

## Tragic deaths of young workers must be stopped: call for urgent changes to Insulation Scheme

The Federal Government should immediately halt the Ceiling Insulation Stimulus Scheme until there are major improvements to its safety, training and licensing standards, say unions.

The tragic recent deaths of three young workers — two by electrocution and one by heat stress — demonstrates this is a very dangerous job which requires extra safeguards.

Unions are concerned there a number of businesses which have recently entered the industry to take advantage of the Federal Government scheme which are cutting corners with safety and training, at the expense of workers' lives.

- Last week it was reported that a 19 year old man died on Saturday 24 November from heat stress after working the day before in the suffocating heat of a ceiling cavity in St Clair in Sydney's west. It was his first day on the job.
- The week before on 18 November a 16 year old young man died when he was electrocuted installing ceiling insulation in Rockhampton in Queensland.
- On 14 October a 25 year old man was electrocuted and a 19 year old female working with him was seriously injured in Meadowbrook, southern Brisbane.

"The Insulation scheme should be halted before any more young Australians are killed," said ACTU President Sharan Burrow.

"Improved safety standards, better training to ensure workers are able to identify risks such as faulty wiring, and a bigger role for qualified tradespeople such as electricians to oversee the work need to be urgently considered to prevent further deaths.

"Shonky operators that are putting lives at risk should be driven out of the industry.

"There needs to be an immediate inquiry and a significant lift in the standards required for businesses to receive funding under the Government scheme.

"The scheme is due to run for another two years, funding the insulation of more than 2 million homes and there has been a flood of new companies rushing to take advantage of the multi billion dollar program.

"This and other Federal Government stimulus and infrastructure investment schemes are important to save jobs and help the economy recover from the Global Financial Crisis.

"But it is essential that workers are not put at risk as a result of the tight deadlines imposed on those receiving grants and funding, including schools that are part of the massive Building the Education Revolution investment program.

"Unions have said from the outset of the \$42 billion stimulus and infrastructure program it is important the Federal Government require businesses that get funding to respect the rights of their workers, provide adequate training and ensure a safe workplace," said Ms Burrow.

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