

UPs and DOWNs : Occupational Health in Australia

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General

Australia : largest island in the world, smallest continent.
Population about 22 million.

Size almost same as USA (without Alaska).

Government : Federal Government,
6 States, 2 Territories.

Developed country, 14th with highest GDP in world.

Income per capita around US \$23,000 pa.

Economy

In most of its History, Australia was mostly
Agricultural and Mining. Recently, Education
(including many students from overseas),
Tourism and Financial Services
are also important.

Occupational Health & Safety (OHS)

The regulation and enforcement of OHS are largely in the hands of the individual States and Territories. In 1986 the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission ("Worksafe Australia") was formed. Its governing board comprised representatives of the National Departments of Industrial Relations and Health, and also representatives of the peak employer and trade union bodies and each of the five States and two Territories.

Objectives of "Worksafe Australia"

In 1987 the following objectives were endorsed :

1. To contribute to ensuring that all people whose decisions and actions affect the Australian workplace are equipped with appropriate knowledge and experience in OHS.
2. To coordinate the national development of high quality, cost effective training and education programmes in OHS that meet the needs of the workplace and the community.

Programme of "Worksafe Australia"

1. A National Institute of OHS (NIOHSH) was established to deal mainly with training and research activities.
2. A Masters' Degree in OHS was established in cooperation with the University of Sydney in 1989.
3. Many short courses in OHS were also run in different parts of Australia, usually in cooperation with the State & Territory OHS authorities.
4. Priority areas were identified and research conducted, both in NIOHSH and through research and training grants to universities and other organizations.



Preventative programmes have been radically reduced.
Only Workers' Compensation remains of significant importance.