

Workplace fatalities claim 32 lives nationwide this year

Monday, 28 April 2025

Thirty-two Australian workers have tragically died so far this year while they were at work.

The figure is a grim reminder of the unacceptably high number of individuals who go off to work on an ordinary day and don't make it back home again.

The number of workplace fatalities last year was 168, slightly lower than the five-year average of 191 workers who have been killed each year at work nationwide.

These workplace fatalities do not include the thousands of workers who die each year from deadly work-related diseases, like asbestosis, mesothelioma and silicosis caused by their use of asbestos and silica containing materials like the now banned engineered stone.

Australian Unions will highlight workplace fatalities at a special service in South Australia today marking International Workers' Memorial Day, one of many such events occurring in each state and territory and around the world.

The memorial services will take place almost a year since the Albanese Government enacted legislation to bring in new nationally consistent industrial manslaughter laws that ensure employers are held accountable for the deaths of workers.

From July 1, 2024, those operating in the Commonwealth WHS jurisdiction found to have recklessly or negligently cause the death of a worker face potential criminal liability and up to 25 years' imprisonment for individuals and \$18 million for companies.

At today's Adelaide memorial service, ACTU Assistant Secretary, Liam O'Brien and SA Unions' Secretary, Dale Beasley will join families, workers and safety advocates to remember the South Australians killed at work in the past year.

Since the industrial manslaughter laws were introduced, there have been prosecutions initiated in nearly all states and across diverse industries including construction and manufacturing.

The Coalition voted against the industrial manslaughter laws twice, including most recently in Parliament in 2023, and has yet to release a workplace relations policy, or work health and safety policies in the current federal election campaign.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary, Liam O'Brien:

"Today, Australian Unions remember those who were tragically killed at work and reflect on the importance of protecting the health and safety of all workers.

"Preventing workplace tragedies means defending the laws that provide justice for victims and their families and corporate accountability for employers who fail in their duty to workers.

"The families of those who lost loved ones at work were instrumental in securing the new industrial manslaughter laws.

“As we approach a year since the laws came into effect, working people deserve clarity on whether the Coalition would support stronger industrial manslaughter laws beyond the election.”

Quotes attributable to SA Unions Secretary, Dale Beasley:

“Coming home from work safely isn’t just a priority; it’s a right.

“South Australia now has a nation-leading workplace safety system, empowering workers and their unions to address workplace safety issues *before* the unthinkable happens.

“Secure jobs save lives. You’re not going to speak up about unsafe work if you’re scared of getting sacked. All the laws and regulations on the books mean nothing if you’re too vulnerable to use them.

“Even one worker’s death is a tragedy, this many worker deaths is a choice. There is so much more work to be done. No worker can afford to risk losing any of their workplace rights.”

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