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ACTU commits to action on national Industrial Manslaughter Laws, OHS regulatory regime, eradication of asbestos

ACTU Congress has passed a motion affirming Australian Unions' ongoing commitment to wide-ranging reform on OHS issues, including national industrial manslaughter laws which would hold companies to account for workers killed by their negligence, systemic reform of all major OHS bodies, the total eradication of asbestos and the effective enforcement of a long-standing but ineffective ban on imports contaminated with the deadly substance.

A full list of the commitments made in the motion can be seen below.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick:

"One death or injury at work is one too many. We need to change the rules so that every worker in Australia, from construction to offices to the gig economy, can rely on a safe and healthy workplace.

"Industrial manslaughter legislation will ensure that employers are held accountable when people die because they are trying to cut corners and save money. No worker should be put at risk to save their employer a few dollars.

"The 2003 ban on Asbestos importation isn't working, and workers are the ones who will suffer as a result. Enforcement of this ban should be a priority for the Turnbull Government, but instead they are giving \$80 billion to big business.

"We need root and branch reform of all major OHS bodies to ensure that all workers are safe at work and get to go home to their families."

ENDS

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The Motion states that the ACTU commits to and will work towards:

- a) The introduction of corporate manslaughter laws;
- b) Preventing the use of corporate restructuring practices and insurance arrangements to avoid OHS penalties;
- c) Meaningful measures, including dedicated laws, to tackle fatigue in the road transport industry;
- d) Enshrining the health rights of workers in national OHS regulatory regime;
- e) Significantly strengthening the importation ban on asbestos so it is effectively enforced, this includes removing legal loopholes;
- f) Appropriate resourcing for the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency
- g) Improved consumer laws to protect the community from hazardous imported goods and which allow the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission to act in real time;

- h) Increasing the role of workers and unions in the work of OHS regulators;
- i) Transforming key national OHS bodies such as Comcare, the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, National Rail Safety Regulator; Federal Safety Commissioner and the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority into effective regulators with the active involvement of workers and their unions;
- j) Enhancing co-ordination and cooperation between OHS regulators and policy making bodies at a national and state and territory level;
- k) The mandating of crush protection devices on quad bikes;
- l) The establishment of a new federal body to oversee the chemical regulatory regime.