

COAL INDUSTRY SAFETY CONFERENCE
CAPRICORN INTERNATIONAL RESORT, YEPPOON QLD
1 - 3 SEPTEMBER 1993

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE SAFETY AGENDA
FOR THE MINING INDUSTRY

PRESENTED BY MR LYALL DIX
DIRECTOR, STANDARDS BRANCH
WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA

**COAL INDUSTRY SAFETY CONFERENCE
CAPRICORN INTERNATIONAL RESORT, YEPPPOON QLD
1 - 3 SEPTEMBER 1993**

**TOPIC : NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE SAFETY AGENDA
FOR THE MINING INDUSTRY**

**NATIONAL UNIFORMITY OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY
STANDARDS**

- . THANK YOU FOR THE INVITATION AND OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN THE CHANGING APPROACH TO OHS IN AUSTRALIA.
- . AS YOU MAY KNOW NOHSC, ALSO KNOWN AS WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA, IS A TRIPARTITE BODY ESTABLISHED BY THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP, FACILITATE AND IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL APPROACH TO OHS.
- . THE NATIONAL COMMISSION COMPRISES OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE PEAK EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER BODIES - THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS AND THE AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY - AS WELL AS THE COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS.
- . TODAY I WILL OUTLINE:
 - . AUSTRALIA'S CURRENT OHS STATUS;
 - . THE BENEFITS OF UNIFORM STANDARDS;
 - . THE NATIONAL UNIFORMITY PROCESS;
 - . HOW WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA DEVELOPS STANDARDS; AND FINALLY
 - . WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES WHICH SPECIFICALLY IMPACT ON THE MINING INDUSTRY.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

OHS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE MICROECONOMIC REFORM POLICY THAT AIMS TO MAKE AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIES MORE COMPETITIVE.

WE HAVE ABOUT 200,000 WORKPLACE INJURIES A YEAR REQUIRING MORE THAN 5 DAYS OFF WORK.

BY WAY OF INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON, THIS IS ALMOST THE SAME NUMBER AS IN JAPAN, WHICH HAS A MUCH GREATER WORKFORCE, BUT A CULTURE WHICH MAY EMPHASISE WORKPLACE SAFETY MORE.

WE HAVE AROUND 500 DEATHS A YEAR FROM WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS, AND A SOMEWHAT HIGHER BUT LESS PRECISELY KNOWN NUMBER OF DEATHS DUE TO DISEASES SUCH AS LUNG CANCER AND MESOTHELIOMA WHICH ARE CAUSED BY HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SUCH AS ASBESTOS, AND ARE A RESULT OF OUR PAST POOR PRACTICES IN CONTROLLING HAZARDS AT OUR WORKPLACES.

IN ADDITION GOOD OHS PRACTICE IS RELATED TO GOOD EMPLOYEE MORALE, LESS INDUSTRIAL DISPUTATION, (5% OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN AUSTRALIA ARE ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS) AND WORKSAFE STUDIES IN SELECTED INDUSTRIES HAVE SHOWN A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOOD OHS PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY.

OUR NEW APPROACH TO OHS REQUIRES EMPLOYERS, WORKERS, MANUFACTURERS AND SUPPLIERS TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR AVOIDING OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES.

WE DON'T ACCEPT THAT IT IS INEVITABLE WORK WILL RESULT IN INJURIES AND DEATHS. EQUALLY, ALL PARTIES HAVE A ROLE IN DETERMINING THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE FRAMEWORK AND THE REGULATIONS THAT ARE INTRODUCED.

UNIFORM OHS STANDARDS

NATIONAL OHS STANDARDS PROVIDE AN AGREED BASIS FOR ACHIEVING SAFETY AT WORK.

THE PURPOSE OF UNIFORM OHS STANDARDS IS TWOFOLD. ONE IS TO PROVIDE A CONSISTENTLY SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS. THE OTHER IS TO MAKE A SAFE WORKPLACE EASY TO ACHIEVE AND ECONOMICALLY ATTRACTIVE TO EMPLOYERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA.

- OUR AIM IS TO HAVE A CONSISTENT SET OF OHS REGULATIONS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA. THIS BEGINS WITH WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA DEVELOPING NATIONAL STANDARDS THROUGH A CONSULTATIVE PROCESS INVOLVING PUBLIC COMMENT AND TRIPARTITE PARTICIPATION.
- NATIONAL STANDARDS CAN USUALLY BE VIEWED AS NATIONAL REGULATORY MODELS AND ARE SUPPORTED BY CODES OF PRACTICE AND GUIDANCE MATERIAL. THESE ARE ADOPTED BY THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS.

