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National Strategy General Stakeholder Workshop in Townsville, QLD

QLD

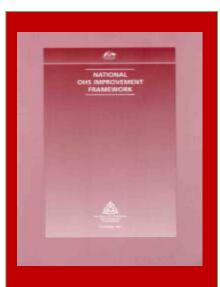|			
Date	Friday, 12 August 2011	**Hosted by**	Simon Blackwood, Executive Director of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, representing Barry Leahy, Deputy Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland
Location	Townsville	**Facilitator**	Professor David Caple

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Disclaimer: The views of participants expressed in this document are not necessarily the views of Safe Work Australia.
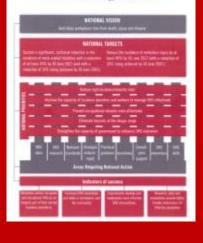
History of National Strategy

National OHS Strategy 2002–2012

The 10 year National Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Improvement Framework (NIF) was in place in the 1990s providing Australia with a nationally coordinated "roadmap" for improving workplace health and safety. The NIF signalled the commitment to OHS improvement in Australia by the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council (WRMC), the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) and NOHSC members. It set out to improve prevention, share knowledge, foster partnerships and collaborations, and compare performance among the key OHS stakeholders in Australia.

The National OHS Strategy (National Strategy) was endorsed in May 2002 with the vision of Australian workplaces free from death, injury and disease. This was a tripartite initiative of NOHSC and unanimously endorsed by Federal, State and Territory Ministers. The 10 year timeframe was chosen to span political terms and provide the time to develop evidence based policies and programs. WRMC noted the successes of the National Road Strategy and its associated targets, and believed the inclusion of targets in a new document would help sharpen the national focus and efforts to improve Australia's OHS performance.

The National Strategy set out the basis for nationally strategic interventions that were intended to foster sustainably safe and healthy work environments, and to reduce significantly the numbers of people hurt or killed at work. Five national priorities and nine areas that required national action were agreed. These collectively aimed to bring about short and long-term improvements in OHS, as well as longer-term cultural change. Reports on progress to achieve the objectives of the National Strategy were provided annually to WRMC.

NOHSC provided the original leadership and took carriage of the National Strategy until it was replaced by the Australian Safety and Compensation Council in 2005.

Safe Work Australia and the National Strategy

In 2009 Safe Work Australia – an independent Australian Government statutory body – was established. It has primary responsibility for improving work health and safety and workers' compensation arrangements across Australia.

Safe Work Australia represents a genuine partnership between governments, unions and industry working together towards the goal of reducing death, injury and disease in workplaces.

The current and future National Strategy are key documents to guide the work of Safe Work Australia and others to achieve this goal. The current historic commitment to work health and safety is illustrated by the joint funding by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments of Safe Work Australia, facilitated through an intergovernmental agreement signed in July 2008.

Safe Work Australia members:

Back left to right:

Mr Mark Goodsell Australian Industry Group; Mr Brian Bradley Western Australia; Ms Michele Patterson South Australia; Ms Michelle Baxter Commonwealth; Mr Rex Hoy Chief Executive Officer; Mr Peter Tighe Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)

Front left to right:

Ms Anne Bellamy Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Mr John Watson New South Wales; Mr Tom Phillips AM Chair; Mr Michael Borowick (ACTU)

Absent: Mr Greg Tweedly Victoria; Mr Barry Leahy Queensland; Ms Liesl Centenera ACT; Mr Roy Ormerod Tasmania; and Ms Laurene Hull Northern Territory.

National Work Health and Safety Strategy Consultation and Development

Safe Work Australia is now developing a new National Work Health and Safety Strategy to supersede the previous Strategy that expires in June 2012.
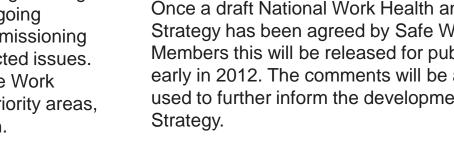
To inform the development process, workshops are being held in all capital cities and a number of regional centres. These will seek ideas and comments from invited participants including employers, employees, regulators, work health and safety professionals, academics and interested community members.

Safe Work Australia will also continue to consult with key stakeholders through a range of other mechanisms including ongoing bilateral consultations and by commissioning topic papers from experts on selected issues. These consultations will allow Safe Work Australia Members to decide on priority areas, targets and the Strategy's duration.

Once a draft National Work Health and Safety Strategy has been agreed by Safe Work Australia Members this will be released for public comment early in 2012. The comments will be analysed and used to further inform the development of the new Strategy.

