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Occupational Health and Safety

THE DEPARTMENT

Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Agreement

The department is committed to providing a healthy and safe work environment that allows employees to perform to their full potential and contribute to achieving the department's goals.

The department's Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Agreement, made between the department, the Community and Public Sector Union and the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, has continued to underpin solid performance in health and safety.

The agreement fosters consultation and also provides for any other matters agreed between the parties for health and safety operations within the organisation, consistent with the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1991*. The agreement also clarifies the responsibilities of managers, supervisors and individuals in relation to occupational health and safety.

Occupational health and safety committees

The department's occupational health and safety consultation arrangements, set out in part 3.6 of the agreement, are made up of:

- a national occupational health and safety committee, covering staff from the national office and state and territory offices
- a national office occupational health and safety committee, covering staff from the national office
- an occupational health and safety committee, or people management committee with occupational health and safety as a standing item, covering staff from the state and territory offices.

All committees meet at least quarterly. At least two national committee meetings take place each year at a venue outside the national office to ensure broad participation of the department's people. During 2004–05, the national committee met in Canberra, Adelaide and Perth.

Selection of health and safety representatives

The department's designated work group structure consists of one designated work group for each group in the national office and one designated work group for each state office and the Northern Territory. A number of elections were conducted through the year by the Community and Public Sector Union to ensure that a health and safety representative and a deputy health and safety representative were operational in each designated work group.

Measures to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and contractors

The department's *Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy*, commenced on 1 July 2004. This strategy, set for an initial two-year period, aims to capitalise on the department's current

strong performance in relation to injury management and occupational health and safety governance. The strategy also works to integrate good health and safety awareness into ordinary work habits and performance.

Major achievements during the first year of implementation include:

- a new online incident and hazard reporting system
- increased support for the return-to-work case management function
- enhanced occupational health and safety orientation briefings for new staff
- health and safety awareness-raising activities.

There has been a significant increase in staff reporting incidents and hazards as they occur, and the increase is directly attributable to staff responding to the ease and simplicity of reporting via the new system. The online reporting system is automated and has increased the speed of notification to the department's occupational health and safety and injury management advisers.

Ongoing benefits of the strategy are:

- opportunities for early intervention
- proactive measures aimed at future prevention
- the provision of return-to-work support for managers and injured staff.

Awareness-raising activities under the *Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy* during its first year have been particularly successful. Activities have included participation in the *HealthSTART* programme, which raised money for the Athens Paralympic Team through healthy fundraising activities, and an inaugural Health Expo day in the national office, which provided access for staff to a range of information, healthcare speakers and health checks. Other activities are arranged to coincide with national health calendar activities.

Participation in health, safety and social events and activities is steadily rising, with positive feedback from employees and unsolicited suggestions and ideas from staff. This indicates a confidence in the department as an honest and communicative workplace where employees' contributions are valued and supported by the departmental leadership at all levels.

To complement the *Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy*, and further reinforce the department's commitment to occupational health and safety, on 1 July 2004 the department signed a statement of commitment with Comcare to achieving targets outlined in the *National Occupational Health and Safety Strategy 2002-2012*. The department is tracking well towards attaining the national targets of reducing workplace injury by 40 per cent by 30 June 2012.

Sound performance against injury indicators

The majority of the department's injuries fall into four categories: occupational overuse syndrome; psychological injuries; injuries occurring whilst travelling to and from work; and slips, trips and falls. The department's premium rate compares favourably with the Australian Government average of 1.77 per cent. The department has performed well in comparison to Comcare's estimated claim costs, and this has resulted in Comcare revising the premium rate from 1.2 per cent down to 0.95 per cent for the 2004-05 premium year.

Section 68 notices

Comcare Australia was notified of three incidents pursuant to s.68 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* in 2004-05.

Investigations undertaken

Comcare's annual *Planned Investigation Programme* included a whole-of-agency investigation of the health and safety management system in the department, conducted during October 2004. The results of the investigation highlighted the positive commitment to health and safety by the department's senior executives and also provided recommendations for improvement, mainly in the areas of occupational health and safety in procurement, risk management and training. The department has developed, and is steadily progressing, a plan of action aimed at addressing these recommendations.

Section 45 directions and section 29, 46, 47 notices

No s.45 directions, or s.29, 46 or 47 notices, were issued in 2004-05.

QUESTACON

Questacon is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for employees, contractors and visitors. Questacon has committed to the continuation and improvement of its good record for occupational health and safety and for the care it exercises in relation to visitor safety and wellbeing.

Measures to ensure health, safety and welfare

Questacon has an Occupational Health and Safety Committee which includes management representatives, representatives of designated work groups and union representatives. Several new work groups were created and representatives appointed. To ensure legislative responsibilities are fully understood, training is provided to representatives.

Questacon has appointed a dedicated occupational health and safety adviser to manage and oversee all health, safety and workplace wellbeing matters. A *Continuous Improvement Action Plan* has been developed, focusing on best practice and allowing continual monitoring of the Centre's health and safety initiatives. Other initiatives include the development of a dedicated intranet site for occupational health and safety matters and the development and launch of a health awareness programme for employees.

A team has also been created to review the fire and emergency procedures and ensure the ongoing training and awareness for all wardens in the Emergency Control Organisation and for new employees to the Centre.

In 2004-05, Questacon reported no incidents under s.68 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991*. There were no reports made under s.69 and no provisional improvement notices issued.