THIS IS WHAT WE CALL NATIONAL UNIFORMITY.
- A CONSISTENT SET OF OHS REGULATIONS IS IMPORTANT TO DECREASE COSTS TO INDUSTRY, REMOVE TRADE BARRIERS BETWEEN THE STATES AND TERRITORIES, AND REMOVE BARRIERS TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF WORKERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA.
- NOT ALL PROVISIONS OF THE LEGISLATION WILL BE THE SAME, AT LEAST INITIALLY. FOR EXAMPLE CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS ARE QUITE DIFFERENT IN THE DIFFERENT STATES AND TERRITORIES. TO ACHIEVE UNIFORMITY IN THIS AREA WILL TAKE A LOT OF TIME, SO THERE IS A FOCUS ON WHAT PRIORITY TASKS CAN BE ACHIEVED IN THE TIME AVAILABLE.

CONSISTENT REGULATIONS.

- ONE KEY OUTCOME OF THIS WILL BE MORE CONSISTENCY OF REGULATIONS. REGULATIONS MUST STILL EXIST FOR THE MAJOR ISSUES BUT WE NEED TO CONSOLIDATE THE CURRENT BULK OF REGULATIONS IN AUSTRALIA INTO A MORE COMPACT AND RELEVANT FORMAT.

PLAIN ENGLISH REGULATIONS.

THE REGULATIONS PRODUCED THROUGH THIS REGULATORY REFORM PROCESS WILL BE IN PLAIN ENGLISH SO EVERYONE CAN UNDERSTAND. YOU SHOULD NOT NEED TO BE A LAWYER TO KNOW YOUR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE AREA OF OHS.

FLEXIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE BASED STANDARDS.

WE NEED REGULATIONS THAT ARE FLEXIBLE AND PERFORMANCE BASED. THESE WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY SUPPORTING CODES THAT DETAIL ONE ACCEPTABLE WAY OF ACHIEVING THE PERFORMANCE GOAL AND GUIDANCE MATERIAL. THROUGH THIS SYSTEM THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT SAYING THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE PRESCRIBED WAY TO ADHERE TO A STANDARD THAT IS ACCEPTABLE IN AUSTRALIA. WE ARE RATHER SHOWING YOU A WAY OF MEETING THOSE STANDARDS WHILE ALLOWING YOU THE FLEXIBILITY TO PRODUCE THE SAME OR BETTER PERFORMANCE BY DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT. THIS IS ON THE PROVISIO THAT THE EMPLOYER CAN ASSURE AND DOCUMENT THAT THE APPROACH TAKEN MEETS OR EXCEEDS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE STANDARD.

I BELIEVE THAT THE NEW DRAFT COAL MINING ACT IS WORDED IN A SIMILAR PERFORMANCE BASED FASHION.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN INDUSTRY.

REGULATIONS AND CODES MUST BE PRACTICAL FOR USE IN THE WORKPLACE. WE BELIEVE THE BEST WAY TO ACHIEVE THIS IS THROUGH THE INPUT OF THE EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEES, MANUFACTURERS AND IMPORTERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDARD. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT AREA IN WHICH WE NEED YOUR HELP.

ONCE THE NATIONAL COMMISSION DECLARES A STANDARD, WHICH I REMIND YOU HAS BEEN PREPARED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE JURISDICTIONS, EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES, IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT EACH OF THE JURISDICTIONS WILL ADOPT IT TO SERVE AS THE BASIS OF REFORMED REGULATIONS.

INTERNATIONAL COMPATIBILITY

WHEREVER POSSIBLE WE ARE DEVELOPING STANDARDS WHICH ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THOSE IN PLACE IN OUR MAJOR DEVELOPED TRADING PARTNERS. IN THIS WAY WE WILL NOT HAVE BARRIERS TO INDUSTRY WISHING TO LOCATE FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA OR EXPORT OVERSEAS.

HOW ARE WE TO ACHIEVE REGULATORY REFORM?

