

## Future of Work Occupational Health and Safety Policy

### *Securing Workers' Health and Safety By Building the Union Movement*

#### Introduction

1. Congress affirms its commitment to the *Union Charter of Workplace Rights*, which outlines the rights and responsibilities of all parties in the provision of decent and fair health and safety, compensation and rehabilitation.
2. Health and safety is a basic human right and of the utmost importance to Australian workers and is integral to union activity and growth.
3. Congress acknowledges that the full impact of work-related death, injury and disease is disregarded by policy makers. Consequently, each year thousands of Australian workers have their health and quality of life harmed by preventable effects of hazards at work. This has flow on effects to entire families.
4. In order to change this, and recognising that unionised workplaces are healthier and safer, unions must intensify their efforts to increase union density by:
  - a) Educating, organising and campaigning around specific health and safety issues to increase union density;
  - b) Securing health and safety legislation that ensures workers are represented and can act collectively to protect their health and safety; and
  - c) Ensuring that health and safety is protected through the highest standards in occupational health and safety legislation, regulation, enforcement measures and industrial instruments.

5. Congress notes and condemns the loss of genuine tripartism on the body replacing the Australian Safety and Compensation Council.

## The Priority Issues

6. In order to protect workers the ACTU and unions will campaign and lobby for:
  - a) The highest standards in nationally consistent occupational health and safety laws and enforcement to improve workers' health and safety.
  - b) Reduction in the use of toxic substances at work, starting with:
    - i) The 'KNOW WORKPLACE CANCER' Campaign;
    - ii) A nationally consistent approach for the removal of all asbestos containing materials (ACMs);
    - iii) The immediate introduction of effective systems to monitor and survey workplaces, work and workers' health where they are required to work with, or are exposed to, any hazardous substances; and
    - iv) A national inquiry into asbestos and asbestos related diseases.
  - c) The introduction of stringent protections for people exposed to nano-materials;
  - d) The introduction of stringent protections for people exposed to biological hazards; and
  - e) Greater protection for workers from psychosocial hazards, particularly those resulting from stress, fatigue and poor rostering, bullying, workplace and occupational violence, harassment and intrusive monitoring.

## Working with Governments and Occupational Health & Safety Bodies

7. Congress recognises that in order to improve workplace health and safety standards a commitment to a genuinely tripartite approach is needed from all governments and as such the ACTU will advocate for:
  - a) Legislation to re-establish a national commission with responsibility for occupational health and safety that is:
    - i) Consistent with the intent of ILO Convention 155;

- ii) Independent; and
    - iii) Properly resourced.
  - b) Legislation to ensure that these structures are mirrored in each state and territory.
  - c) A national commission to deliver laws that will develop and improve contemporary health and safety standards and that actively monitors the regulating authorities to ensure that these laws are enforced.
  - d) The ratification and effective implementation of all relevant ILO conventions.
  - e) Effective action under the National OHS Strategy 2002 - 2012, including:
    - i) The establishment of a comprehensive online database covering all work-related injury, disease and death; and
    - ii) Comprehensive data collection, compliance, education, research, enforcement, OHS skills development, national standards, incentives and practical guidance.
8. This policy is to be read in conjunction with both the 2003 and 2007 ACTU OHS Policies.