounding – leadership is a nuanced issue surrounding culture and climate and all of these things, and yet the legislation has very black and white expectations on leaders in particular, but right across the board, and inspectorates and regulators, their tendency is to go for that, or their obligation is to uphold that black and white law in a context which isn't black and white.

So that's quite a difficulty for a regulator, especially when inspectors often aren't as experienced as the type of people that we've got here on the panel or in the audience in many occasions and they've got to make a call when they're out on the workplace about "Is this an employer that really needs to be 'pinged'" as someone said, "because they're not addressing health and safety issues or are they one that we should be being a bit more advisory and suggesting ways to improve etc.?" It's a real challenge for a regulator because - and this is where community expectation comes in again – the community expectation often is that we impose black letter law and yet it's not – that's not what drives safety quite often at the higher levels in an organisation. So.

**David Caple:** Okay. Thanks Wayne for the question.

**Mark McCabe:** There's a whole PhD there, so I'm sure you're working on that.

**David Caple:** Yes.

**Audience Member:** Peter Manly, ACT Ambulance Service. Could the panel discuss and possibly answer senior managers have to walk several talks. They have to walk a financial talk. They have to walk a quality talk – primarily operational performance. And then they have to sometimes in the shadow of those, walk a safety. How do we move the safety to be on the same par as financial and operational quality?

**David Caple:** Mark

**Mark McCabe:** I'll have a go as the start. Look, one of the reasons – this was touched on a bit earlier – one of the reasons senior managers are a bit scared to walk the talk in relation to safety is because they often feel they don't have the expertise to do it because safety traditionally has been the job of the safety manager and I think sometimes they're afraid that they'll look silly in terms of what they might ask. And I'm mindful of some of the work of Professor Hopkins who's really encouraged leaders to get out there and ask questions and just the asking of the question about "Why are you doing that?", "Is that the safest way?" actually sends a message that the senior manager cares and of course they take the answer back away with them and scrutinise it away from that particular environment, but I think managers have just got to have the confidence to go and ask those questions and if the answer doesn't sound right, then it probably isn't right, but it's an area they're a bit afraid to step into. They are more comfortable with the financial aspects and those other aspects that they do on a daily basis, but for too long they've left safety to the safety manager and it's difficult for them to then step into that space.

**David Caple:** Thanks for the question. We've only got about five minutes to go so I might just prepare the panel to think about some take-aways from this discussion about one or two issues that have come out of this that you feel we all need to keep thinking through as to the next steps to make sure that we're progressing on a journey in Australia which recognises the importance of walking the talk and achieving the sort of outcomes that you think are achievable. I'll just ask is there any other question in the audience before we move to that? Okay, so let's – David, would you like to just maybe do some reflection on your area of study which is incredibly comprehensive and well done on all of that, but succinctly I suppose where do we go with it from here?

**David Borys:** Well I'm going to broaden my responsibility, if that's all right David, beyond just organisational culture and probably pick up a little bit on Dennis Else's presentation from the other day as well, and I think the challenge for the future for me is to move from focusing on work as imagined, as contained in the paperwork with the safe work method statements. I think we have the next iteration of safety management systems coming over the horizon with 45,000. I think we've got to guard against once again going into a cycle of work as imagined and really close that gap and focus on work as it's actually done and that respects the workers and the difficulties that they work under in the workplace.

So it's a real shifting of the spotlight away from the paperwork and onto the realities of work as done because work as done is where culture lives and breathes in terms of the meetings workers attach in local groups to what they do and why they do what they do, and I think that's what we've got to get at. That's the heart of the next phase or the next challenge, not just for safety, but for business performance improvement as well. I'm trying to shift away from always separating out safety, quality and environment. I think it's just all part of managing the business and the business performing and they perform well if they're getting more things right than they're getting wrong. So I think it's shifting the focus to work as done and there's probably a hidden challenge in that as well.

