



ACTIVITIES/NEWSLETTER 30TH SEPTEMBER 2011

To: Friends and members of the Workplace Tragedy Family Support Group
Fr: Wendy Lark, Andrea Jones and Cheryl Romer
Date: 30th September 2011

We write to provide you all with an update on the many activities that we've undertaken over the past few months, and to keep you informed of our future plans. You are getting this report as we have either been in touch in the past, or we have received your support.

If you do not wish to receive our Newsletter, please send an email to wendylark@workplacetragedy.com with the word **unsubscribe in the subject line.**

Issues covered by this Newsletter include:

1. WORKPLACE VISITS AND MEETINGS
2. NEWCASTLE VISITS
3. PLANNING FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING APRIL 28
4. COMCARE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
5. STUDY INTO THE IMPACT OF WORK-RELATED DEATHS ON FAMILIES
6. WORKCOVER NSW FACILITATION OF INTERAGENCY MEETINGS
7. PERSONNEL
8. ADVOCACY TRAINING & NEW SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BY OUR GROUP
9. GROUP COUNSELLING WORKSHOPS
10. OTHER CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIVITIES
11. FUTURE ACTIVITIES
12. REGISTRATION STATUS
- 13. BECOME A MEMBER OF OUR GROUP**

1. WORKPLACE VISITS AND MEETINGS

Over the last six months we have had many speaking engagements, and many lined up in the near future. We are willing to speak anywhere in NSW or in the ACT, or at organisation's National Conferences if required. Our speeches have a strong impact - they describe the impact of a work-related tragedy on families, and strongly promote the need for improved safety and better handling of families following a work-related death by authorities.

We have now spread out to industries other than the Construction Industry, and are broadening our area of influence to Newcastle and Wollongong - we find families in rural NSW often feel disenfranchised by the

Sydney base. The Construction Industry and the Union remain our major supporter, and the CFMEU holds a function every International Day of Mourning to assist with the funding of our group.

If we speak on job sites, our services are free. Generally (with some exceptions) if we speak at corporate conferences, seminars and meetings - we request a donation to at least cover our travel, paid time and accommodation expenses.

Last week I spoke at a large company - *Caterpillar* (located in Newcastle) who make the large earth moving and similar machines in the mining and construction industries. The talk and presentation went very well, and they are inviting us back to address the rest of their 500 strong workforce. This is as a result of their OH&S Officer, Stephen Clarke, who is exceptionally passionate about OH&S.

Three weeks ago I also spoke at a Conference held by a company called *Supply Clusters* - attended by companies from all industries. The message went well I think, although the room was in complete silence - perhaps they were in shock LOL.

2. NEWCASTLE - SERIES OF VISITS

I also attended a meeting at the Newcastle Trades Hall Council and they have invited me to speak at their Council Meeting next month, to try and get the rest of the Trade Union Movement in Newcastle on board.

On 27th October (& possibly 28th October) I am again visiting Newcastle, will take the opportunity of speaking on a large construction site, and hopefully be able to make an appointment to see the Mayor of Newcastle to encourage them to lay a memorial for workers who have died through work-related incidents. This is a big one, as we are applying joint pressure to get a memorial laid.

I AM INTERESTED IN SPEAKING TO ANYONE IN NEWCASTLE OR THE CENTRAL COAST WHO NEEDS SUPPORT, OR JUST WANTS TO SUPPORT OUR GROUP.

ACTION FOR YOU	Contact me on 0418 698 553 if you would like to meet up in Newcastle or on the Central Coast on 27 and 28 October. Alternatively if you have sites or meetings that you believe will benefit by our message, let us know.
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3. PLANNING FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING 2012

Additionally, we would like to plan our International Day of Mourning activities early, so it's all not so much of a rush.

ACTION FOR YOU	Please let me know if you can attend any of the activities on 28 April 2012 and particularly if you can contribute to our International Day Of Mourning Activities (job site meetings (either speaking or going along to debrief the speaker), Sydney memorial gathering (I am trying to get us as one of the speakers at next year's memorial service) or at a local memorial (we have them in Baulkham Hills, Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Canada Bay, Grafton, Holroyd, Kogarah, Leichardt, Port Macquarie, Strathfield, and I think Wollandilly Council Shires).
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4. COMCARE CONFERENCE MELBOURNE SEPTEMBER 2011

Two weeks ago I attended the important COMCARE Conference in Melbourne (COMCARE is the National WorkCover authority for people who work for the Commonwealth). The theme for the Conference was ***Improve, include and inspire workplace wellbeing.***

This annual National Conference deals with OH&S at every level. It was very informative as there were International and local speakers who are at the heart of OH&S. This information serves me well when

speaking on job sites, and provided some great Networking opportunities. The Conference organisation and presentations given were brilliant, and COMCARE should be congratulated for presenting such an effective seminar.

