

26 April, 2023

Kia ora koutou katoa,

We are the New Zealand Institute of Safety Management (NZISM), New Zealand's leading professional association for health and safety practitioners. We are a 2,600-strong community, operating nationwide through a network of 14 branches, and our members support the entire spectrum of New Zealand business. As the credible, trusted authority for the Health and Safety Profession in New Zealand, we want to ensure you are informed about our key challenges.

We recently surveyed our members on the top five things the profession believe would have the biggest impact on health and safety in workplaces in Aotearoa.

Improving Regulatory Engagement

Unsurprisingly the issue that had the largest response was improving regulatory engagement. Our members understand that WorkSafe's ability to be an effective Regulator is fundamental to improving health and safety in workplaces. This means ensuring the Regulator is adequately resourced, improves the capability of the Inspectorate workforce and utilises this workforce to work proactively with organisations to educate and create opportunities for improvement at both an individual workplace and system level.

Our members would also like to see effective accountability for those who don't invest in caring for their people to create real disincentives to poor performance. An increase in targeted enforcement action, including timely action against those who are ultimately responsible for serious health and safety failings would help to both raise standards and create a more level playing field. We want WorkSafe to be set up for success and expect them to step up and into their role of engaging, educating, and enforcing. This includes them being more overt about the strategic intent behind their actions so that others clearly understand what the substantive issues are.

To achieve this, there needs to be a fundamental change to the funding mechanisms between ACC, WorkSafe and other regulators as these currently create conflicts due to different priorities and return on investment criteria. This is not about more money as much as better use of the resources currently invested in the system.

Improve the Suite of Priority Regulations and Guidance Documents

The second biggest issue members identified is the need to improve the suite of priority Regulations and guidance documents. This was the failure identified by the Independent Taskforce in relation to the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 and we are seeing this replicated with the 2015 HSWA. We have seen little movement in terms of the regulatory review from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Specifically, the proposed Plant, Structures and Hazardous Work Regulations, which had significant input from industry and are still sitting with MBIE, with no updates on what action is being taken to introduce them and when.

The Working Safer Blueprint agreed by Government after the Taskforce Report needs to be revisited as there is clarity of the current programme and when identified regulatory gaps will be filled. Access to up-to-date guidance documents is a critical tool to help organisations effectively manage the health and safety of their workplaces. Much of the guidance is outdated and cannot be relied upon by those working in health and safety, let alone small businesses who struggle to engage professionals to undertake this work on their behalf. This is work that needs to be prioritised.

Increasing Worker Engagement and Participation

Increasing worker engagement and participation is considered an essential component to improving workplace health and safety. We know when you have workers effectively participating in the design of work, when they contribute to the decision making in organisations, you create a more engaged workforce, which is a more productive workforce. If we can better support Health and Safety Representatives and ensure they are utilised as an effective participant in the system of better work, we will improve health and safety outcomes across Aotearoa.

Legislating Registration of the Health and Safety Profession

While we believe that legislating registration for the Health and Safety Profession would improve health and safety outcomes, we know that this is a long-term goal, which is why we are making great strides as a profession to ensure our members are appropriately qualified and experienced within our accreditation framework. We have also established a register via HASANZ to ensure that when this does become a national priority, we have an existing registration process, defined entry requirements, and a system fit for purpose.

Improved Access to Health and Safety Training

Finally, we recognise that improved access to health and safety training could have a positive impact on the system of work. Reducing the cost of training, ensuring training provided meets the needs of workplaces via the establishment of an independent accreditation body, providing free training to Health and Safety Representatives, and improving the health and safety knowledge of all students could make a real difference.

We hope that by providing all major political parties with the top five issues the profession believe could make a difference to the health and safety of workplaces in Aotearoa, we are giving you the opportunity to commence this conversation at a national level. Please feel free to contact me directly if you would like to discuss this communication further.

Ngā mihi,



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