

'It's no accident' is the OHS newsletter of the AMWU. Feedback and story ideas to amwu@amwu.asn.au

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INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY AUSTRALIA

On Tuesday 28 April, International Workers' Memorial Day, unionists across the world committed to keep campaigning for safety. This years Australian theme was "Stand for Safety".



IT'S NO ACCIDENT

HEALTH AND SAFETY NEWS

MAY
2015

PLEASE PLACE ON
NOTICEBOARD

HURTING THE HURT – FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PLANS

“ I feel Comcare is doubting my honesty, trying to intimidate people already suffering to get them off their books and I think these changes to the law might be the next step to formalise that. ”

Jane* is talking about the Abbott Government's deceptively-named Improving Comcare Scheme Bill which will wind-back existing Comcare benefits, risking leaving thousands of injured in potential poverty unless they try to prematurely return to their workplace.

It's a catch-22 choice which could affect all AMWU members in government areas including Defence, CSIRO, ASC plus those private self-insurers under Comcare such as Thales, CSR Ltd and John Holland.

Another Bill in the Senate proposes to open up Comcare to more self-insurers. This would undermine all the state WorkCovers. If one third of eligible Queensland employers moved to Comcare, nearly 20% of the income from the premium paid by employers would be lost to the State Government.

It is essential that we get the cross-bench Senators on board to vote with the ALP. We need the cross-bench and National Party Senators to hear our concerns. Go to www.amwu.org.au/campaigns/ohs/news for our flyer and petition.

(*"Jane" is a pseudonym to protect our member)



Members at the following sites would be immediately affected if the SRC (Improving the Comcare Scheme) Bill was passed: Department of Defence, ANSTO, CSIRO-AHL, ASC, ARPANZA, Royal Australian Mint, TGA Labs, Institute of Marine Science, Commonwealth Parliamentary Departments, GEO Science Australia and companies which are self-insurers under Comcare – John Holland Group, CSL Ltd, Thales, Snowy Hydro Limited, Toll Holdings, Linfox and K&S Freighters.

Government attacks on Workers' Compensation Rights

The Federal Government has drafted legislation that aims to cut workers' compensation rights.

It will affect any worker who is currently under the Comcare scheme – or whose employer transfers to the Comcare scheme.

This legislation would result in cuts to workers' compensation benefits and deny access to Comcare for many who suffer from work related injury and illness. The Bill removes the rights of workers to compensation in a broad range of circumstances.

These are the worst changes ever proposed to workers compensation seen in this country.

If passed into law, they would immediately affect union members at a range of worksites, including public service Departments and many private sector companies including the entire John Holland Group (part of the Chinese CCCI group), ASC and Thales.

This Bill and another Bill before parliament would allow companies to transfer out of their current state workers' compensation schemes into Comcare – offering lower protection to workers.

Sign the petition to say no to the Government – protect our workers' compensation rights.

Key features of the Legislation includes:

- Denying many workers access to workers compensation by limiting the type of injuries and illnesses covered
- Reducing payments for injuries that lead to permanent impairment
- A decrease to weekly benefits by introducing step-downs in benefits
- Ability of employers to take away payments from workers who fail to meet employers' demands
- Even when workers are back at work on suitable duties there will be inability to accrue normal entitlements

Authorised by Paul Bastian AMWU National Secretary 04/15



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IF BOTH BILLS GO THROUGH FEDERAL PARLIAMENT, ALL STATE AND TERRITORY WORKERS' COMPENSATION SCHEMES WILL BE UNDERMINED. ALL GOVERNMENTS NEED TO HEAR OUR CONCERNS.
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YOU EXPOSE US, WE'LL EXPOSE YOU

On 28 April, International Workers' Memorial Day 2015, the international trade union movement, issued a stern warning to rogue employers: “If you expose us, we'll expose you”.

According to the ITUC, worldwide occupational cancers kill at a rate of more than once a minute.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said: “Some of the world's most profitable companies are not just defending their toxic products, they are defending weak exposure standards that mean they profit and you pay. It is not ethical, it is not healthy and it is not what we bargained for. We make this pledge: if they expose us, we will expose them.”

The AMWU and CFMEU are leading a worldwide union campaign to stop the deadly trade in white asbestos. The United Nations will be voting on whether to add the white asbestos to a list of dangerous substances. A powerful advertising campaign on trams and buses running through the heart of Geneva is set to remind residents and visitors about the alarming dangers of asbestos.

As Burrow said, “There is nothing

inevitable about exposure to toxins at work. Over 40 countries, including all those in the European Union, function without asbestos and without negative impacts. Why shouldn't workers in India, Brazil or Sri Lanka be afforded the same protection, the same respect for their health?”

The chemical industry has recently attacked the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) for listing the worlds most heavily used herbicide “glyphosate” as a

probable human carcinogen. Monsanto which sells glyphosate under the trade name “Roundup” accused the IARC of “selective cherry picking” of the data. Monsanto added that the IARC decision was a clear example of agenda-driven bias (Monsanto, March 23, 2015).

The IARC, an agency of the World Health Organisation, based the assessment on

findings in animals and male agricultural and forestry workers who have a higher incidence of a type of lymphoma than non-exposed workers.

This is another example of what Burrows says: “Wherever stricter controls are proposed, industry representatives or their hired guns appear, challenging the science and predicting an economic catastrophe.”

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- helpdesk: 1300 732 698
- AMWU Care: 1800 206 316

Make sure all the AMWU HSRs on your site are registered with the AMWU as a HSR. If they don't receive the 2015 AMWU health and safety booklet, then it's likely their details need updating. Ask your AMWU delegate to check.

