



media release
Issued Wednesday 19 September 2007

The Race to Commercialise Nanotechnology Leaves Workers' Health and Safety at the Starting Block: ACTU

Today the Australian Council of Trade Unions joined an international coalition of civil society, public interest, environmental and labour organizations in signing the Declaration on the Principles for the Oversight of Nanotechnologies and Nanomaterial.

The declaration identifies eight fundamental principles for the effective oversight and assessment of nanotechnology, including mandatory government regulation.

ACTU Occupational Health and Safety Officer, Steve Mullins said:

“Governments and business are falling over themselves to make Australia a commercial hub for the potential 2.5 trillion dollar nanotechnology industry but lip service is being paid to the occupational health and safety risks.

“Already hundreds of products containing nanomaterials are on the market, including popular sunscreens.

“The ACTU is concerned about the research showing the potential for serious health impacts on workers exposed during the manufacturing of products using nanomaterials.”

Studies indicate that ultrafine particles are more toxic than larger particles on a mass for mass basis and current research has identified the potential for a number of disturbing health impacts including lung and cardiovascular disease, brain damage and central nervous system disorders.

Mr Mullins said, “This is a potential time bomb.

“There is no government regulation in Australia to control the unique risks posed to workers or consumers or to regulate the manufacturers and importers of nano-products

“Governments are asleep at the wheel and business sees dollars signs in their eyes.

“By signing this declaration, the ACTU is sending the clear message that profit at the expense of workers lives will not be tolerated,” said Mullins.

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