

Future of Work
Occupational Health and Safety
Policy
ACTU CONGRESS 2003

Mainstreaming Occupational Health and Safety

1. Congress acknowledges that:
 - (a) work-related death, injury and disease are at shameful levels in Australia;
 - (b) while the union movement has been at the forefront of improvements in occupational health and safety, in Australia and internationally, unions need to intensify their efforts ensuring that workers' health and safety is an integral part of union activities;
 - (c) union members consistently rank health and safety in the top workplace issues of concern to them and rightly expect the union movement to give high priority to health and safety; and
 - (d) too many workers will continue to needlessly suffer death, injury and disease if the union movement fails to substantially improve protection of the occupational health and safety of Australian workers.

The Occupational Health and Safety Objective

2. Congress recognises that workers will judge the union movement on whether we make a substantial impact on the health and safety of Australian workers through:
 - (a) better organisation of health and safety at the workplace level;
 - (b) improved health and safety legislation, regulation and enforcement; and
 - (c) reduction of health and safety hazards.

Making Health and Safety Representatives the Focus

3. Unions should promote health and safety in workplace organising and recruitment activity, through:
 - (a) ensuring that workers and their representatives are supported and encouraged towards increased activity on health and safety;
 - (b) linking the activities of workplace delegates and health and safety representatives;
 - (c) campaigning for a legislative extension of the roles and powers of health and safety representatives;
 - (d) ensuring that health and safety representatives have access to expanded training and are able to choose their own training providers;
 - (e) provision by the union movement of excellent training for health and safety representatives;
 - (f) provisions in enterprise agreements and awards which advance health and safety;
 - (g) campaigning for and exercising the right of union officials to enter and inspect workplaces in relation to health and safety;
 - (h) implementation of legislation requiring employers to meet their legal duty of care, including consultation with employees and their representatives; and
 - (i) maximising workplace involvement in health and safety campaigns.

The Role of Government

4. The ACTU, TLCs and unions must implement a common agenda for OHS activity by governments which includes:
 - (a) Federal and State Industrial Manslaughter legislation;
 - (b) legislation and regulation which advances health and safety rights;
 - (c) comprehensive and adequate compensation legislation for victims of workplace death, injury and disease including access to common law remedies;

- (d) improved rehabilitation services and appropriate return to work programs for injured workers;
- (e) the revitalisation of the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission into a body which develops contemporary health and safety standards and codes of practice;
- (f) effective action under the National OHS Strategy 2002-2012;
- (g) ongoing proactive enforcement, with a broadened range and scope of penalties for health and safety offences;
- (h) integration of health and safety into vocational and higher education and training;
- (i) improvements in health and safety data and research; and
- (j) the establishment of a Dust and Disease Tribunal in all States and Territories based on the NSW Dust and Disease Tribunal or extend the jurisdiction of the NSW Dust and Disease Tribunal to cover all states and territories.

The Priority Issues

5. The ACTU, TLCs and unions need to vigorously address priority health and safety issues, including:
 - (a) Industrial Manslaughter legislation;
 - (b) stress at work;
 - (c) work-related violence;
 - (d) work-related bullying;
 - (e) labour market changes;
 - (f) dangerous working hours;
 - (g) manual handling;
 - (h) chemicals at work;
 - (i) exposure to asbestos;
 - (j) electromagnetic radiation;
 - (k) smoke-free workplaces;

- (l) impairment at work, including drug and alcohol testing;
 - (m) major hazard facilities; and
 - (n) the potential threat of terrorism in the workplace.
6. In addition Congress calls on the ACTU, TLCs and unions to lobby for National and State memorials to commemorate workers who are killed or die as a result of their work.