Welcome to participants

Dr Simon Blackwood, Executive Director of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, welcomes participants to the Townsville workshop.

Workshop Introduction

Dr Peta Miller, Director of National Strategy at Safe Work Australia gave an introduction to the workshop. She noted that the National OHS Strategy 2002-2012 provides a basis for developing sustainable, safe and healthy work environments and for reducing the number of people hurt or killed at work.

She noted that the current Strategy set very clear and ambitious goals for work heath and safety, and was a key initiative to improve Australia's work health and safety performance from 2002–12.

She thanked participants for attending and indicated that the workshops are an important part of the extensive stakeholder consultation process for the development of the New National Strategy. Dr Miller invited participants to stay engaged and review the development progress reports on the new Strategy on the Safe Work Australia website as they are released.

Dr Miller provided data on the progress and limitations of the current Strategy and lessons learnt.

She also noted the public comment period for the new Strategy early next year and welcomed participants' comments at that time.

Dr Miller's presentation slides are available on the Safe Work Australia website.

Participant comments on the workshops and new National Strategy themes can be sent to nationalstrategy@safeworkaustralia.gov.au.

Townsville Workshop Participants' Profile

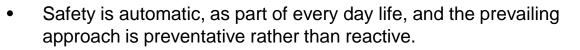| 12 August 2011	Number
Academic/Specialist	3
Company/General	7
Community based organisation	5
Employer Association	1
Legislative/Legal	1
Public Policy	2
Regulator	2
Union	1
Work Health and Safety professionals	11
Total	**33**

Session Scopes

To assist participants, all tables displayed scopes outlining what was meant by the key discussion topics. These are noted below:

- **Social/Economic/Emerging Issues in the Workforce, Business and Technology**
  - *The Workforce: Changing worker demographics such as ageing, young workers, casualisation, contract work, shift work, and individual needs such as literacy, disability, mental health.*
  - *Business: How business is changing to meet emerging challenges and to remain viable and competitive, such as outsourcing, subcontracting, casualisation, etc.*
  - *Technology: Innovations in the workplace that have already or may have a future impact on Work Health and Safety , such as nanotechnology, green technology, innovations in genetics, electronics and IT systems.*

- **Hazards – Enhancing the capacity of workplaces to respond to:**
  - *Disease-Causing Hazards - includes noise, hazardous substances, chemicals and asbestos.*
  - *Injury-Causing Hazards - includes work practices, manual tasks, slips trips and falls.*
  - *Psychological Injury-Causing Hazards - includes the design, management and organisation of work and work systems to achieve resilient productive and safe psychological working environments.*

- **Work Health and Safety Systems – Challenges and Solutions in Safe Design and Work Systems, Skills and Training, and in Safety Leadership and Organisational Culture**
  - *Safe Design and Organisational Systems: the systems and principles that facilitate the elimination of hazards at the design or modification stage of products, buildings, structures and work processes.*
  - *Skills & Training: the skills and training that employers and workers need to deliver safe workplaces.*
  - *Safety Leadership and Organisation Culture: Safety leadership generates organisational cultures that view safety and productivity of equal importance, validated by the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and values of the workforce.*

Session One: What will success look like in 10 years?

- Safety is automatic, as part of every day life, and the prevailing approach is preventative rather than reactive.
- Australia is a world leader in work health and safety.
- There is a stronger evidence base, therefore we can move forward knowing what we need to do.
- There is increased access to remote areas, ensuring equity.
- Safety is implemented and is the way we do business, ensuring work health and safety training from the apprentice up.
- Peoples attitude have changed due to the introduction of safety in the early school years and all the way through their education.
- Teachers are trained in work health and safety, and use their skills to educate children.
- Work health and safety tools are standardised.
- Improved LLN (literature, language and numeracy) has ensured that workers are well informed and engage in safe work, and are empowered through enhanced skills, knowledge and training.
- Other safety inspectors are utilised to cover regulator shortfalls.
- Workplace cultures have evolved to be positive and empowering and the safety message *No One Gets Hurt Today* is entrenched via the use of marketing tools.
- Productivity has improved as a result of safer workplaces.
- Industry focuses on job design and on training needs analyses.

Session One: How do we get there?

- Ensure that safe work cultures, attitudes and practices prevail.
- Help the community to gain knowledge about good work health and safety practices.
- Get regulators involved, and get them to assist operators to assist workers.
- Publish prosecutions on websites, allow people to see the repercussions of actions involved.
- Launch zero harm campaigns.
- Liaise with education departments and train from the top down.
- Raise awareness of what safety leaders are doing and what works.
- Educate safety professionals and consultants to ensure they provide credible advice.
- Harmonise national work health and safety and workers' compensation legislation.

