

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

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AMWU NATIONAL RANK AND FILE COMMITTEE FORMALLY ESTABLISHED.

In December 2015 the AMWU National Council formally endorsed the report and recommendations of the first face to face meeting of the AMWU National Safety Council - in November 2015.

The key role of HSRs and workers in improving health and safety at the worksite was discussed, as well as the shortcomings of some employers. For example, some employer/PCBUs representatives:

- Don't actually know the law as well as a trained HSR
- Try to move responsibility onto individuals
- Sometimes deal with health and safety issues as disciplinary issues
- Are clever at working with complacent rather than active HSRs
- On some large sites like to refer safety concerns to the FWC rather than dealing with the problem immediately and effectively.

This is in contrast with better health and safety and more productive sites where employers/PCBUs actively engage workers and HSRs around health and safety issues.

Active HSRs [eg PINS, cease works, active health and safety committees] have forged much improved relationships with their employers -- which is beneficial to all. In these worksites, employers actively discuss health and safety with the union and members, sometimes coming to HSRs for advice.

Since February 2016, members of the AMWU National Safety Council have been addressing their relevant state councils or conferences. Their presentations included the actions and activities necessary to improve health and safety in manufacturing industries; recognising that some of our industries have a worse safety record than construction and that good health and safety is of paramount importance to workers and their families.

Some recommendations from the National Safety Council have been forwarded to State Conferences and will be discussed at the AMWU National Conference in July 2016.



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Facebook page for Health and Safety Representatives
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IT'S NO ACCIDENT

HEALTH AND SAFETY NEWS

MAY 2016

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

The participation of AMWU members in this year's commemoration for Workers Memorial Day was better than ever. Many workplaces observed a minute's silence, while others attended the events across the country. For example:

- A huge turn out of over 1800 people remembered the 26 fatalities in Queensland last year
- Morwell Victoria, AMWU member Allan Buhagiar recalled the day in 2006 when 26 year Scott Thorburn was killed and Allan's hand was amputated - it took 15 operations to reattach Allan's left hand
- Retired members Phil Reid and Bruce Campbell laid a wreath on behalf of AMWU members at Darling Harbour, Sydney
- Canberra unionists gathered at the National Worker's Memorial
- Victorian unionists, including many at AMWU worksites, heeded the call to down tools for a minute's silence --- members at TUBA observed a minute's silence on day and afternoon shifts. The remembrance was supported by the AMWU and management.



PLEASE PLACE ON NOTICEBOARD

Some Good News

The Senate failed to pass the legislation to reintroduce the ABCC; this is good news for the health and safety of our members working in construction.

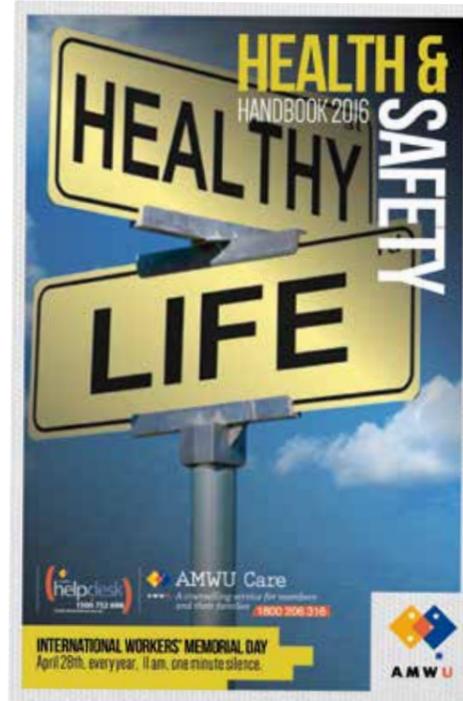
The political nature of the Federal government, backed by large employer groups, attempts to re-establish the ABCC were on clear display during questioning at Senate Committee hearings on March 7 2016. The employer groups, AiG and MBA, had presented arguments about the costs of unions to the Committee. But when Senator Doug Cameron asked, "what are the costs to productivity of workplace deaths and injuries in the construction industry or to individuals and their families?", the employers couldn't even manage a guesstimate – they had no idea!

For the record, on 2012 estimates, the overall cost of workplace injury and disease is \$2,700 per person [this is per person in the general population, not

the working population]. It would not be hard to calculate how many families have someone employed in construction – a job for the economists at the AiG and MBA?

Asbestos Safety Eradication Agency Funding

Over the last 12 months, the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency has been unable to access \$3 million previously allocated in its budget. But the Minister responsible for ASEA, Minister Cash, refused to release the monies. It was bizarre, so unions and asbestos support groups went to Canberra to lobby the cross bench Senators. The lobbying paid off as the Federal government has effectively restored the unspent money, plus a small additional amount. ASEA will now have an additional \$3.4m over the next two years to complete the rollout of the National Strategic Plan and some innovative pilot programs which had stalled do to lack of funding.



**H&S HANDBOOK
AVAILABLE NOW**

HEALTH AND SAFETY - IS NOT FOR HIRE

A 2015 survey of AMWU H&S Reps indicates that there has been little improvement in the H&S of casuals over the last three years – despite the laws being very clear that ALL workers are to be provided with:

- Training
- Information
- Safety gear
- The right to raise health and safety concerns, without fear.

Over half of our AMWU HSRs surveyed indicated that casuals may not get the same H&S training as permanents and nearly a quarter reported they were unsure if casuals were given adequate safety gear.

In a 2012 AMWU survey 28 per cent of casuals said they never had any H&S training.

The survey answered by H&S Reps from 144 workplaces saw many convinced that casuals were too scared to speak up about safety issues for fear of losing their shifts.

The majority of HSRs who answered the survey made comments about how hard it is for casual workers to speak up:

"For those that do make a little noise, alot just do what they are told – safe or not."

"If I rock the boat I will be out of here"

"If you hurt yourself, you get sacked."

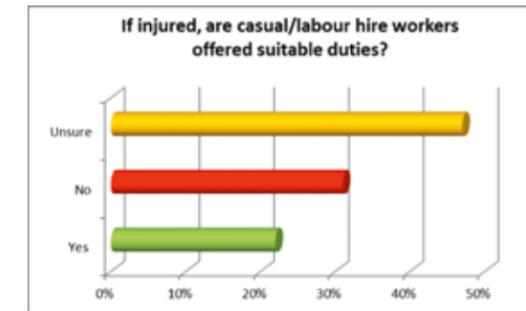
"Usually made to work longer hours with no enforced breaks and if contracted you are not entitled to super or sick-holiday pay."

"Easy for employers to remove "difficult" casuals by simply not re-employing"

"One casual worker was taken off the roster for a few days after complaining about health and safety"

The bar was also set higher for casuals than permanents seeking to come back after being injured at work; 38 per cent of Health and Safety Reps stated that casuals were required to be fully fit before being allowed back in the door.

This is of importance, as good return to work, using modified duties or hours, are predictors of better rehabilitation and less time off overall.



"If I rock the boat I will be out of here"

"If you hurt yourself, you get sacked."

