



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

PRINCIPLES OF OHS POLICY

ACCI is committed to the achievement of an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) outcome for Australian workplaces where every person in the workplace has a safe place of work and a safe method of working.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

ACCI's overarching policy objectives are:

- to achieve improved workplace OHS performance; and
- to achieve a nationally consistent OHS regime.

Specific policy objectives include:

- implementation of effective OHS management;
- implementation of effective OHS training programs through members;
- the promotion of OHS to small businesses;
- the adoption of performance-based legislation in all jurisdictions;
- limiting the development and adoption of new national standards; and
- effective implementation of the recognised priority national standards.

In order to achieve these objectives, ACCI will continue to pursue a number of specific strategies which include:

- raising awareness amongst employers of the importance of improved OHS;
- increasing the capacity of employers to achieve improved OHS performance;
- implementation of ACCI's policies by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC);
- circulation of publications and general information to promote a nationally consistent OHS regime;
- further development and implementation of the *ACCI Small Business Strategy*; and
- influencing policy makers in State and Territory jurisdictions to implement the recognised priority national standards in OHS.

THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Management

Effective OHS management should be an integral element of the role and responsibilities of all workplace managers. OHS management must be viewed with at least the same importance as production, efficiency and cost control. OHS is the responsibility of all persons at the workplace. A proactive approach to safety management is essential if industry is to achieve best practice.

Safety must be considered a corporate aim.

A management plan is essential and should incorporate the following:

- the establishment of a health and safety policy that clearly defines roles and responsibilities of workplace parties;
- a joint approach that involves all employees at the workplace;
- the provision of appropriate information and training;
- risk minimisation including the identification, assessment and control of hazards; and
- ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review.

Training and Education

Training and education initiatives play a vital role in ensuring that everyone in the workplace is equipped with the necessary OHS knowledge and skills. The attitudes and behaviour of workplace parties will be influenced by information and training that is directly relevant to them and deals with the environment they operate in. Information and training programs should therefore be tailored to the needs of the enterprise.

Every opportunity should be taken to ensure that an awareness of OHS issues is incorporated into appropriate vocational education and training programs.

The effectiveness and impact of training and information which is provided should be evaluated for its ability to bring about workplace change and improved OHS performance.

Wherever practicable, training initiatives should involve both management and employees to ensure consistency of approach. The workplace parties should be provided with consistent messages to implement systems for OHS management and to constructively resolve problems as they are encountered.

Reporting Systems

Workplaces must have access to OHS reporting systems that provide timely and relevant data on their own performance and enable them to benchmark their performance against comparable workplaces. Governments at State and Federal levels should ensure that there are consistent reporting systems and performance standards to enable effective benchmarking in enterprises and across industries.

Traditional measures of OHS performance such as lost time injury rates are no longer considered sufficient or appropriate for a large part of industry as they are often not responsive enough to assist in the evaluation of preventive approaches. Positive performance indicators should be developed to be used internally by enterprises and for comparisons with other enterprises.

Legislation

Performance-based OHS legislation provides a framework for compliance with the general duty of care. The principal focus should be to encourage and support the implementation of healthy and safe work practices, giving scope for enterprises to establish their own approaches.

Successful preventive programs will only be achieved through the full support of all those who can directly influence workplace practices. Only employers and employees working together can put into effect real workplace change. The role of government agencies is to assist and facilitate change through the provision of guidance and advice developed in consultation with industry.

Enforcement of regulatory requirements by prosecution should not be the primary focus of policy and should only be used as a last resort.

National Consistency

There should be consistency in the regulatory and standards framework throughout Australia and this should be achieved through appropriate consultation and co-operation.

The States and Territories have responsibility for the implementation of the regulatory and standards regime within their jurisdiction. National approaches should be directed toward encouraging States to achieve consistency between the different jurisdictions.

In this context, there should be co-ordination between the OHS prevention systems and compensation and rehabilitation systems.

Costs/Benefits of Standards Implementation

Standards must be based on a sustainable, and substantially agreed, scientific and technical appraisal of the issues involved.

To facilitate workplace implementation, standards must be practical and understandable and free from industrial or political agendas.