Session Two: Emerging Issues in the Workforce
What will success look like in 10 years time?

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- Generational change has occurred, and an expectation of a positive work life balance is the norm.

- The transition from work to retirement is well managed, in particular the transfer of knowledge and skills from older to younger workers.

- New workers are trained and have regular skills updates.

- The health and wellbeing of workers is given more consideration.

- There is more of an emphasis on new employee work health and safety induction as well as ongoing training and change management.

- The increased mobility and transient nature of the workforce is managed by superior work health and safety practices.

- Provide more training positions for applicants, for example for nurses.
- Offer assistance to older workers who want to return to the workforce.
- Consider the needs of all areas (urban and rural) as well as the different demographics.
- Ensure records kept are relevant and contribute to continuous improvement.
- Educate Gen Y on developing business plans and gaining skills.
- Ensure flexibility of casual workers, depending on the industry.

Session Two: Emerging Issues in Business
What will success look like in 10 years time?

- Flexible working conditions allow for adjustments to hours and work patterns to suit changed working conditions created by climate change and unpredictable weather patterns.

- Australia understands the business case for safety at the local, state and national level based on rigorous data (not just claims but risk data as well).

- Harmonisation has increased compliance and we have moved forward.

- Procedures are streamlined, simplified and require less paperwork.

- Subcontractors do not enter sites before undergoing induction; proof is verified.

- Work health and safety skills training shortages are addressed, and where international skills are imported to ease the skills shortage, the literacy and language barriers are also addressed.

- The chain of responsibility between contractors and employers is simplified and transparent.

- The workplace is ergonomically designed to take into account the differing needs of all workers.

- Australian skills and competencies are globally competitive.

Session Two: Emerging Issues in Business
How do we get there?

- Create new networks to support each other.

- Expand globally with new visas and provide competency based training for workers entering Australia.

- Train teachers in work health and safety.

- Provide more skilled trainers for rural areas.

- Harness new technology to lessen the need for skilled trainers.

- Implement training passports, such as in the oil industry, to provide a means to assess continuous, competency-based training, and to know when to update skills.

- Maintain a healthy wariness and check to ensure skills testing is effective.

- Monitor businesses that are moving off shore, as well as those that are entering Australia.

Session Two: Emerging Issues in Technology
What will success look like in 10 years time?

- Data is distributed widely.
- Safety information is readily available for employees and employers at the touch of a button.
- New technology has facilitated the creation of online information that is credible, culturally appropriate, evidence-based and usable.
- There is better adherence to standards.
- Technology is used to automate or design out high risk work, including the risks of sedentary work and sedentary lifestyles.
- Equipment in workplaces is updated to help manage work health and safety risks.
- Technology ensures that workers and employers are aware of work health and safety issues as soon as
- they arise.
- Technology has forced positive changes, particularly due to an increase in technology induced transparency (such as cameras recording poor work practices).
- The link between business, technology, safety and the workforce is clear.

Session Two: Emerging Issues in Technology
How do we get there?

- Automate or provide technological replacements for people in high risk areas of work such as mining.
- Design initiatives for new technology at work and design out risks before they get to workplaces.
- Provide incentives for business to improve technology.
- Focus on the effect of technology beyond physical impacts to also include psychological impacts, particularly for workers working from home.

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- Disease awareness is raised, and major workplace education and communication programs ensure that workplaces know what occupational diseases are.

- Medical practitioners are aware of occupational diseases and recognise them when they see them.

- Traditional occupational diseases are managed and are not allowed to reoccur.

- The media does not sensationalise occupational diseases and introduce fear and misunderstanding ("one fibre"..).

- Occupational physicians conduct occupational disease health surveillance equally in remote and rural areas as well as in urban areas.

- There is better guidance and communication with the community about hazardous substances and occupational diseases, including from regulators.

- Health surveillance is championed by capable and qualified people.

- More meaningful occupational disease information and statistics are made available about common diseases.

Session Three: Responding to Disease-Causing Hazards – How do we get there?

Enhance the capacity of workplaces to respond by:

- implementing the Globally Harmonised System (GHS) of chemical labelling to improve rates of knowledge and expertise in workplaces

- conducting more research into hazardous substances and chemicals in Australia (similar to the level of expertise as found in Canada)

- providing simple information, eg Material Safety Data Sheets in simple language

- constantly working to refute the "its not going to happen to me" mentality, and

- providing more funding for proper health surveillance.

- Hazards are reported without fear or favour, and management is approachable and encourages reporting.
- Hazard management is part of everyone's job description.

