

Health and Safety Professionals Alliance

Progress Statement to March 2008

This paper describes the precursors to the establishment of HaSPA and the activities and achievements of HaSPA over the period October 2007 to March 2008.

March 2008

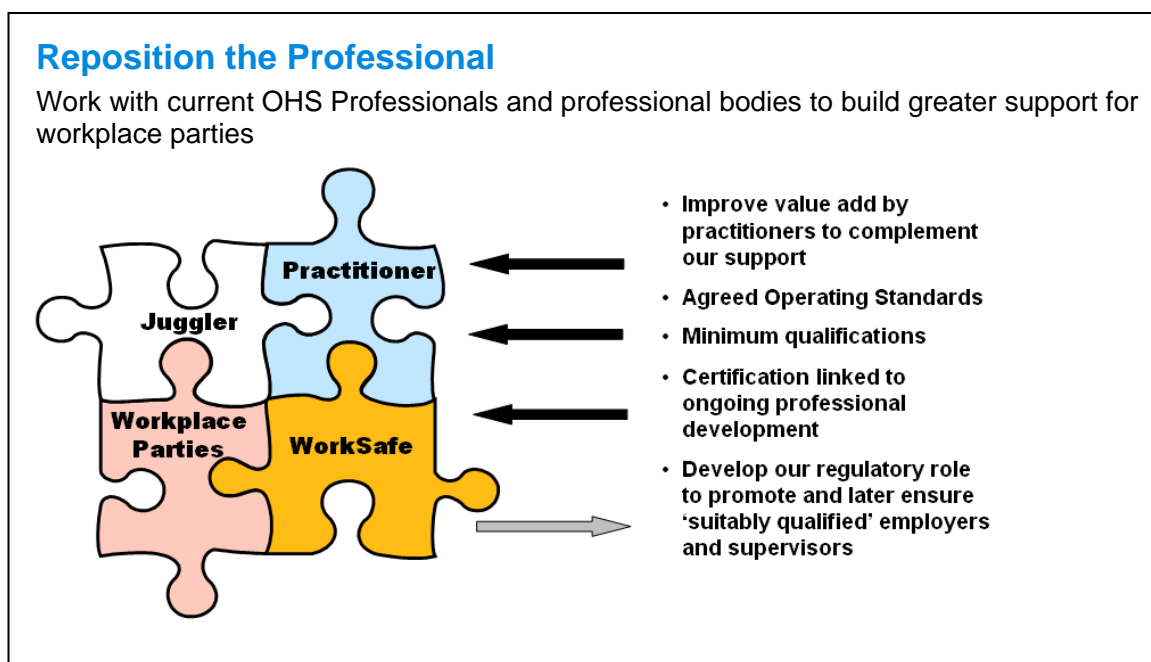


HaSPA Background

In early 2007, as part of its corporate strategy planning, WorkSafe identified an opportunity to improve workplace OHS by developing the quality of OHS advice and services being provided to medium employers by OHS consultants and other OHS service providers.

The potential was recognized to develop a productive relationship with the OHS professional and education communities and by working together improve the quality of OHS advice and services being given to medium employers. The development of such a relationship would help achieve WorkSafe's five year strategic plan and contribute to achieving the National OHS Targets.

The above fed into the component of the WorkSafe Corporate Strategy that focused on medium size workplaces¹. One element of this component is to 'Reposition the Professionals:-



In May 2007 WorkSafe met with the independent expert members of the WorkSafe OHS Advisory Committee, David Caple and Steve Cowley to gain their advice on how best to engage with these communities and it was decided that WorkSafe Victoria CEO Greg Tweedly and WorkSafe Executive Director John Merritt would meet with representatives of the OHS Professional Associations and the OHS Education Community

¹ See WorkSafe Strategy 2012 Medium Segment Strategy

HaSPA Background

1.1 WorkSafe meeting with the OHS Professional Associations 5/9/2007

On 5th September 2007 WorkSafe Victoria CEO Greg Tweedly and WorkSafe Executive Director John Merritt met with representatives of the OHS Professional Associations².

