



## WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY Wednesday 28 April 2010

### INVITATION TO ALL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES AND DELEGATES

#### WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY FIGHT FOR THE LIVING - MOURN FOR THE DEAD

##### Program for the commemoration ceremony – Wednesday 28 April

- 9.30am:** Assemble at Argyle Place, corner of Argyle St and Lygon Street in Carlton for the commemoration ceremony. This park is two blocks North of Trades Hall
- 10.00am:** Move to Trades Hall to join combined Building unions' rally and lead the march
- 11.00am:** March stops at 11.00am for one minute's silence
- Following march:** There will be refreshments in Meeting Room 1, Trades Hall. The Victorian Trade Union Choir will again be performing at this year's memorial event.

The theme for 2010 is ***Unions and Health and Safety Reps Make Workplaces Safer.***

The "union safety effect" is very real and very pronounced. A classic study found UK *workplaces with an active union safety system had an injury rate half that of workplaces without these systems.* Only the study was wrong – a recent academic re-examination of the evidence "led to results which are actually, if anything, a stronger confirmation of the mediated effects of trade unions on injuries at work"

It's a healthy effect too. Another UK study found: "The proportion of employees who are trade union members has a positive and significant association on both injury and illness rates." It added unions "lower the odds of injury and illness when compared with arrangements that merely inform employees of OHS [occupational health and safety] issues."

Australia is currently in the process of harmonising our OHS legislation: Act, Regulations and Codes. The union movement continues to fight for the best model law for all workers which recognises and enshrines the important role of representatives and unions.

- It is crucial to ensure that the powers and rights of elected reps are not eroded, but maintained and where possible, strengthened.
- Right of Entry provisions for union organisers must ensure access to workplaces for health and safety matters

**Contact the AMIEU, talk to your Organiser, ring the Health & Safety Reps' Support Officer, EJ, or the Health & Safety Officer, Gwynnyth, and check out <http://amieuvic.org> for more information**

Workers Memorial Day is organised by the Victorian Trades Hall Council in conjunction with  
**IDSA – Work to live; not to die.**

## Workers Memorial Day 28 April 2010

Workers Memorial Day (WMD) is an international day that unions, workers and their families and communities around the world join together to remember and mourn for those who have been killed or injured at work, and to fight for the living.

### History of WMD

- Workers Memorial Day was started by Canadian Unions in 1984. By 1996, it was an international day. Australian unions have marked the day since 1997.
- In 2004 Victorian Unions adopted the canary as the symbol of this day (first adopted by Canadian Unions).

### Why we Have WMD

- Globally, we remember the 2 million workers who die, the 1.2 million who are injured and the 160 million who become ill each year from unsafe, unhealthy or unsustainable work and workplaces.
- In Victoria in 2010, 10 workers have lost their lives at work, as at 12 April. Australia is generally a poor performer compared to other industrialised countries. In 1999, for every 70 workers killed at work in Australia, the corresponding number in the USA was 53, and in the UK it was 14.
- **In Australia** as many as 21 Australians die each day from work-related incidents or illnesses, 1,890 workers are injured or made ill each day and one in seven workers are exposed to at least one cancer causing substance in their workplace.
- The ILO estimates that Australia, with different reporting systems (compensation, inspectorates, coronary reports, hospital records) at best cover 60 – 70% of all fatalities.
- Every 2 -3 minutes someone in Australia is injured seriously enough to lodge a workers' compensation claim.
- The (former) Australian safety and Compensation Commission stated in a March 2009 report that "Studies estimate that as many as 7000 fatalities may occur each year as a result of work related diseases." This is four times the national road toll.
- The total economic cost of work-related injuries and illnesses for the 2005-06 financial year was \$57.6 billion, or 5.9% of Australia's Gross Domestic Product.
- In 2004 the national OHS Commission found that  
*In terms of the burden to economic agents, only 3 per cent of the total cost is borne by employers, 44 per cent by workers and 53 per cent by the community. The cost of pain, suffering and early death could conservatively add a further \$48.5 billion to the total cost figure (net of human capital costs already included in total costs), leading to a total cost estimate of \$82.8 billion*

## ***Unions and Health and Safety Reps Make Workplaces Safer.***

### What can your workplace do?

- Send your OHS rep to the commemoration ceremony.
- Talk to your workmates and observe a **minute's silence** at your workplace at **11.00am on Wednesday 28 April**.
- Give your workplace a Union health check:
  - *Union organisation*: Make sure you have effective union coverage across the workplace, including shiftwork and off-site workers, contractors, etc
  - *Be union Active*: do a workplace inspection, speak to workers, map the workplace, etc.
  - *Union audit*: Are systems working effectively? Or do you raise issues again and again without anything being done? If so, consider other actions: PINs, calling your Support Officer, etc
- Go to the AMIEU OHS Reps website (<http://meatiesohs.org>) or VTHC OHS Reps site ([www.ohsrep.org.au](http://www.ohsrep.org.au)) for more information and materials, information and support in developing your strategies to improve health and safety at your workplace.