- People are fit for work, and work is designed to be suitable for people's capacity.
- Safety systems are appropriate for the ageing workforce.

Session Three: Responding to Injury-Causing Hazards
How do we get there?

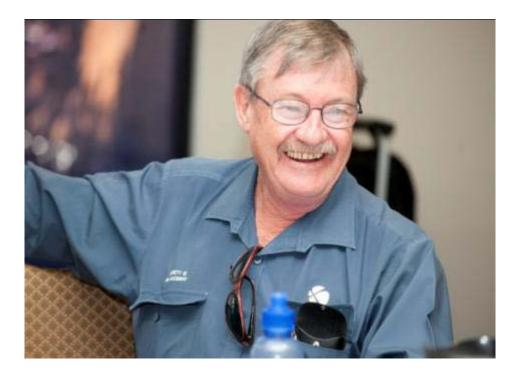Enhance the capacity of workplaces to respond by:

- ensuring good workplace design, based on empowered workers that report hazards, then business operators that uses that information to make positive changes

- engaging workers in training and in finding solutions

- ensuring that workers are fit for work

- looking after your mates, such as in the construction industry

- ensuring that people don't become habitually accepting of hazards ("workplace blindness")

- ensuring proactive hazard management

- ensuring proactive mitigation of hazards that are identified

- ensuring that everyone takes responsibility – resisting the "not my problem" mentality

- educating people to recognise that it <u>can</u> happen to them

- facilitating more sharing of information between industry groups

- implementing a national strategy that focuses on and targets appropriate industries, and

- continuing to improve the capacity of business operators and workers to manage work health and safety effectively.

Session Three: Responding to Psychological Injury-Causing Hazards – What will success look like in 10 years?

- Reduced psychological injuries.
- Better understanding of fatigue and mental health, and of the link between workers and their family.
- Improved managerial skills in recognising and dealing with issues early and appropriately.
- Improved managerial skills in managing workloads, fatigue, interpersonal relationships, and in providing performance feedback.
- Laptops are not taken home, work remains at work.
- Managers don't talk at people, but negotiate with them in good faith.
- Improved return to work procedures with a holistic approach that encompasses family and workplace impacts.
- Improved recruitment practices ensure that recruits are matched to jobs.
- Reduced duration of FIFO (Fly in Fly out, 14 days on, 7 days off) work hours which in turn reduces psychological stress.

Session Three: Responding to Psychological Injury-Causing Hazards – How do we get there?

Enhance the capacity of workplaces to respond by:

- integrating risk management to deal with hazards related to FIFO, such as issues with family and fatigue
- ensuring participation of workers in developing procedures
- promoting staff based on talent and people skills, not just on technical skills
- providing and supporting flexible work arrangements, particularly in extreme heat and in preparing for extreme weather conditions such as cyclones
- ensuring there is reasonable and sensible job control, and limiting very enthusiastic workers from overdoing it
- ensuring managers provide training and job design that is matched to the work required to be undertaken
- training and supporting managers and supervisors to improve their 'people' skills
- demystifying the issues around stress and psychological injuries
- focussing on respectful behaviour between managers and employees, rather than relying on employee assistance programs to deal with interpersonal conflict
- not accepting occupational violence – particularly against nurses, ambos, fire fighters etc, and
- changing thinking and creating more of a socially enjoyable work environment while maintaining productivity.

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- A safe design "tick" (similar to the heart foundation "tick") recognises best practice in design.

- Safe design is holistic, and applies from the inception of a project, to construction, and right through to demolition and decommission.

- The safe design message is integrated into universities, with lecturers teaching it, students learning it, then applying it in their chosen field.

- Architects that are already leading the way in safe design are seen as champions.

Session Four: Safe Design & Work Systems
How do we get there?

- Ensure that designers recognise their obligations under the legislation.
- Hold designers accountable for poor design, despite the potential for litigation and retribution.
- Train lecturers to understand the need for safe design.

Session Four: Skills & Training
What will success look like in 10 years time?

- More management training has generated improved workplace safety cultures.
- Knowledge and training is relevant to the specific needs and functions of employees.
- Employers are more aware of the work health and safety legislation and what it requires of them.
- People management skills are embedded within workplaces.
- Training providers are responsive and provide courses that focus on relevant skills, eg. not necessary to do whole Certificate Four training if all that is needed is to brush up on risk assessment.
- Training is more flexible and focussed to reflect the rapid pace of life, but initial training of employees is always face to face.
- Refreshers are provided on line where possible.
- Training packages are culturally aware and sensitive to different ethnic requirements.
- Harmonisation of work health and safety legislation brings the added benefit of conformity of trades, skills and competencies across state borders.