Our current legislation focuses on hazards and controls and I challenge us to think that perhaps that's restricting the spotlight a little bit too far because just knowing the controls for a specific hazard may not tell us exactly or anything about the reality of work as done in the workplace. We've got to really go and engage with the workers and understand the work as done, and my last little snippet would be when you do that, the questions you ask matter. And I think this is something that's coming through in some of the research that my master's students are doing at RMIT that what you ask is what you learn and what you learn is what you fix, and that there's a specific set of questions which will engage workers that tell you their stories about work as done from which you can really learn and you might be surprised what you will learn in that process.

**David Caple:** And I suppose Mark when you had checklists of checklists, that drives the agenda of what you want to talk about, but if you ask the question, "What worries you about this job?" or "What does your family worry about with you working in this industry?" a lot of this colour would come through in the type of answers you would get.

**Mark McCabe:** Yeah and look, the take-away I would leave with leaders is leaders generally, especially as the organisations get bigger, are good at thinking strategically, but for some reason when it comes to safety they drop back into operational and tactical thinking, and I think they've got to see it just like other government's issues. Think about it strategically - where they want to go, where they are and how to get there – and not bog down in that paperwork, "Have we got all the papers?" and all that kind of stuff. Think about where they're trying to take their organisation, and I think they'll find they've got the skills to do that, but safety has built up this language that scares leaders from doing that and so they retreat down into the detail and the operational aspect.

**David Caple:** Okay. Did you want to follow on with any other, "Where do we go from here?"

**Mark McCabe:** No, I think that is the key. I think that is the key for leaders. They have the skills to do this, but they don't open their mind up to it. They retreat into what the safety professionals and the safety managers are telling them, rather than raising above that and asking the types of questions that David was talking about. Rather than "Have we got enough paperwork?", think more broadly about what they're trying to achieve with their workforce and how they're trying to get their workers to think about issues. They're usually good at doing that in their organisation in terms of productivity etc. Apply that same thinking to safety.

**David Caple:** Good. So as a safety professional Rod, what do you see the future?

**Rod Maule:** Well I think as a safety professional you need to influence organisational practices. That's pretty much where I've got to in – and most of my sort of forward-thinking colleagues, that's where we're at. We do have to move away from the tendency of relying on systems to the extent that you're spending all your time doing paperwork and you're forcing other people to do paperwork for you, and I think organisational practices where you're out talking to frontline people, out verifying things at the frontline and getting that information either by taking them with you or presenting it in a way that's engaging for senior managers. I think that can really drive change and as a safety professional you're often challenging existing – you know – if all you're doing as a safety professional is telling your management team what they want to hear, which is "It's all good news" I don't think you're doing your job, but you've also got to be careful you're not – you know – crying wolf over every minor infraction.

So, it's being very clear on what the organisation needs, how you can contribute and understanding – the other thing with organisational practice is understanding the context. If you're the safety person you need to understand the financial constraints, the customer expectations, all those other things that are driving the business and people who do that well are the ones who are rising up in organisations and being able to impact in a big way.

**David Caple:** Very good. Thank you, and we've sort of come to the end of our time for this particular session. I'd just like to thank our three panellists for your time and your sharing of your knowledge and experience, and – yes, so we shall thank our panellists.

Audience applause

**David Caple:** And thank you to our audience here today and also to those that are online, and remember you can still use the #virtualWHS hash to keep Tweeting in and also the live chat we'll keep going. For those that may have Tweeted in and we weren't able to get to your questions, we'll make every effort to respond to you after this session this morning, and also just to be aware that there is a feedback sheet on the website, so if you don't mind, it only takes a couple of minutes to complete and just acknowledge this session here today.

So, on behalf of Safe Work Australia's team, and I thank them for their preparation work, thank you all for participating and there'll be another one of these sessions with three women who represent boards and directors to talk about their perception on this topic as part of this series. So look out for that coming up soon. So, thanks for coming and thanks for watching online.

Audience applause

[End of Transcript]