Attendees included David Caple (OSHAC), Steve Cowley (OSHAC), Geoff Dell (SIA), Ian Firth (AIOH), Barry Gilbert (ANZSOM), Philip Goad (RAIA), Phillip Kamay (SIA), Gary Lawson-Smith (SIA), Clarke Martin (WorkSafe), Ross Mills (AFOEM), David Skegg (COSHAP), Greg Tweedly (WorkSafe), Megan Verry (WorkSafe), Christine Waring (HFESA), Margarete White (WorkSafe), Eric Windholz (WorkSafe)

Clarke Martin of WorkSafe presented the WorkSafe Strategy for medium sized employers which are defined by a remuneration of \$1 million to \$20 million with a key focus on the \$2 million to \$10 million sub-group. The strategy includes three linked initiatives:

1. Reposition the professionals (OHS professional community);
2. Educate the 'jugglers' (employees that juggle OHS/RTW with other duties); and
3. Concentrate on the injury and RTW 'hotspots' (in high risk industries, engaging with employers at the ownership level and offering OHS support)

Clarke outlined the potential opportunities to work with the OHS professional community in providing improved services to medium sized workplaces.

WorkSafe stated its intention to better support and engage with the OHS professional community, to achieve:

- a closer working relationship;
- better support for employers in choosing an OHS professional; and
- ultimately better OHS outcomes

An open discussion around the table then took place with the key points being:

1. An alliance should be formed with a representative group of the professional associations and WorkSafe to begin working together
2. This alliance needs to be outcome focused
3. WorkSafe could assist the professional associations to engage with industry to ensure there is a required service standard, which may include: professional qualifications; certification linked to professional development; a complaints process; indemnity insurance etc.
4. The term 'OHS professionals' needs to be defined. Furthermore, the roles of physiotherapists, occupational rehabilitation providers, occupational nurses and physicians, risk engineers, trainers, auditors, tender consultants, insurance brokers, equipment suppliers etc. need to be considered and explained
5. The current list of consultants on WorkSafe's website should be removed through a transparent and constructive engagement process. These businesses will be encouraged to participate with their relevant professional associations.
6. The current list of consultants could be replaced with links to the association / societies websites, although this may require a review of those websites to ensure they are relevant to a wider audience than their members

² This was the first time since the proclamation of the Victorian OHS Act in 1984 that such a meeting had taken place between the State's OHS jurisdictional body and the OHS professional community

HaSPA Background

7. Disparity of professionals and different overarching policies of professional associations in relation to engagement with workplaces could be harmonised
8. Information packs on key WorkSafe initiatives would be useful for OHS associations to brief their members
9. Regulator and professional associations to work closer regarding injury data
10. Professional associations should be briefed on current WorkSafe strategies, which would enable them to support WorkSafe's strategy implementation

John Merritt highlighted three key points from the discussion:

- There is the potential for a MoU to be signed between WorkSafe and the professional associations as a vehicle for driving this initiative. One outcome of this activity will be to give employers insight in to how to select a suitable qualified OHS professional
- WorkSafe need to produce guidance material that will better assist members of professional associations
- WorkSafe should define what it is we want employers to do regarding their OHS capability, particularly employers with high risks

1.2 WorkSafe meeting with the OHS Education Community 17/9/2007

On 17th September 2007 WorkSafe Victoria CEO Greg Tweedly and WorkSafe Executive Director John Merritt met with representatives of the OHS Education Community³.

Attendees included Linda Arnold (IBSA), David Borys (Ballarat), David Caple (OSHAC), John Catford (Deakin), David Hayward (Swinburne), Clarke Martin (WorkSafe), Leon Piterman (Monash), Don Reid (Chisholm), Brendan Sheehan (OTTE), Susanne Tepe (RMIT), Peter Trewin (Holmesglen), Michelle Towstoles (Victoria Uni)

The purpose of this meeting was similar to that with the OHS Professional Associations as outlined above.

An open discussion around the table took place with the key points summarised below:

1. The OHS education community would benefit from greater awareness of WorkSafe's initiatives and increased communication between the two groups.
2. Providing employers with improved capability by delivering OHS and RTW support through refreshed processes, is the direction WorkSafe is taking. As opposed to making mandatory provisions such as the QLD model of Workplace Health and Safety Officers.
3. Professional bodies need to have minimum qualifications/certification that is linked to: professional development; agreed service standards; a transparent complaints system; and a process of dealing with non compliance. Bringing the various current standards together would assist WorkSafe to refer matters to professional association's members.
4. Currently, the OHS profession is fragmented and not properly defined.
5. The curriculum of health and safety courses differs between the various tertiary institutions to some extent and the professional bodies have little influence in current curriculum development

³ This was the first time since the proclamation of the Victorian OHS Act in 1984 that such a meeting had taken place between the State's OHS jurisdictional body and the OHS education community

HaSPA Background

6. The bar for OHS standards need to be raised by ensuring issues are addressed through evidence based research techniques.
7. Increasing professional recognition through the relevant professional association would help.
8. WorkSafe could support the occupational health profession by establishing scholarships, academic chairs etc. to ensure there are academics who can influence curriculums.
9. Boosting the profile of occupational health among medical students is a challenge we need to address. The medical professionals and OHS professionals need to work from the same starting point when dealing with workplaces.
10. Funding for research on OHS and/or RTW would help and is something WorkSafe are exploring.
11. Alternative methods of getting the messages out to workplaces need exploration.
12. Training should only be part of the solution, more work needs to be done to establish a culture of continual learning and best practice.
13. Creating specialist service points in particular locations (i.e. industrial estates) and/or through trade associations, could be explored.