Session Four: Skills & Training - How do we get there?

- Ensure that the links between environmental safety and workplace safety are recognised.
- Train people to understand the impact and act speedily when safety or environmental issues arise.
- In the case of fossil industries, develop specific induction packages, then underpin them with general induction.
- Conduct training needs analysis routinely.
- Ensure that competencies are recognised nationally and internationally to avoid expensive and unnecessary retraining.

Session Four: Safety Leadership and Organisational Culture – What will success look like in 10 years time?

- Effective guidance and mentoring is available on what successful safety leadership looks like.

- Effective guidance is availability on how to incorporate safety leadership into general management.

- Safety leadership (formal and informal) is driven at all levels, and everyone at every level feels empowered to drive it without feeling uneasy and risking adverse consequences.

- Safety is part of leadership and management, and incorporated through all levels of the business.

- Leaders "walk the talk".

- Regulators encourage positive safety leadership.

- Managers don't take off their "management hat" to put on a "safety hat" – rather there are "safety threads" all through their "management hat" and only one hat is needed.

Session Four: Safety Leadership & Organisational Culture – How do we get there?

- Incorporate safety leadership into all training (not just safety training) and university education courses.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the WorkSafe Victorian *Operation Undercover Boss* program and apply it nationally if it is shown to be effective.

- Accept that people will always take risks, and invest in leadership as the tool to introduce a safety culture.

- Recognise the importance of consultation, and build empowerment by ensuring it occurs openly and without negative consequences for all involved.

- Ensure that safety and productivity are intertwined; recognise that leadership is the connecting link.

- Share information without fear or favour, and act on convictions when safety standards are compromised.

- Ensure accountability at every level, and communicate standards for performance management.

- Complement business values with safety values.

- Enforce and apply sanctions where needed to deal with culpable acts.

Closing Reflections from Safe Work Australia

Peta Miller thanked Simon Blackwood, Executive Director of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, for opening the workshop; the facilitator David Caple, and all the workshop participants for their attendance and enthusiastic contributions.

She commented that while there were many commonalities discussed at today's workshop that echoed other findings from the nine National Strategy workshops Safe Work Australia has hosted so far, the Townsville attendees had generated many new ideas as well.

In particular there had been many important observations made over the day around accurate risk perception, above all in relation to the extreme weather events faced by Townsville recently. The challenges of dealing with these types of uncontrolled hazards are of consequence, and Peta complimented the attendees on their resilience.

She outlined how the Townsville workshop fits into the overall development of new National Work Health and Safety Strategy, and committed to reflecting on the many themes she had heard over the day – such as the need for accountability to engender safety leadership, the need for a collaborative, consultative approach to take all stakeholders on the journey with Safe Work Australia, and the need for effective communication of consistent messages to ensure that people remain informed and empowered.

As a continuation of this theme, Peta urged participants to stay engaged with the development process as the journey has only just begun. A draft strategy will be made available for public comment early next year, and she urged everyone to view it and make comments. She also advised participants that they will be able to view a write-up of today's workshop outcomes which will be published on the safe Work Australia website.

Peta went on to comment that the matters that had been chosen for exploration were just some of the many that are under active consideration by Safe Work Australia members as they develop the new National Strategy. She closed the workshop by welcoming participants' ongoing engagement with the development of the new Strategy and invited any further comments and ideas to the National Strategy post box - nationalstrategy@safeworkaustralia.gov.au.

Evaluation Outcomes

Overall, the feedback from the National Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022 workshop which was held in Townsville on   12 August was very positive.

Both quantitative and qualitative results were collected from 20 evaluation sheets, which reported 100% satisfaction for both the format of the day and the facilitator. The opportunity to contribute and the location/venue also reported 100% approval. The food, the room set-up and length of the workshop recorded between 90 and 95% satisfaction.

There was *a sense of ownership* due to the *high satisfaction of having input into the direction of health and safety in Australia (100%).*

There was in particular a call from the audience to *see more people in management roles participate in the workshops.* A great deal of participants found *the topics interesting* and that there were *ample opportunities to contribute.*

The occasion to provide feedback and input at this critical stage of developing the new Work Health and Safety Strategy was appreciated, and the fact that all input was respectfully received and many times validated by the presenters successfully made this workshop *very well worth attending - positively focused.*

Many helpful suggestions were made on how to improve the quality of discussion, ranging from the need for *more information on direction and scope and future plans from Safe Work Australia* to the need for an *overview of how each of these topics fit with a driving idea or topic for the strategy.*

All of this input has been noted.

Text in italics indicates direct quotes from responders

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