

## Workplace deaths surge to their highest level in a decade

Monday, 12 October 2026

Australian Unions are demanding better enforcement of safety standards including prosecutions along with the immediate endorsement and implementation of Safe Work Australia's Best Practice Review, in response to an increase in the number of workplace deaths, particularly in remote parts of Australia.

Figures from Work Safe Australia released today show that 222 Australian workers were killed at work in 2025, the highest annual death toll in more than a decade since 2012.

Workers in remote Australia are around eight times more likely to be killed at work than the national average, highlighting a significant safety divide between metropolitan and remote Australia.

Six industries account for around three-quarters of workplace fatalities – agriculture, construction, transport, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and public administration and safety.

Vehicle collisions remain the leading cause of workplace deaths, whether on roads, farms, mines or worksites, tragically continuing to claim more workers' lives than any other type of fatality with major companies like Cleanaway again recording multiple fatalities over the last 12 months.

Mental health claims have also increased from around 6,600 to 17,900 serious claims over the past decade, making psychological injuries the fastest-growing category of workplace harm and highlighting the ongoing stress that Australian workers are under.

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

"The fact that 222 Australian workers were killed at work in 2025 is shameful and a toll that can't be allowed to continue. No Australian worker should leave for work and not come back home again at the end of the day, because safety wasn't a high enough priority.

"The public expect health and safety regulators, who currently have an exclusive monopoly on enforcement, to carry out thorough investigations and go after employers that breach safety standards and when they don't workers and their unions should be able to.

"Too often rogue employers, such as Cleanaway, continue to breach safety standards that cost workers their lives. These companies must be held accountable.

"Progress on lowering fatality rates has been made but over the past few years this has stalled, to the point where worker deaths are again trending back upwards. Governments must immediately agree to and implement Safe Work Australia's recently concluded Best Practice Review which will strengthen the rights of workers and their unions to make work safe and lift safety standards.

"Workers in agriculture, construction, transport and manufacturing are bearing the greatest toll, with vehicle collisions still the leading cause of death.

"At the same time, health care and social workers, the people who care for those who are sick, injured, ageing or living with disability are increasingly becoming part of the work death statistics.

“The clear increase in the fatality risk with each step away that workers are from the major cities is also totally unacceptable. Workers’ safety should never depend on a postcode and whether you work in metropolitan or remote Australia.”

**ENDS**

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