



Safe Work Week timely reminder of human cost of workplace tragedies and need for strong OHS laws

The unacceptably high human cost of workplace death and injury highlights the need for stronger national workplace health and safety laws, the ACTU said today.

As union members around the country hold events to mark Safe Work Week, the ACTU is stepping up its push for new national laws that protect workers and ensure employers cannot escape their duty of care to provide a safe and healthy workplace.

“Safe Work Week serves as a timely reminder of the need for a strong and healthy workplace for all workers – full time, part time, casual or contract workers,” said Sharan Burrow, ACTU President.

“Unions support the current Government review which will lead to new national workplace health and safety laws in Australia provided that the Review delivers the highest standards in health and safety and that every worker is better off.

“The ACTU believes the new laws should allow unions to initiate prosecutions over breaches of workplace safety where other agencies have failed to do so,” said Ms Burrow.

A three-person panel is due to complete the first phase of the Review next week and make recommendations to the Federal Government. Government figures show that in 2005-06, 236 Australians died from a traumatic workplace injury or disease and many thousands more are injured or become ill.

But unions are concerned that this official figure grossly underestimates the true figures as it does not include people with asbestos-related disease or other conditions that become apparent years later.

“For every death and injury there are grieving loved ones, workmates and others who are left to pick up the pieces,” said Ms Burrow.

An ACTU Factsheet on the campaign for strong national OHS laws is available on request.

See details of a Safe Work Week event today in Sydney on the following page.

MEDIA ALERT

Friday, 24 October 2008

On 24th October 1988, Cheryl Romer lost her husband Bob after a horrific accident on a Sydney worksite at No 1 Bligh Street. The company involved was never fined or obliged to apologise.

Since that time, Cheryl has fought for compensation and stronger OHS laws. She is now the convenor of the Workplace Tragedy Family Support Group. This **Friday 24 October 2008**, 20 years after Bob's death, Cheryl's family, Bob's work colleagues and CFMEU members, including will hold a ceremony hosted by Grocon at the Sydney site where Bob Romer was critically injured.

MEDIA ALERT

What: The family of Bob Romer and building workers will hold a spiritual smoking ceremony with Aboriginal dancer Terry Olsen. They will unveil a plaque which is a joint initiative between the CFMEU, Workplace Tragedy Family Support Group, Grocon and the Romer Family.

Where and when: Friday 24th October 2008, 10am, Farrer Place, opposite No 1 Bligh Street, Sydney.

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