COMCARE have kindly invited me to be a speaker at next year's conference, to be held here in Sydney. I do hope that some of you may also be able to attend, to know what is developing in OH&S, all of course designed to prevent critical incidents at work and to improve the health and safety of our workforce.

ACTION FOR YOU	Consider allocating time to attend this conference - it will be held late September 2012 - I will keep you up to date when the conference dates are finalised.
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5. **TRAUMATIC WORK-RELATED DEATH IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY- EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMS' FAMILIES - PROFESSOR MICHAEL QUINLAN, PROF. PHILIP BOHLE, OLIVIA RAWLINGS WAY, LYNDA R MATTHEWS**

In 2010 the University of Sydney, under the direction of Professor Michael Quinlan (our Patron) and Professor Phillip Bohle, Dr Olivia Rawlings-Way and Linda R Matthews, conducted in-depth interviews of members of our group to investigate the **IMPACT OF TRAUMATIC WORKPLACE DEATHS (TWDs)**. This pilot study, which our group contributed to, examined the financial, social and health consequences of families. The report into this Pilot Study has been released this year, and if you would like a copy, please contact me.

The report noted that **five thousand family members became survivors of TWDs each year**, making the issues bad enough to warrant a complete investigation into the impact on families, including the costs to the Australian Taxpayers.

Health consequences were universally reported, including immediate and longer lasting psychological and physical problems. Participants revealed symptoms of *post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and complicated grief* (Our note - some developed stress-related cancer, obesity and other physical symptoms). Some families experiences *drug and alcohol* issues. Violence and ongoing debts were prevalent, particularly in regards to adolescent children of deceased workers.

Social consequences for families were widespread - most spoke of lost friendships/family relationships and diminishing support following such losses. Family tensions were very common. (Our Note - Some of our family members feel isolated from their extended families or isolate themselves).

Financial consequences included short-term or long-term monetary hardship. Issues of access to workers' compensation were paramount, and for those who could access compensation, it typically took an unduly long time to obtain (creating further stress and added strain to existing financial situations). Some participants were not eligible for compensation because their loved ones were sub-contractors, or at the time of their death, were legally classified as non-dependent. These participants reported extreme financial adversity that in some cases necessitated a long-term reliance on social security support mechanisms.

Problematic institutional responses to TWDs were widely reported, and in all cases families reported dissatisfaction with these processes. Protocols for keeping families fully informed were ineffective. This area requires urgent attention.

Furthermore, all participants reported serious grievances concerning their insensitive treatment by Authorities, the difficulties involved in inquests and court cases, and their unjust outcomes.

Participants discussed varying interactions with Employers, with some employers acknowledging the death in meaningful ways and others responding in ways that families perceived as hurtful.

On a positive note, participants commended the role of the Union in providing outreach, information & assistance to bereaved families, even when their loved ones had not been members of the Union.

The lack of knowledge of the consequences of TWDs for surviving family members is a serious and noticeable omission in OHS research in Australia.

This study has provided strong evidence for a deeper investigation of the consequences of TWDs for families and the provision of support services and information. It provides preliminary evidence of serious bureaucratic and institutional deficiencies that warrant further investigation and reform.

The study's principal recommendations are:

- That more extensive and representative research of the impact of TWDs on surviving members should be conducted
- The future research should systematically sample TWDs in all industries while ensuring adequate representation of the four industries that account for approximately 70% of all notified TWDs (construction, forestry & fishing, mining & agriculture, and transport & Storage). That this research should employ qualitative methods to deepen understanding of the impact of TWDs on families and responses to it, and quantitative methods to establish representativeness and causal relationships. In addition to in-depth interviews, participants should be asked to complete a questionnaire survey measuring key variables;
- That the research should also include interviews with peak organisations to better understand the protocols for responding to TWDs and their interaction with surviving families. In depth interviews should be conducted with senior managers from major employers, officials of trade unions, representatives of government authorities, the Coroner's Court and the Police.
- Finally that the findings should be disseminated and discussed with policy makers and peak organisations to facilitate policy and practice reforms.

On behalf of our Group, I highly commend the research team who maintained utmost privacy of the participants, while getting to the essence of the issues many in our group face.

Our view is that until full research is done into these issues, we will still face complicated bureaucratic processing without having as a minim the same rights as victims of crime (covered by the NSW Victims of Crime Act), and Australia will not pay true attention to those who need better support in these circumstances.

It is also our view that unless and until families' are allowed to have a representative participate in the full investigation and prosecution processes, we will continue to suffer from deliberate information withholding, causing long term additional pain and suffering on top of the dreadful loss.

ACTION FOR YOU	If you'd like a copy of the full report , please contact Wendy on 0418 698 553,
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6. WORKCOVER NSW FACILITATION OF INTERAGENCY MEETINGS

Each quarter, WorkCover NSW hold a meeting attended by themselves, NSW Coroner's Court, NSW State Coroner's Coronial Information and Support Program (CISP), the Industrial Court, the NSW Police and ourselves. The purpose of the meeting is to share experiences and improve processes for families.

