

Transcript

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Program: **MORNING** Time: **10:20 AM**
Compere: **ALEX SLOAN** Summary ID: **W00036168431**
Item: **DISCUSSIONS ON WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS.**

**INTERVIEW: MARK GOODSSELL, NSW AND ACT DIRECTOR,
AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY GROUP; DEAN HALL, CFMEU
(EXCERPT)**

Demographics:	Male 16+	Female 16+	All people	ABs	GBs
	3600	6700	10300	2600	7100

ALEX SLOAN: Well earlier in the program we were talking to Dean Hall of the CFMEU, and they were highlighting a workplace accident that happened here in Canberra this week, and then expressed - he went on to express the concern about the recent spate of serious incidents in the construction industry and said that the lives of workers in this industry at risk, particularly with the proposed harmonised, national OH&S laws.

Here's a little bit of what Dean Hall said.

[EXCERPT - DEAN HALL]

DEAN HALL: It sounds terrible, but the construction industry unfortunately will roll the dice, and I've been told many times by builders and developers that they have prepared to roll the dice on safety for a greater increase in their profits.

[END EXCERPT]

ALEX SLOAN: Now we have a response now from Mark Goodsell who is director of the Australian Industry Group, for New South Wales and the ACT.

Mark Goodsell, nice to talk to you.

MARK GOODSELL: Good morning.

ALEX SLOAN: Your response to this statement by Dean Hall and the proposed harmonised national OH&S laws?

MARK GOODSELL: Well I didn't hear all of what Dean had to say, but I am aware that the unions have been banging on about what they think is or isn't in this - the proposed harmonised laws. It's a very, very important issue for business that they are able to operate under one set of safety laws around the country. What a lot of people don't know is the amount of time, energy and management concentration that is wasted, trying to comply with up to seven or eight different sets of safety laws so the most important principle behind harmonisation is if there is a good way to manage safety, let's get governments to get their acts together and come up with that one set of protocols so the companies only have to concentrate on one...

ALEX SLOAN: So you reject any suggestion that this will mean a weakening in the laws?

MARK GOODSELL: No it doesn't mean a weakening. If anyone who has read the - and I don't know whether Dean has - but



if anyone has read the report of the review into the safety laws, there was a very extensive review by a tripartite panel of experts. The unions and employers and other people had the ability to put input into that over the last year. They came up with 232 recommendations on what a harmonised law should look like, and I would defy anybody to go through there and see how it is weakening anything that exists in current principles, particularly when you compare how the current principles that operate in different states actually produce safe workplaces or not.

The unions are asserting that some of the principles in that review, or some of the recommendations that came out of that review will weaken safety, but in fact they've got absolutely no evidence and they've put forward no evidence as to why that is the case. They don't like some of those principles because they address things like whether unions can have the right to push Workcover to one side and initiate a prosecution against an employer themselves. Those kinds of principles - they've been very vocal about but when it comes to principles that we know deal with safe workplaces and deliver safe workplaces, those recommendations are very strong. They're particularly strong and particularly vigorous in relation to the role of unions, the role of safety representatives and the rights of employees, particularly strong on those issues.



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ALEX SLOAN: Every year we read out the stats that are around 440 fatalities occur through workplace accidents, so that's eight per week.

MARK GOODSELL: Yes and look, and it's an appalling tragedy for everyone concerned, particularly the families of those who are lost at work, but also their colleagues and the managers of those companies. It really casts a pall over an organisation when you have a fatality.

Interestingly again, if you look at the evidence, the construction industry over the last five years has been one of the stellar performers in relation to safety. If you divide the - divide out individual safety performance by industry, construction has had remarkable increases in its safety record over the last couple of years. So there is a tendency when there is a particular incident for people to say, oh look, someone has been killed at work, therefore the laws aren't working, but you've really got to step back and say, what's happened over the last five or ten years in individual industries. And in the construction industry, for example, there's been a very significant increase in the safety and that's the result of union activity, but it's also the result of managers and companies taking the issues very, very seriously and better technology in relation to scaffolding and things like that. So that industry actually has a lot to be proud of in relation to safety.

ALEX SLOAN: The - you say that the proposed harmonised national OHS laws are based on a successful model

that has delivered demonstrable, safer workplaces.
What is it based on?

MARK GOODSSELL: The harmonised principles.....they're not based on any one model, but they are closest to what operates in Victoria. If you look at the standards of legal responsibility, the rights of employees, the rights of union reps, the rights of union officials the way the regulator is going to work, it is very close to what happens in Victoria and Victoria is, and has been for some time, the clearest, best performer in safety across all the jurisdictions, and it is about 20 to 25 per cent better in terms of injury performance than say New South Wales.

ALEX SLOAN: Mark Goodsell, it was great to get your response.

MARK GOODSSELL: My pleasure.

ALEX SLOAN: And appreciate having you on the program. Thank you very much.

MARK GOODSSELL: Thank you, bye.

ALEX SLOAN: Farewell. And that's Mark Goodsell who is the director of the Australian Industry group for New South Wales and ACT. He's the council member of



SafeWork Australia and a member of the New South Wales OHS and Worker's Compensation Council.

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ABs = Managers, administrators, professions. GBs = Grocery buyers.
