



The Hon Greg Pearce MLC

Minister for Finance & Services

Minister for the Illawarra

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW introduces harmonised work, health and safety laws

NSW Minister for Finance & Services Greg Pearce said today NSW will be the first State to pass national harmonised workplace safety laws following a notice of motion tabled in State Parliament.

“The bills being introduced today will mean NSW will be the first state in Australia to pass the nationally harmonised laws,” Mr Pearce said.

“When this Government came to office, we undertook to introduce this legislation within our first 100 days. Today we are following through on this commitment,” he said.

“There are nine different WHS regimes operating across Australia, and this once-in-a-generation change will see thousands of pages of different state-based legislation simplified into a single national set of laws.

“This is a win for workers and a win for business.

“One set of rules across Australia means one set of rules for business. One set of rules focusing on making health and safety the priority at any workplace anywhere in Australia.

“This is backed by all governments across Australia including Prime Minister Julia Gillard and State Labor Premiers and Chief Ministers.

The harmonisation of work, health and safety laws will reduce compliance costs and red tape for employers and maintain the state’s strong work, health and safety framework. The laws will:

- maintain our strong work, health and safety framework;
- keep businesses accountable;
- reduce red tape for employers; and,
- mean that no matter where you work or do business in Australia the same laws will apply.

“We need to cut the red tape, make laws easier to understand while protecting workers,” Mr Pearce said.

“These new laws will protect the role of Work Health & Safety representatives and empower them to take action over safety breaches – something they couldn’t do before.

“In line with comments made in the High Court Kirk case, the prosecution now bears the onus of proof.

“As a result of extensive consultation and as agreed nationally, only the regulators will be able to prosecute.

“The laws will continue the right of employee representatives to enter workplaces to examine safety issues. Importantly, they will need to give reason as soon as reasonably practicable.

“In addition to these changes, we will fast track aspects of the national legislation to commence from today to mirror the federal model in the lead up to the 1 January 2012 implementation. This will offer more clarity and help prepare everyone for the changes.

“It is important to remember, when we say goodbye to our families in the morning we expect to return home safe – when we work safe, we come home safe.

“The devastating toll of injury and death on family and friends is incalculable and there is always more that can be done.

“The changes today are long overdue and will ensure that NSW has a safe and healthy environment for all workers,” Mr Pearce said.