WorkCover NSW has a new WorkCover NSW's Coordinator Counselling and Liaison - Leonie Jacques - who may be reached on 1800 806 626.

7. PERSONNEL

As most know, I "retired" from the CFMEU in February 2011, and I am now concentrating my efforts on the Group. Currently I am working for our Group for 2 paid days per week.

Andreia is currently on maternity leave (under the new Federal Government scheme paid by Centrelink) and hoping to get back into our projects as soon as she thinks it's feasible. She will continue to work for 1

paid day per week (I say “paid” for the actual days we get paid, but of course we work far more hours than those paid LOL).

If you hadn't heard, Andreia has had a lovely little baby boy - Jacob - unfortunately he hasn't been well over the past few weeks. She is doing it tough, as she is still getting over the loss of her father last year as well. If you could drop her a line or perhaps send a card, that would be great - her address is Andreia Jones, 23 Becky Avenue, North Rocks NSW 2151 - phone 0433 249 085, email corey_makayla@optusnet.com.au.

Cheryl Romer, our Convenor, is still available for anyone to phone and have a chat - she is generally the first person people speak to in our group. Cheryl's number is 0420 865 450.

Committee Member Natalie Asekona has relocated up to Tamworth. She is very keen to talk to other members who are perhaps in country NSW, or just to catch up on your own progress. To get in touch, call her on 0478 172 790 or email nat1980@live.com.au. She has completed her training in aged care so has a busy working-life as well, but I am sure she would like you to get in touch.

ACTION FOR YOU	If you feel you can contribute in any way with our projects please contact us. Alternatively, if you would like us to undertake other projects, again let me know.
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8. ADVOCACY TRAINING AND NEW SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BY OUR GROUP

From experiences with dealing with many varied families in our group, it has become very clear that many families need a voice and an advocate, other than a solicitor, when dealing with Authorities in the post-death processes we have to go through.

We have found many family members are vulnerable and not in a position of strength (following a tragic death) to be able to adequately advocate on their own behalf. While most employ solicitors, even so, sometimes they need an advocate to be able to know and receive their rights (as few as they are) at a minimum.

As such, and even though I've worked in an advocate's role for many years, I propose to you all that I undertake a *Advocacy Course* on behalf of the group, to be able to take emotion out of the equation when advocating issues families undergo, and to better articulate the needs of each individual family concerned.

The *Workplace Tragedy Family Support Group Advocacy Service* **will be a completely free service to families provided by the group**, and should commence after I have completed training next year.

By the same token we are not solicitors, and therefore would not be able to advocate on legal matters (clearly lawyers are appropriate for this). But there are many times a family needs a strong voice on their side when dealing with the bureaucracy they must go through, even in some cases when dealing with solicitors. Most families at the time do not even know their rights.

ACTION FOR YOU	I therefore ask that you email me your approval for me to: A, Undertake the course B Undertake this role in our Group. If you have any questions, or if you would like to undertake such a role yourself , please call me on 0418 698 553.
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9. GROUP COUNSELLING WORKSHOPS

Last week we held our very first workshop for family members following a work-related death. This was requested by a woman who had lost her husband last year, and was finding herself lost in dealing with

family and other matters. The initial workshop topic was *COMMUNICATION IN FAMILIES*. We were able to look at various strategies and issues around this topic.

The company running our Group Workshops - Effective Australia (an accredited rehabilitation company) - provide two psychologists to attend the meeting. They have offered to follow through with the family concerned to register a complaint about this breach of trust by the psychologist.

We must sincerely thank Effective for undertaking our project - they have provided their services at a heavily discounted rate, because of the true morality and compassion of the company Director, and the Company's overall integrity and understanding of work-related critical injuries. This is reflected in all of the services they provide, and we are sincerely thankful.

One of the issues raised at the meeting was the "ethical" practice of a psychologist who, on behalf of the employer, visited a family to offer support. The family involved felt safe and readily expressed all of the issues they were facing. They then later discovered that their discussions with this psychologist were included in the company's investigation report. In our view, this breaches the *Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, and is an abuse of power.

Another family had major problems with communication with their solicitor who treated them disdainfully and was not keeping them informed, nor giving them the dignity they deserve. We are investigating this further.

At the first workshop, mostly we discussed **family communication breakdowns** - some families are blessed and maintain good relationships with their siblings/in laws/children. However, we also noted that if relations weren't good in the first place (i.e. prior to the death) they often deteriorated further after a work-related death.

Other families faced a myriad of problems - including the often-held expectation for someone closely affected to **move on (this is unrealistic in our view - it's a matter of learning how to live with the loss and can not be time-limited)**. From what we've seen the pain never goes away, so we need strategies to deal with it.

