

Question on Notice

No. 477

Asked on Thursday, 11 March 2010

Mr KILBURN asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations (Mr C R Dick) -

QUESTION:

What action is the government taking to assist medium sized business to provide a safe workplace?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government through Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is conducting an initiative that involves working cooperatively with all of Queensland's medium-sized businesses, over 7,700 of them, to assist in managing workplace health and safety more effectively.

Medium-sized businesses are being targeted as they employ about one in five workers, yet they account for about one in three workers compensation claims.

The only way to tackle the high number of workplace injuries and fatalities occurring in Queensland is to target the areas of greatest concern. This is why the Queensland Government recently launched the medium-sized business initiative to assist this sector to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all its workers.

This is the largest single workplace-based education and audit campaign that Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has ever embarked upon.

As part of the initiative, workplace health and safety inspectors will visit medium-sized businesses to check their safety management systems. These systems comprise the business's approach to managing workplace health and safety hazards and risks in its workplace. However, before conducting the audit, medium-sized businesses will be offered the opportunity to attend a free advisory session to learn more about effective safety management systems and what the inspectors will be looking for during the audit.

The initiative has been split into two phases, to ensure workplace visits are completed by early 2011. On 1 March 2010 letters were sent to chief executive officers and workplace health and safety officers of 4,000 medium-sized businesses across Queensland. The letters advised of the initiative and how business representatives can register to attend one of the more than 60 free sessions being conducted across the state. The other 3,700 businesses will receive a letter later this year in phase two of the initiative.

By assisting medium-sized businesses through working together and providing education in better ways to manage health and safety, the outcomes for all Queenslanders working in this sector will be improved. Working cooperatively is the best way to make sure that loved ones make it home safe and sound at the end of each working day.

As at 19 March 2010 nearly 40 percent of the businesses involved in phase one have already registered to attend a free session. This is a very pleasing result and shows that businesses are committed to working with the government to ensure they have the best possible practices in place to manage workplace health and safety.

Businesses that attend the sessions will get expert advice on what makes up a good safety management system. They will get the opportunity to ask questions about workplace health and safety. These businesses will then have the opportunity to take what they have learned and apply it in their workplaces.

The audit will involve a desktop assessment of the documentation that underpins the safety system of the business and then an assessment of how the system is operating by testing it against a particular work activity.

Not only can businesses get important information at the free advisory sessions, but Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's website, www.worksafe.qld.gov.au, has a range of practical information on every workplace health and safety issue. There are a suite of publications available that can assist every business, large or small, to improve their health and safety performance. Resources specifically geared to the medium-sized business initiative are also available on the website.