- . WE HAVE A NARROW WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY IN WHICH TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNIFORMITY AND NATIONAL REGULATORY REFORM. THE PREMIERS AND CHIEF MINISTERS AGREED THAT WE MUST ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNIFORMITY IN OHS BY DECEMBER 1993.
- . TOGETHER WITH THE STATES AND TERRITORIES, EMPLOYER BODIES AND UNIONS WE HAVE CAREFULLY THOUGHT THROUGH THE METHOD AND SEQUENCE OF EVENTS WHICH WILL ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNIFORMITY AND REGULATORY REFORM.

NATIONAL UNIFORMITY AGENDA

- . THE NATIONAL UNIFORMITY AND REGULATORY REFORM AGENDA I HAVE TALKED ABOUT IS NOT SOMETHING RUN BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. INSTEAD IT IS A PROCESS IN WHICH THE STATES AND TERRITORIES HAVE AGREED TO RATIONALISE THEIR DIFFERING PIECES OF LEGISLATION INTO A SET OF REGULATIONS THAT APPLY CONSISTENTLY IN KEY AREAS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.
- . INITIALLY A FRAMEWORK OF NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT OHS STANDARDS WAS DEVELOPED TO COORDINATE CURRENT AND FUTURE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT. THROUGH CONSULTATION WITH OHS AUTHORITIES IN EACH JURISDICTION OHS ISSUES HAVE BEEN PRIORITIZED. EACH OHS ISSUE HAS BEEN RANKED AS EITHER A FIRST OR SECOND ORDER PRIORITY.

FIRST ORDER PRIORITIES

- . WE HAVE IDENTIFIED SEVEN FIRST ORDER PRIORITIES.

THEY ARE:

- . PLANT;
- . OCCUPATIONAL NOISE;
- . MAJOR HAZARDOUS FACILITIES;
- . WORKPLACE HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES;
- . CERTIFICATED OCCUPATIONS;
- . STORAGE AND HANDLING OF DANGEROUS GOODS; AND
- . MANUAL HANDLING.

THESE ARE AREAS THAT WE MUST COMPLETE FIRST TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNIFORMITY AND REGULATORY REFORM.

THESE FIRST ORDER PRIORITIES HAVE BEEN CHOSEN BECAUSE REGULATORY REFORM IN THESE AREAS WILL ADDRESS AROUND 2/3 OF ALL THE COMPENSATED OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES AND DISEASES CURRENTLY OCCURRING IN AUSTRALIA. SO THESE ARE THE KEY AREAS THAT WILL MAKE THE MOST IMPACT.

WE RECOGNISE THAT THE REGULATIONS AND CODES FOR OUR FIRST ORDER PRIORITIES ARE UNLIKELY TO BE PERFECT, AND THAT THEY WILL NEED FUTURE MODIFICATION AS NEW KNOWLEDGE COMES TO LIGHT OR EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT THEY CAN BE IMPROVED.

SECOND ORDER PRIORITIES

THE REMAINING STANDARDS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED SECOND ORDER PRIORITY STATUS.

SOME SECOND ORDER PRIORITIES, WHILE NOT MEETING THE CRITERIA OF FIRST ORDER PRIORITIES, ARE URGENT ISSUES WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA CONTINUES TO PROGRESS BECAUSE THEY ARE AREAS OF CONCERN IN AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY.

THESE INCLUDE DIVING, CONSTRUCTION SAFETY, WORK IN CONFINED SPACES AND THE PREVENTION OF INFECTION BY HIV/AIDS FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS, AND PASSIVE SMOKING. THESE SUBJECTS ARE VERY IMPORTANT AND PRESSING, ALTHOUGH WE WILL BE PLACING EMPHASIS ON THE SEVEN FIRST ORDER PRIORITY ISSUES IN THE COMING MONTHS.

HOW IS A NATIONAL STANDARD OR CODE OF PRACTICE DEVELOPED?

THERE ARE SEVERAL STEPS IN DEVELOPING A NATIONAL STANDARD OR CODE OF PRACTICE, INCLUDING:

EXPERT WORKING GROUPS.

ONCE AN OHS ISSUE HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION, A PROJECT BRIEF IS PREPARED TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO THE EXPERT WORKING GROUP WHICH IS ESTABLISHED TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL STANDARD OR CODE OF PRACTICE. THIS GROUP REPORTS TO THE TRIPARTITE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT STANDING COMMITTEE WHERE THE DRAFT DOCUMENT IS CONSIDERED AND, IF SATISFACTORY, IS ENDORSED TO BE RELEASED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT FOR A PERIOD OF TWO TO THREE MONTHS.

ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

FOR SOME STANDARDS AN ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ASSIST THOSE JURISDICTIONS WHO HAVE A REQUIREMENT TO CONDUCT REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENTS FOR PROPOSED REGULATIONS. THIS AREA IS STILL UNDER DEVELOPMENT AND IT IS PROPOSED THAT THE ASSESSMENT WILL NORMALLY BE UNDERTAKEN DURING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT STANDARD BY THE EXPERT GROUP. THE RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT WILL THEN BE RELEASED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DRAFT STANDARD.

OTHER ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO ACCOMMODATE THOSE STANDARDS WHOSE DEVELOPMENT IS ALREADY BEYOND THE PUBLIC COMMENT STAGE.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA STAFF COLLATE ALL PUBLIC COMMENT. THIS IS THEN CONSIDERED BY AN EXPERT REVIEW GROUP WHICH IS CONSTITUTED TO BEST ADDRESS THE ITEMS WHICH ATTRACTED THE MOST PUBLIC COMMENT. THE REVIEW GROUP PREPARES A REVISED DRAFT STANDARD OR CODE OF PRACTICE IN LIGHT OF THE COMMENT RECEIVED.

DECLARATION.

THE REVISED DRAFT IS CONSIDERED BY THE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT STANDING COMMITTEE, AND IF SATISFACTORY, IS SENT TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DECLARATION. FOLLOWING DECLARATION BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION, THE TITLE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STANDARD OR CODE IS PUBLISHED IN THE COMMONWEALTH GAZETTE.

ADOPTION & IMPLEMENTATION BY JURISDICTIONS.

ALL THE JURISDICTIONS HAVE EXPRESSED A COMMITMENT TO THE ADOPTION OF NATIONAL STANDARDS INTO THEIR LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS IN A CONSISTENT MANNER. THE ADOPTION PROCESS INVOLVES DRAFTING LEGISLATION WHICH INCORPORATES THE INTENT OF THE COMMON ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS CONTAINED IN THE NATIONAL STANDARDS.

MINING INDUSTRY STANDING COMMITTEE

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION HAS ALSO ESTABLISHED THE MINING INDUSTRY STANDING COMMITTEE TO IDENTIFY, MONITOR AND ADVISE WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA OF OHS ISSUES WITHIN THE MINING INDUSTRY. IT IS THE CONSULTATIVE BODY WHICH LIAISES WITH THE MINING INDUSTRY TO OBTAIN IT'S VIEW ON MATTERS AFFECTING THE INDUSTRY AND TO PROVIDE AN AVENUE FOR DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON ISSUES RELEVANT TO MINING.

THE MINING INDUSTRY

THE NATIONAL UNIFORMITY PROGRAM IS INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT TO THE MINING INDUSTRY.

THE MINISTERS OF LABOUR ADVISORY CONFERENCE (MOLAC) HAS INITIATED DISCUSSIONS IN EACH STATE REGARDING THE EXTENSION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF OHS LEGISLATION TO ALL INDUSTRY SECTORS - INCLUDING THE MINING INDUSTRY.

THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND MINERALS AND ENERGY COUNCIL (ANZMEC) HAVE ALSO AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL OHS AND DANGEROUS GOODS STANDARDS TO APPLY TO THE MINING INDUSTRY.

THE MINING INDUSTRY STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION IS CONSULTING WITH THE CHIEF INSPECTORS OF MINES CONFERENCE AND PROVIDING INPUT ON HOW THE CODE CAN BEST FULFIL THE NEEDS OF THE INDUSTRY.

A RECENTLY DECLARED NATIONAL STANDARD WITH RELEVANCE TO THE MINING INDUSTRY IS THE NATIONAL OHS CERTIFICATION STANDARD FOR USERS AND OPERATORS OF INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT. THERE ARE ALSO ACCOMPANYING NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR OHS COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR THE OPERATION OF LOADSHIFTING EQUIPMENT AND OTHER TYPES OF SPECIFIED EQUIPMENT.

