

# STAYING SAFE IN THE WORKPLACE

THIS YEAR'S SAFETY IN ACTION EVENT WILL HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE.

**T**he largest workplace health and safety event in Australia, Safety in Action, will take place in Sydney from September 6–8 at the Sydney Showground, exhibiting the latest innovations, products, systems, and seminars to promote employee safety.

This year's theme is "Keep your workplace safe" with the event hosting more than 5000 decision makers in Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) across government, manufacturing, construction, resources, transport, and engineering industries.

More than 100 exhibitors will attend the event including Australian Safety Wholesalers, Black Dog Institute, SAI Global, and the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Keith Barks, general manager at Informa Australia – who are jointly presenting the event with the Safety Institute of Australia (SIA) – said it is estimated that more than 2000 workers die from work related illnesses annually.

"[This] highlights the urgent need for national improvements to prevent and reduce the number and severity of injuries and illnesses in the future," he said.

Untreated mental health conditions cost Australian workplaces approximately \$10.9 billion per year; comprising \$6.1 billion in presenteeism, \$4.7 billion in absenteeism, and \$145 million in compensation claims. Therefore business owners and organisational leaders play a critical role in driving practices that promote mental health in the workplace.

While creating a mentally healthy workplace is everyone's responsibility, mental health is a leadership issue, and change must start at the top.

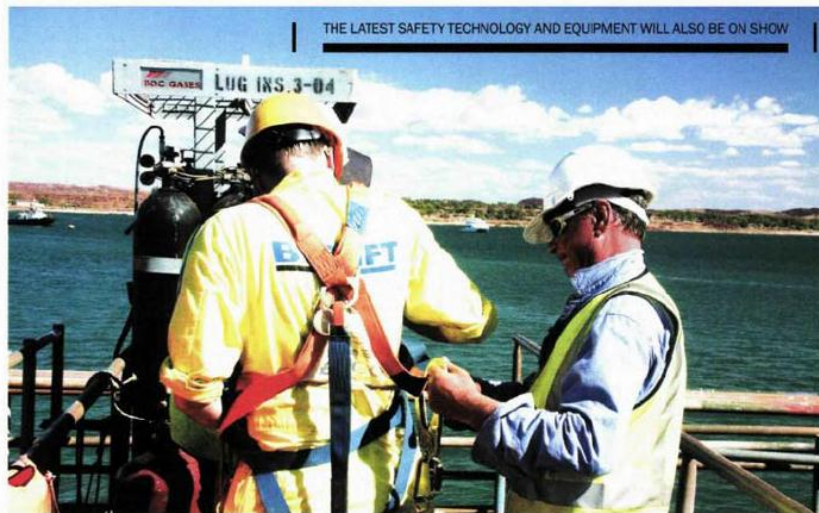
As a result, mental and physical health will be one of the major focus areas in the exhibition's seminar series, with presentations from Beyondblue, SafeWork NSW, Myosh, Mayo Hardware, and Aframes Safety discussing new research, regulatory compliance issues and expanding on technological innovations. AccessEAP and Beyondblue will expand on how to create mentally and physically healthy workplaces and why workplace wellness is good for a business' bottom line.

There will be seminars on high-performance thinking strategies to

achieve a zero harm, positive safety culture; how to manage and improve work safety with software tools; how companies are using in-vehicle monitoring systems to improve driver safety in Australia; and on contractor safety management and compliance. There will also be a time dedicated to the latest innovative developments in the sector, with presentations from those at the forefront of concepts such as virtual reality, 3D printing, and the future of workplace health and safety.

The event will also host a panel discussion tackling the question 'Is workplace psychological health and safety being undermined and trivialised by unsystematic "quick fixes" approaches?' The panel members include SafeWork NSW psychosocial inspector Alexis Wray and Master Builders Association of NSW executive officer, safety, David Solomon.

"Mentally healthy workplaces are as important to Australian employees as physically safe workplaces; however workplaces are not meeting their expectations. Three quarters of Australian employees expect mental health support in the workplace environment, but many may not be aware of, or are unable to access appropriate resources," Nick Arvanitis, head of workplace research and resources at Beyondblue, said.





In the mining industry, up to one in three FIFO workers reportedly experience mental health difficulties, with an R U OK? campaign launched earlier this year encouraging workers to support one another before they "hit rock bottom".

R U OK? CEO Brendan Maher encouraged employers to do more to foster workplace cultures that encourage discussions about wellbeing.

"Working away from family and friends inevitably takes a toll on people; especially if they're dealing with issues at home. We need to remind workmates to watch out for the subtle changes that suggest someone isn't coping so well," he said.

Running parallel to *Safety in Action* will be the SIA's National Convention, a two day conference featuring global and Australian safety leaders to challenge employers to change their thinking about safety.

The leaders will address the theme of "Disruptive Safety" which has a range of meanings including

disruptive change, which tackles positively disrupting the status quo in workplace health and safety; the disruptive environment, which questions how health and safety officers, managers, and executives can work together to withstand changes in their businesses; and working in challenging fields, questioning whether anything can be learnt from industries with high health and safety risks and how these can be translated throughout the business.

The convention also includes the SIA Annual General Meeting, OHS education awards, OHS leaders and CEO's breakfast, and a women in leadership forum.

Australia's largest cleaning and hygiene show CleanScene, will also be co-located at *Safety in Action*, presented by the National Cleaning Suppliers Association (NCSA). It will feature exhibitors catering for cleaners, commercial, industrial and facility managers, government agencies and purchasing officers. ■