

Inquest into the death of Glenn Richard Newport

Mr Newport died on 13 January 2013 as a result of cardiac arrest precipitated by dilutional hyponatraemia whilst working as a fly-in-fly-out worker creating infrastructure for a future liquefied natural gas project. The coroner found Mr Newport's principal cause of death was his physiological reaction to the exposure to heat in his work environment.

Coroner John Hutton delivered his findings of inquest on 20 April 2016.

The Queensland Government responds to recommendations directed to government agencies at inquests by informing the community if a recommendation will be implemented or the reason why a recommendation is not supported.

The departments named in this response will provide implementation updates until the recommendation is delivered. Further information relating the implementation of recommendations can be obtained from the responsible minister named in the response.

Recommendation 1

The heavy construction industry should devise and implement an industry-wide code of practice in relation to the prevention and management of heat injury in the course of work. This code of practice should become the baseline against which operations can be assessed in terms of safety.

Response and action: the recommendation is agreed to in part and implementation is complete.

Responsible agency: Department of Education (Office of Industrial Relations) supported by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy.

On 6 April 2017 the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs and the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines responded:

The Office of Industrial Relations (OIR) and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) are awaiting a response to a submission to Safe Work Australia to lead a national approach to the coroner's recommendation to implement a code of practice in relation to the prevention and management of heat injury.

If a national approach is not supported, the OIR in collaboration with DNRM will consider how to implement the recommendation at a state level.

On 23 January 2018 the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations (lead minister) and on 25 October 2017 the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines (supporting minister) responded:

Safe Work Australia endorsed the development of national guidance material to manage the risk of heat related illness. As climatic conditions and heat related issues vary throughout Australia each of the state and territory regulators will be able to modify the national guidance to ensure it is relevant to their jurisdiction.

OIR will continue to work collaboratively with DNRM to develop the guidance material to address this recommendation. A final decision is yet to be made as to whether the material will be guidance or a model code of practice.

It should also be noted, in November 2016 OIR published a Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) web script on [managing the risks of heat related illness](#) which includes many resources including a heat stress (basic) calculator.

Furthermore, in 2016 WHSQ Inspectors underwent training by Dr Ross De Corletto on heat stress risk assessment, control and enforcement.

On 22 February 2018 the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations, and the Minister for Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy responded:

Safe Work Australia led the development of national guidance material to manage the risk of heat related illness.

The coroner recommended the development of a Code of Practice however as climatic conditions and heat related issues vary throughout Australia, development of national guidance material was preferred as it allows each of the state and territory regulators to modify the guidance to ensure it is relevant to their jurisdiction.

The content of the *Guide for Managing the Risks of Working in Heat* (the guide) was reviewed by the Office of Industrial Relations, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and work health and safety regulators in other jurisdictions. The content was also reviewed by technical experts in the field, Professor Dino Pisaniello and Dr Richie Gun of the University of Adelaide.

The guide was endorsed by the Strategic Issues Group – Work Health and Safety (SIG-WHS), as the national committee that supports Safe Work Australia. The guide was given final approval by Safe Work Australia members (with the exception of Victoria and the ACTU) on 7 December 2017.

The [guide](#) was published on the SWA website on 8 December 2017.

A communication and engagement strategy was also approved by SIG-WHS members and communication activities have begun and will continue into autumn 2018. A range of channels will be used to promote the key messages of the guide. Safe Work Australia is also working with the Bureau of Meteorology about cross-promotion of the guide.

Recommendation 2

Any future industry-wide code of practice should be based on a quantitative assessment of climate, including an ultimate cut-off temperature at which work must cease. Qualitative measures may be implemented in support of such quantitative measures, but quantitative measures should be in place. It follows that work sites should have appropriate equipment and personnel to measure temperature and humidity.

Response and action: the recommendation is agreed to in part and implementation is complete.

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The [Guide for managing the risks of working in heat](#) (the guide) published by Safe Work Australia on 8 December 2017 includes both quantitative and qualitative assessments tools for managing heat in the workplace (indoors and outdoors).

The guide does not include an ultimate cut-off temperature at which work must cease. This is because there are many factors, apart from temperature, that affect how hot a workers feels, for example, how physically demanding the work is, humidity levels, requirements to wear personal protective equipment, how long they will be exposed to the heat. There are risks in setting a cut off temperature as under certain conditions temperatures below it may pose a significant risk.

The guide includes a comprehensive risk management approach to encompass all working environments, not just the construction industry. The guide requires the assessment of all risks associated with the work being undertaken, the individual worker/s and the environment, and specifies when the risk of heat related illness to workers remains too great, work is to be cancelled or postponed until the risk can be eliminated or minimised – this may mean waiting for hot conditions to pass. The guide includes hyperlinks and appendices providing ease of access to all quantitative and qualitative assessment tools to assist with the comprehensive risk management approach to managing heat in the workplace.

Recommendation 3

Any future industry-wide code of practice should include provisions for night-based work in times when the heat of the day is expected to be dangerous.

Response and action: the recommendation is agreed to in part and implementation is complete.

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The [Guide for managing the risks of working in heat](#) (the guide) published by Safe Work Australia on 8 December 2017 identifies that a combination of controls is the most effective way of managing workers' exposure to heat.

Special note is made to the scheduling of heavy or strenuous work for cooler times of the day or year. The guide identifies the Bureau of Meteorology as a useful source of up to date information for environmental conditions that affect temperature and humidity, as well as heatwave forecasts and information on climate zones of Australia. Safe Work Australia is also working with the Bureau of Meteorology about cross-promotion of the guide

Recommendation 4

Any future industry-wide code of practice should include measurable, objective criteria which would require a casualty to be evacuated to a hospital, and further, measurable objective criteria which would require a casualty to be immediately evacuated to a hospital.

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The [Guide for managing the risks of working in heat](#) (the guide) published by Safe Work Australia on 8 December 2017 promotes that heat-related illnesses are progressive and emphasises that if the worker is not treated or remains in a hot environment, it can be fatal.

The guide provides a 'First aid fact sheet' which includes information on recognising symptoms of the most common forms of heat-related illness (dehydration, heat rash, heat cramps, fainting) with the corresponding first aid treatment and a recommendation to seek medical advice. The fact sheet also includes information on recognising symptoms of more severe heat related illness (heat exhaustion and heat stroke) with the corresponding first aid treatment and the recommendation to call an ambulance immediately.