- . THE NATIONAL OHS CERTIFICATION STANDARD SPECIFIES UNIFORM CERTIFICATION CLASSES AND MINIMUM OHS COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR:
 - SCAFFOLDING AND RIGGING
 - CRANES AND HOIST OPERATION AND
 - PRESSURE EQUIPMENT OPERATION
- . THE GUIDELINES SPECIFY MINIMUM OHS COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR THE OPERATION OF NINE CLASSES OF LOADSHIFTING EQUIPMENT.
- . FOR EMPLOYERS, THE NATIONAL OHS CERTIFICATION STANDARD WILL PROVIDE NATIONALLY RECOGNISED CERTIFICATES FOR USE AND OPERATION OF THE SPECIFIED EQUIPMENT. YOU WILL BE ABLE TO INCORPORATE THE OHS COMPETENCIES INTO THE COMPETENCY STANDARDS, WORK PRACTICES AND TRAINING PROGRAMS OF YOUR ORGANISATION. I UNDERSTAND THE NATIONAL COAL SECTOR - MINING INDUSTRY TRAINING ADVISORY PROJECT IS CURRENTLY DEVELOPING INDUSTRY COMPETENCY STANDARDS AND IS WORKING ON INCORPORATING THE NATIONAL OHS CERTIFICATION STANDARD COMPETENCY OUTCOMES TO ACCORD WITH INDUSTRY REQUIREMENTS.
- . THERE ARE POTENTIAL PRODUCTIVITY GAINS TO BE ACHIEVED THROUGH COMMON CORE REQUIREMENTS FOR INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS AND OHS CERTIFICATES. THIS WILL ENABLE CONSISTENCY OF TRAINING PROGRAMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND ONE STOP ASSESSMENTS IN THE WORKPLACE.
- . APART FROM STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT NOHSC IS DEALING DIRECTLY WITH SPECIFIC INDUSTRIES.

A MAJOR REFOCUS OF THE SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION IN LATE 1992 HAS RESULTED IN A PROGRAM TO IMPROVE INDUSTRY OHS PERFORMANCE, ESPECIALLY IN INDUSTRIES CRITICAL TO AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC WELL BEING.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IS AN AREA OF THE WORKPLACE WHICH IMPACTS ON OUR NATIONAL INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS. THROUGH ITS INDUSTRY PROGRAM, THE NATIONAL COMMISSION AIMS TO ENSURE THAT THE POTENTIAL OF IMPROVED OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TO CONTRIBUTE TO REFORM IS FULLY RECOGNISED IN THE NATIONAL WORKPLACE REFORM AND REGULATORY REFORM AGENDAS AND THAT THESE IMPROVEMENTS ARE CARRIED THROUGH INTO IMPROVED 'WORLD-CLASS' PERFORMANCE IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AT AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES.

ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION: EMPLOYERS, UNIONS, STATES AND TERRITORIES AND THE COMMONWEALTH HAVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO MAKE IN THIS EFFORT.

KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION WHICH UNDERPIN THESE NATIONAL REFORM EFFORTS INCLUDE:

- THOSE TO INCORPORATE OHS IN WORKPLACE REFORM SUCH AS BEST PRACTICE, QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF OHS, BENCHMARKING, DEVELOPMENT OF THE OPTIMUM ROLE FOR OHS IN ENTERPRISE BARGAINING, TRAINING AND WORKPLACE REFORM, ECONOMIC STUDIES OF THE LINKS BETWEEN OHS AND PRODUCTIVITY AND THE LIKE;

- THOSE TO HELP ENSURE THAT THE BENEFITS OF REGULATORY REFORM THROUGH IMPROVED NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR WORKPLACE HAZARDS ARE REALISED IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE MANNER IN AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES; AND

- THOSE TO ENSURE THE APPLICATION OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN OHS THROUGH THE WIDE DISSEMINATION AND RAPID USE OF APPROPRIATE RESEARCH ADVANCES.

I UNDERSTAND THAT MR MARSHALL OF PACIFIC COAL WILL SPEAK FURTHER ON THE USE OF "BEST PRACTICE" THIS AFTERNOON.

THE OBJECTIVE OF ALL THESE EFFORTS IS TO ENSURE THAT THE BENEFITS OF THESE REFORMS IS OBTAINED AT THE LEVEL OF THE WORKPLACE BY INCORPORATING THESE REFORMS INTO THE ACTIVITIES ALREADY UNDERWAY BY THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, HELPING TO RESOURCE THE MOBILISATION OF THE CAPACITY AND EXPERTISE OF THE INDUSTRY TO IMPROVE ITS OHS PERFORMANCE.

