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OHS must be a priority for incoming Federal Government

An incoming federal government should commit to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) goals across Australia, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) highlights today.

During the period of the Abbott/Turnbull Government, a period of policy stagnation in Occupational Health and Safety and workers' compensation has been delivered. The ACTU has outlined key considerations that a new federal government should adopt in the next three years that would support workers and their safety in the workplace.

Thirteen key objectives have been published by the ACTU today. They include:

- Comcare. A reorganisation of Comcare so that it becomes a full service regulator capable of adequately resourcing its enforcement and compliance activities;
- Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. Amending this Act would make its objectives clear - a better off overall test to protect workers employed by entities wanting to join the Comcare scheme. This would enable the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to adequately deal with occupational health and safety and workers' compensation challenges in the Australian public sector (APS) and private sector;
- Safe Work Australia. This agency needs investment and support to effectively oversee OHS and workers' compensation;
- Uniform Policies - A Review into the roles of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development should be initiated to ensure occupational health and safety and workers' compensation policies are applied consistently across all Australian Government departments and agencies;
- Reform the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA), the National Transport Commission and the National Rail Safety Regulator so as ensure tripartite oversight of their activities

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick:

"Strong OHS standards are the measure of a truly modern labour market, and the next government must ensure that we continue to improve protection for workers, rather than stripping it away as the Abbott/Turnbull Government has."

"The Abbott/Turnbull government has reduced protection for workers in 10 key areas including failing to properly resource Comcare and failing to regulate the importation of asbestos."

"OHS standards have gone backwards in the last three years, the next government has a substantial task ahead of them, but it must act to protect workers."

ENDS

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Please see full list of OHS objectives: <http://www.safeatwork.org.au/content/ohs-should-be-embedded-industrial-relations-policy-and-practice-incoming-federal-government>