John Merritt closed the meeting saying that WorkSafe looked forward to increasing its dialogue in the future and building a stronger relationship, with the first step being participating in the working party. One of themes coming through was around research and that is a focus for WorkSafe in the future.

Establishment of HaSPA

The outcome of the above meetings was an agreement to establish a working party of OHS Professional Associations and OHS Educators to develop and pursue the issues discussed and the opportunities identified to achieve better OHS outcomes in Victorian workplaces.

The working party decided to call itself HaSPA. The alliance is currently comprised of representatives of the following organisations and bodies:

- Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine and incorporating Members of the former Australian College of Occupational Health Nurses
- Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists
- Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine,
- Chisholm Institute of TAFE
- Congress of Safety and Health Association Presidents
- Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
- Human Factors and Ergonomics Society of Australia
- Innovation and Business Skills Australia
- La Trobe University
- RMIT University
- Safety Institute of Australia
- University of Ballarat

Representatives of the Victorian Trades Hall Council and the Victorian Congress of Employer Associations attend as observers.

The purposes of HaSPA are to:

- Promote establishment of OHS as an area of professional practice
- Improve quality of Professionals
- Improve service delivery to workplaces
- Improve OH&S in workplaces

The inaugural meeting of HaSPA took place on 15th October 2008.

Progress of HaSPA

3.1 Outcomes of 15th October meeting

A workshop was conducted at the inaugural meeting on 15th October 2007

It was agreed that 6 the key areas for the Alliance to address were

1. Communications between educational institutions, professional associations and WorkSafe
2. Research
3. OHS Professionals Training and Education
4. OHS Professionals issues
5. OHS Professional Standards
6. WorkSafe resourcing

Focus areas for the Alliance were identified:

Two goals:

- Improve quality of Professionals
- Improve service delivery

Outcomes to achieve these goals include:

- Develop minimum standards for professionals:
 - Form of standards
 - Content of the standards
 - Agreed core educational requirements - vocational and university/higher ed areas
 - Standards are agreed to by associations and educators
 - Standards are adopted by associations and educators
 - Standards are adopted by the marketplace
- WorkSafe recommends the use of OHS Professional Bodies to obtain services
- Value of joining an associations increases as a result of the above
- There is a systematized strategy to promote and communicate these minimum standards
- The Alliance is a 'sustained body', long term, not a temporary initiative
- Associations and educators are unified and speak with one voice
- Research, see 2 below, is ongoing

Members also discussed a range of future activities and initiatives the alliance could pursue and these are listed in **Appendix 1**

It was also agreed that WorkSafe would develop a Press Release about the formation and purposes of HaSPA. HaSPA members were consulted about the content of the Press Release which was publicly issued on 19th November - see **Appendix 2**

Following the first meeting and before the second meeting in November WorkSafe consulted individually with HaSPA members to flesh out the details of the high level purpose and objectives identified, along with drafting a work plan about the key areas for the Alliance to address.

Progress of HaSPA

The outcomes of these consultations were:

- General agreement with the formation and objectives/purposes of the Alliance
- Good support for the Press Release
- Agreement that Standards would be the first task of the Alliance and it was understood this was linked with:
 - changes to WSV consultant Directory and replacement with associations webpage and links
 - development and issue of WSV Policy on 'suitably qualified'
 - development and issue of Guidance on getting OHS support for medium workplaces
 - WSV activities to promote engaging of consultants (with professional level membership of identified associations: website, advice from Inspectors to workplaces, other) as one way of getting OHS support for medium workplaces

3.2 HaSPA achievements November 2007– March 2008

HaSPA met 4 times in the period November 2007 to March 2008.