- . WORKSAFE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STATES AND TERRITORIES, HAS INITIATED DISCUSSIONS WITH KEY REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MINING INDUSTRY THROUGH MISC TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY, OWNED AND IMPLEMENTED JOINTLY BY INDUSTRY AND UNIONS, TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED NATIONAL OHS PERFORMANCE IN THE INDUSTRY.
- . THE FOCUS OF THIS WORK WILL BE TO ASSIST THE MINING INDUSTRY TO IDENTIFY ITS OHS PROBLEMS, BARRIERS TO IMPROVED PERFORMANCE, SOLUTIONS AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT THEM.
- . MISC HAS ALSO IDENTIFIED THREE OHS PRIORITY ISSUES WHICH WORKSAFE IS NOW PURSUING. THESE ARE:
 - . THE EFFECT OF EXTENDED SHIFTWORK ARRANGEMENTS. A RESEARCH PROJECT - *THE RELEVANCE OF EXPOSURE STANDARDS TO EXTENDED SHIFTS* - HAS BEEN PLANNED BY THE WORKSAFE RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC DIVISION FOR 1993-94.
 - . PREDICTION OF COAL GAS OUTBURSTS. A SURVEY OF CURRENT WORK IN PROGRESS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND IS BEING MONITORED.
 - . OCCUPATIONAL BACK PAIN AND THE ERGONOMICS OF MANUAL MATERIALS HANDLING. THE LITERATURE AND WORK IN PROGRESS IS CURRENTLY BEING ASSESSED TO FACILITATE DECISIONS ON FURTHER ACTION IN THE INDUSTRY.

PROJECTS SPONSORED BY WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA

- . NOHSC HAS FUNDED OR PROVIDED STAFF FOR SEVERAL PROJECTS TO ASSIST THE MINING INDUSTRY.
- . WE FUNDED THE RESEARCH FOR THE DRAFT STANDARD FOR *THE DESIGN OF REMOTE CONTROLLED EQUIPMENT IN USE IN THE MINING INDUSTRY* WHICH HAS BEEN REFERRED TO THE STANDARDS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA FOR DEVELOPMENT INTO AN AUSTRALIAN STANDARD.
- . ALSO FUNDED HAS BEEN RESEARCH BY THE VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH TO DOCUMENT 50 SOLUTIONS TO NOISE PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN THE MINING INDUSTRY. I IMAGINE THAT MR MITCHELL OF THAT INSTITUTE WHO IS TO SPEAK THIS AFTERNOON WILL REFER TO THIS.
- . IN A JOINT PROJECT BETWEEN BHP AND WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA, A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO THE CONTROL TECHNOLOGY FOR THE REMOVAL OF DIESEL EXHAUST PARTICLES IS ALSO BEING INVESTIGATED.

EACH OF THESE PROJECTS IS DIRECTED AT PROVIDING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN INDUSTRY.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT THE WORKPLACE CAN ONLY MEET COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS IF THERE IS CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IN REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF WORKPLACE INJURIES AND DISEASE. TO MEET THIS CHALLENGE WE MUST LOOK AT THE VIABILITY OF NEW OPTIONS TO CREATING A SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT.

IT HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION THAT MANY ACQUISITIONS OF MINING EQUIPMENT INVOLVE A ONE OFF PURCHASE OF LARGE AND EXPENSIVE MACHINERY. THERE ARE DIFFICULTIES IN ASSESSING THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT CREATED BY THESE CUSTOMISED INSTALLATIONS.

WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA THROUGH OUR ONGOING PROGRAM OF RESEARCH IS PROVIDING GUIDANCE ON MANY FACTORS RELEVANT TO THE MINING INDUSTRY AND EQUIPMENT USED IN THE INDUSTRY.

THE MINING INDUSTRY IN PARTICULAR HAS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN PROMOTING SAFE DESIGN IN THE EQUIPMENT IT PURCHASES. IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA THERE IS ALSO A DESIRE FOR EQUIPMENT INCORPORATING SAFER DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS. IN THIS ENVIRONMENT IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT MANUFACTURERS AND IMPORTERS OF MINING AND OTHER HEAVY EARTHMOVING EQUIPMENT CONSIDER HOW TO INCORPORATE GREATER SAFETY INTO DESIGN.

IT IS ALSO APPROPRIATE THAT WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA ASSIST MANUFACTURERS AND IMPORTERS OF MINING AND OTHER HEAVY EARTHMOVING EQUIPMENT BY PROVIDING ADVICE ON WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFICIENT AND COST EFFECTIVE MEANS OF IMPROVING THE SAFETY OF THEIR EQUIPMENT.