It is imperative that in the development of standards full account be taken of the international environment and of the need for competitiveness in Australian industry. It must be recognised that any new standards which are imposed represent costs to industry. Standards should only be adopted where it is clear that the OHS benefits justify the costs that will be incurred by industry in their implementation.

Responsibilities

The achievement of a safety culture in the workplace requires the commitment and participation of everyone in that workplace. OHS regulation should:

- recognise the obligation on all workplace parties to carry out their work activities in a safe manner;
- clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of all workplace parties; and
- encourage a consultative and participative approach in the workplace.

'Modern Workplace: Safer Workplace' – An Industry Blueprint for Improving OHS in Australia

In April 2005 ACCI released Australia's first employer-initiated national Blueprint on occupational health and safety (OHS) law and policy. The Blueprint is titled *Modern Workplace: Safer Workplace*.

The *Modern Workplace: Safer Workplace* Blueprint presents a clear way ahead for industry and for policy makers. It is a four part, 96 page national plan. Its Vision statement, five core Outcomes, and twenty specific Conclusions and Recommendations can make a difference.

It is plain speaking, constructive and forward looking. Its messages are directed at industry and directed at governments. To both parties, the Blueprint acknowledges improvements, identifies failures and makes recommendations for improvement. Through the Blueprint, Australia's employer bodies are calling for a fundamental re-think by governments about OHS law and policy.

The Blueprint outlines a Vision for an improved OHS system:

“Occupational Health and Safety policies and systems that support employers, employees and all those in the supply chain to develop cultures and attitudes, and accept responsibilities, that achieve safer places of work and safer methods of working so that Australian workplaces are free from death, injury and disease.”

It seeks to achieve the following Outcomes:

- significant and sustained reduction in fatalities and injuries;
- reduced human and economic costs;
- increased awareness, communication and co-operation as the driver of cultural change;
- reasonable, balanced and practical regulation that contributes to a world class OHS system and performance; and
- safer communities.

It makes 20 Conclusions and Recommendations. These are:

- workplace culture drives outcomes more effectively than regulation;
- mutual responsibilities exist, but should not be delegated to others;
- active and ongoing OHS management plans and corporate leadership is required;
- there is a role for governments and regulation, but only where intervention drives improved outcomes;
- Australia's OHS performance is improving, but can and should be better;
- commitment throughout the supply chain is needed, including early intervention through workplace design;
- the focus should be on risk management, not risk elimination where that is unachievable;
- the current system of regulation is seriously deficient;
- complex regulation is self-defeating and removes the incentive to invest in better OHS outcomes;

- the duty of care based on reasonableness and foreseeability has been distorted in some jurisdictions into impossible or unreal duties of care;
- specific measures, such as a business advisors program, are needed to make OHS regulation workable for small and medium businesses;
- alternative criteria for assessing the duty of care, such as compliance with a safety management system, should be pursued;
- national consistency of regulation is a desirable goal, whether or not there are national laws;
- State and Territory governments have a crucial role to play if OHS regulation in the private sector is to be improved;
- OHS communication activities by governments should be nationally co-ordinated;
- an imbalance exists in current enforcement and compliance practices. The focus is on prosecution of the few instead of prevention amongst the many;
- alternative penalty options, such as enforceable undertakings, should be introduced;
- proposals for new offences of industrial manslaughter breach fundamental principles of criminal responsibility and should not be pursued;
- safety awareness should be built into community education; and
- investment in OHS training needs to be increased.

The power and uniqueness of the *Modern Workplace: Safer Workplace* Blueprint is that it is a collective plan by Australia's 37 State and Territory chambers of commerce and leading national industry organisations across all industry sectors. Consistent with one of the key messages of the Blueprint – that OHS cultures require leadership from the top of organisations – it was adopted by employer bodies at the highest level - Presidents and Chief Executives.

The Blueprint will be supported by specific initiatives, publications and activities by ACCI and employer bodies. A copy of the OHS Blueprint and its summary pamphlet can be obtained from the ACCI web site www.acci.asn.au or an ACCI-affiliated employer organisation.

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