During this period HaSPA:

- Contributed to the development and delivery of a WorkSafe public forum for OHS Professionals in December. The purpose of the Forum was to be as transparent and consultative as possible on the aims of HaSPA and more broadly WorkSafe's goals under Strategy 2012. This was particularly important for those OHS Professionals not associated with any professional OHS body. The Forum was advertised by direct mail out to 1000 OHS professionals and was attended by 120 OHS professionals.
- Provided input into a survey of 160 OHS professionals which inquired into issues such as the WorkSafe OHS Consultants Directory, their affiliation with OHS Professional Associations, reasons for being/not being affiliated and improving access of medium size workplaces to OHS services,
- Made substantial progress in developing a Draft Code of Ethics and Minimum Service Standards for Professional and Certified Members of OHS Professional Associations
- Developed elements of an Alliance Work Plan
- Established a Working Part to develop definitions of OHS knowledge, what is an OHS Professional and competencies of OHS Professionals
- Contributed to the development of a breakfast seminar at the SIA Conference in late April on OHS Professional issues.

Progress of HaSPA

3.3 The context and purpose of the HaSPA Code of Ethics and Minimum Service Standards

The WorkSafe meeting with the OHS Professional Associations on 5/9/2008 identified the following issues:

- WorkSafe could assist the professional associations to engage with industry to ensure there is a required service standard, which may include: professional qualifications; certification linked to professional development; a complaints process; indemnity insurance etc
- Disparity of professionals and different overarching policies of professional associations in relation to engagement with workplaces could be harmonised
- Professional bodies need to have minimum qualifications/certification that is linked to: professional development; agreed service standards; a transparent complaints system; and a process of dealing with non compliance.
- Bringing the various current standards together would assist WorkSafe to refer matters to professional association's members
- Currently, the OHS profession is fragmented and not properly defined.

The WorkSafe meeting with the OHS Education Community on 17/9/2008 identified the following issues:

- The bar for OHS standards needs to be raised by ensuring issues are addressed through evidence based research techniques.
- Increasing professional recognition through the relevant professional associations would help

The agreed purposes of HaSPA confirmed and agreed at the second HaSPA meeting in November 2007 are to:

- Promote establishment of OHS as an area of professional practice
- Improve quality of Professionals
- Improve service delivery to workplaces
- Improve OH&S in workplaces

In line with the above HaSPA is currently actively developing a Draft Code of Ethics and Minimum Service Standards for OHS Professionals.

The Code and Standards are considered to be an essential component of a strategy to improve the quality of practice and services delivered to workplaces by OHS Professionals and thus improve OHS in workplaces.

The stated objectives of the Code and Standards are to:

1. Develop and maintain minimum standards of ethics and practice for OHS Professionals
2. Provide guidance for OHS Professionals on ethical and service standard issues
3. Strengthen and extend professionalism and promote self-regulation across OHS Professional Associations

Progress of HaSPA

Achieving these Objectives will help to ensure that the work and practices of OHS Professionals contribute to achieving the highest level of protection for employees, employers (and other workplace health and safety stakeholders⁴) against risks to their health and safety.

3.4 WorkSafe initiatives linked with the HaSPA Code and Standards

Initiatives linked with the development the Code and Standards and the 'Reposition the Professionals strategy are:

- The current list of OHS Consultants on WorkSafe's website should be removed through a transparent and constructive engagement process with businesses listed on the Directory. These businesses will be encouraged to participate with their relevant professional associations. The current WorkSafe list of consultants could be replaced with links to OHS Professional Associations websites.
- The HaSPA Working Party recently established to develop definitions of OHS knowledge, what is an OHS Professional and competencies of OHS Professionals.

Production of an OHS Resources Guide for Workplaces. This is being developed in consultation with key stakeholders and will include a section on engaging an OHS consultant.

⁴ '...other workplace health and safety stakeholders' includes members of the public, workplace visitors, volunteers and others

Appendix 1 - Suggestions from the Alliance for future Alliance activities were as follows:

- 1 Communications between educational institutions, professional associations and WorkSafe
 - Information packs on key WorkSafe initiatives would be useful for OHS associations to brief their members
 - Regulator and professional associations to work closer regarding injury data
 - Professional associations should be briefed on current WorkSafe strategies, which would enable them to support WorkSafe's strategy implementation
 - The OHS education community would benefit from greater awareness of WorkSafe's initiatives and increased communication between the two groups.
 - Increasing professional recognition through the relevant professional association would help.
 - Alternative methods of getting the messages out to workplaces need exploration
 - The current list of consultants on WorkSafe's website should be removed through a transparent and constructive engagement process. These businesses will be encouraged to participate with their relevant professional associations.
 - The current list of consultants could be replaced with links to the association / societies websites, although this may require a review of those websites to ensure they are relevant to a wider audience than their members
- 2 Research
 - The curriculum of health and safety courses differs between the various tertiary institutions to some extent and the professional bodies have little influence in current curriculum development
 - Funding for research on OHS and/or RTW would help and is something WorkSafe is exploring.
 - The bar for OHS standards needs to be raised by ensuring issues are addressed through evidence based research techniques.
- 3 OHS Professionals Training/Education
 - WorkSafe could support the occupational health profession by establishing scholarships, academic chairs etc. to ensure there are academics who can influence curriculum.
 - Boosting the profile of occupational health among medical students is a challenge we need to address.
 - The medical professionals and OHS professionals need to work from the same starting point when dealing with workplaces.
 - Training should only be part of the solution, more work needs to be done to establish a culture of continual learning and best practice.
- 4 OHS Professionals issues
 - The term 'OHS professionals' needs to be defined. There is a great deal of diversity covered by the term. Furthermore, the roles of physiotherapists, occupational rehabilitation providers, occupational nurses and physicians, risk engineers, trainers, auditors, tender consultants, insurance brokers, equipment suppliers etc. need to be considered and explained
 - Address different types of professionals eg a common core of expertise and knowledge (the 'General Professional') for all professionals and then specific expertise in different subject matter areas
 - Currently, the OHS profession is fragmented and not properly defined
 - Creating specialist service points in particular locations (i.e. industrial estates) and/or through trade associations, could be explored.
 - Recognition that OHS is not only interdisciplinary but to achieve good OHS a trans-disciplinary approach is required
 - Role of Gatekeeper
- 5 OHS Professional Standards
 - Educational and training requirements
 - Minimum experience requirements

- Membership categories/grades
- Professional indemnity insurance
- Codes of ethics
- Procedures for managing complaints about professionals
- Maintenance and upgrading of membership grade/category WorkSafe could assist the professional associations to engage with industry to ensure there is a required service standard
- Disparity of professionals and different overarching policies of professional associations in relation to engagement with workplaces could be harmonised
- Providing employers with improved capability by delivering OHS and RTW support through refreshed processes, is the direction WorkSafe is taking. As opposed to making mandatory provisions such as the QLD model of Workplace Health and Safety Officers
- Bringing the various current standards together would assist WorkSafe to refer matters to professional association's members

6 WorkSafe resourcing

- It is understood that many of the professional associations are run on limited resources.
- The following are examples of type of resourcing WorkSafe can provide:
 - facilitation with diverse groups;
 - a range of communication channels to support various initiatives;
 - grant funding (depending on assessment from the WorkSafe Grants Program); and
 - partnering in projects.

Appendix 2 - WorkSafe Press Release

A new Alliance: WorkSafe, Educators, Health & Safety Associations

19 November 2007

WorkSafe Victoria today announced an alliance with Australia's leading universities and health and safety organisations to make small and medium sized Victorian companies safer.

WorkSafe Executive Director, John Merritt said the alliance would be working closely in the coming months to develop ways to assist the more than 240,000 small and medium sized employers in Victoria meet the challenges of providing safe workplaces.

"We aim to raise the profile of key people and organisations that help small and medium business employers with their health and safety risks"

"The priority of the alliance is to develop minimum standards for OHS practitioners that work with SMEs, creating a referral service for employers seeking help and promote the value of working with professional associations.

In the longer term it is expected that the alliance will explore research opportunities to help WorkSafe gain a better understanding of how it can help make small and medium sized workplaces be safer.

As part of streamlining support for small to medium sized businesses, WorkSafe is reviewing its web based directory of service providers.

"The current directory does not reflect the skills and professional standards of those on it. By working through professional bodies, greater consistency will be achieved with benefits for consumers and industry alike.

Currently listed companies are being encouraged to work with the professional associations to detail their expertise and qualifications to better target their work," Mr Merritt said. "Professional associations, vocational trainers and educators are a vital for safety.

"Good OHS practitioners will become better while others with the potential to improve will have the opportunity to be supported by a professional body.

"While each organisation will retain its autonomy, professional associations will build on their existing policies to jointly develop updated service standards, improved professional development, transparent and consistent complaints handling systems.

"The benefit will be more consistent information provided to the community by people trained to a defined high standard.

Mr Merritt said professional associations, universities and other training organisations could also help WorkSafe do its job better.

"These groups are in direct contact with workplaces and OHS professionals and have experience and information we can draw on.

"By working more closely with professional bodies and training organisations we will achieve higher levels of professionalism and improved service for the community.

