



IN BRIEF



The basics

"New national OHS legislation must guarantee workers a safe and healthy workplace, the ability to decide who represents them on OH&S issues and a right to refuse to do unsafe work," says Peter Marshall.



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Sober stats

Last year's Australia-wide figures indicate that vehicle accidents are the most common cause of death at work (46%), followed by falls from height (12%) and being hit by falling or moving objects.



Serious tally

Every 2 to 3 minutes, someone in Australia is injured seriously enough to lodge a workers compensation claim. There are almost 690,000 work-related incidents, including diseases, injuries and fatalities, each year.

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Not good enough! UFUA OHS Coordinators and Members have joined rallies across Australia to demand better national OHS laws. This rally in Geelong (Victoria) was on September 1.

Safety at stake

The Rudd government and the states are developing nationwide OHS laws that have the Union movement worried

National OHS legislation has now been released in draft form for public comment. "As it stands, this *Safe Work Act* is a real problem," says UFUA National Secretary, Peter Marshall. "Workers and OHS Reps stand to lose hard-won rights and protection."

The Union movement is telling the Rudd government – and the states – that while uniform laws could be an advance, changes that reduce workers' safety standards just to appease business calls for cost-cutting are not on.

"Currently, there are nine sets of occupational health and safety laws across the

country," says Peter Marshall. "And while it makes sense to rationalise the system, we say governments across Australia must ensure the highest standards of safety at work are achieved."

Reducing death, injury and illness at work are top priorities for Unions. "Firefighting is one of the high risk occupations," says Peter Marshall. "The UFUA is working hard with the ACTU to ensure the Rudd government doesn't blow this once-in-a-lifetime chance to establish the world's best safety standards for workers."

RISK AVERSE

Don't Risk Second Rate Safety is the ACTU's campaign to encourage governments to stand up to big-business pressure. "A new national OHS code should not be a backward move," says Peter Marshall.

The Union movement says new laws must:

- give workers a say,
- make employers responsible,
- empower health and safety representatives,

- respect the role of Unions, and
 - enable workers and Unions to take court action.
- "The UFUA supports the ACTU's demand that these five basic standards must be met," says Peter Marshall. "The new laws must not undermine standards and put Australian workers and their families at risk."

The government says it will announce the finalised 'model' legislation in mid-December.