

NSW workplace injuries lowest in 20 years

Tuesday, 02 October, 2007

This is a media release issued by Minister for Industrial Relations John Della Bosca

Minister for Industrial Relations, John Della Bosca, today announced that work-related injuries in NSW have dropped to their lowest levels since the state's workers compensation scheme began in 1987.

The data also shows work-related fatalities have more than halved in that time. Releasing details of WorkCover's Statistical Bulletin for 2005/06, Mr Della Bosca said the incidence rate for serious injuries has dropped to a record low of 11 injuries per 1,000 employees.

"A total of 141,240 employment injuries were reported in 2005/06, a reduction of six per cent from the previous year, while the incidence rate reduced by 11 per cent.

"Total employment injuries include all claims, regardless of whether any time was lost from work or whether medical costs were incurred.

"Serious workplace injuries, those requiring more than five days off work, fell by 13 percent, from 36,150 in 2004/05 to 31,613 in 2005/06, a reduction in incidence of 18 per cent.

"I expect that the statistics for 2006/07, which will be available next year, will show that NSW has met the national target of reducing serious workplace injuries by 20 per cent and fatalities by ten per cent by 30 June 2007," said the Minister.

The Minister also released a report by respected economic consultants, ACIL Tasman, which found that the Government's reform of NSW workplace safety laws in 2001 had led to an annual saving of around \$5.58 billion to the State's economy.

The report, which examined claims data to 2004/05, found that improved workplace safety performance and a significant decline in the number of injury claims could be directly linked to the reforms.

"The report demonstrates that, far from being a burden on the state's economy, occupational health and safety is an investment that provides direct financial benefit," Mr Della Bosca said.

"As well as the annual \$5.58 billion saving to the economy through a increase in earnings, reduced medical and compensation costs and improved productivity, the reforms have also led to an increase of \$619 million in the Gross State Product in 2005 alone," the Minister said.

"Safer workplaces also reduce pressure on workers compensation premiums.

"In the past 18 months, the Lemma Government has cut workers compensation premium rates by 25 per cent, saving NSW businesses \$675 million per year.

"The fact that employment injuries in NSW have been steadily reducing for more than a decade is an endorsement of the Labour Government's long-term commitment to ensure safer workplaces and higher productivity," he said.

Mr Della Bosca said it was encouraging to see incidence rates fall in traditionally high risk industries, led by manufacturing: down from 24.9 per 1,000 workers in 2004/05 to 20.5 in 2005/06; and agriculture: down from 29.3 to 25.8.

Construction and mining also recorded reductions in incidence rates.

"The hard work invested in safety has also seen injuries resulting in permanent disability fall by 23 per cent," Mr Della Bosca said.

"Occupational disease claims decreased by 11 per cent.

"This report is a success story about the benefits of cooperation between workers and employers in NSW in improving safety in their workplaces.

"While the data is very encouraging, there are still more than 30,000 serious injuries each year and we must continue to work to reduce that number," said the Minister.