Some families also have to deal with dysfunctional children and relatives after the death - these of course exacerbate their loss.

In summing up we talked about the following difficulties and strategies

Difficulties	Strategies discussed
Asserting our needs	By Implementing boundaries / perhaps writing a letter (whether you send it or not) to clarify your feelings
Dealing with different grief reactions E.g. anger, depression, self-blame, guilt, difficult behavior, drugs, alcohol, isolating oneself from social interaction	By understanding grief and learning effective communication methods (non-blaming vocabulary)
Supporting each other through grief	By talking; writing; participating in support groups
Living arrangements	By considering the possibility of relocating - consider your own needs now. However this should not be considered within the first six months after the death.
Avoidance / withdrawal/isolation	This may be alleviated by writing down your thoughts and feelings, looking for quest for justice - empowerment = initiating positive change

These series of workshops will include (but are not limited to):

WORKSHOP 1 COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS HELD 24/9/11

WORKSHOP 2 AM I NORMAL

TO BE HELD 3RD SAT OCTOBER

- WORKSHOP 3 COPING STRATEGIES
- WORKSHOP 4 CARING FOR YOUR SELF
- WORKSHOP 5 DEALING WITH AUTHORITIES
- WORKSHOP 6 UNDERSTANDING & ACCEPTANCE

ACTION FOR YOU	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You can attend all or any of the current sessions. Let me know if you are interested 2. Perhaps you can share strategies you have learned yourself. It always helps to talk to others in this situation. 3. Let me know if you are interested in participating in this set of workshops, or perhaps in a future series (commencing possibly around March/April next year). 4. Also please let me know as urgent if you can come along to our next meeting on October 15. Email me on wendylark@workplacetragedy.com or phone me On 0418 698 553.
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10. OTHER CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIVITIES

Currently our campaigns include:

- Council Campaigns - to ensure memorial plaques are placed in every shire in NSW
- Campaign to improve post-death processes in NSW - working with WorkCover, NSW Coroner's Police & Industrial Courts on a regular basis
- Campaign for NSW families in this situation to have **the same rights as Victims of Crime** - including involvement in the investigation and prosecution processes
- Campaign to Federal Government for **uniform collection, recording and reporting of work-related deaths across Australia**
- Continuous campaign to raise awareness on jobs in all industries about the impact of a work-related death on families, and promote safer behaviours.

ACTION FOR YOU	<p>Perhaps you can contribute to these campaigns.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maybe take on the job of letter writing to Councils across NSW and keep track of our progress. 2. Perhaps you would like more involvement with WorkCover Interagency meetings we have, or we also have chat meetings with them on a quarterly basis if you'd like to come along). 3. When we develop and commence the campaign for families to have the same rights as victims of crime, I will let you know what you can do. 4. Perhaps we can develop a group letter asking the Federal Government to install uniform collection, recording and reporting of all deaths (including dust disease, transport, commuting & mining deaths - many of which aren't included in the current figures. 5. And if you'd like to come as a de-briefer when either Andreia, Cheryl or I go to jobs and conferences, you are very, very welcome (if you don't feel confident enough yourself). 6. We are also looking for someone to be the official follow-up person when
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	<p>someone new logs onto our website. I need someone to be able to answer the email, provide our condolences, and offer our support. Ideally this would be to meet with them, and just provide a phone call occasionally.</p> <p>7. Is anyone good at accounts? I am currently having difficulty doing the accounts as well as other projects. Perhaps we could meet and you could take over the recording/reporting of our finances?</p> <p>8. Construction Industry Dinner Organisation - this is an enormous job which takes from February to April to organise each year. If anyone has any experience with MS Excel or can send out letters and tickets to those attending, please let me know</p>
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11. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

We are still trying to get the plaque for Bob Romer to be inlaid in the city. Sadly the CFMEU Delegate we were dealing with, Tom Grover, from Grocon, died a few weeks ago, and we have still got to follow up.

Another family has requested an individual plaque for their lost loved one and we are also following this up.

Another activity is the proposal for a **LIFE QUILT BANNER**. This proposed project requires each family member (if they want to) to prepare a single patch of a specific size, which includes a photo (scanned on) of their loved one (if they want), or just to design a patch symbolising your ongoing love for your lost loved one.

This could be a healing project to pay tribute to those who have been lost, but also perhaps a healing mechanism, where families can get together (if they like) to sew the Life Quilt together. This has been inspired by a very successful quilting project in South Australia. I think they got some funding from WorkCover SA (for the materials and scanning equipment). We still have some investigation to do in terms of practicalities of such a project.

With the finished result we could put it on display on **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING**, display it in various galleries and in NSW Parliament, to ensure people learn about the importance of safety, and do not forget about the impact of a work-related death on families.

Please let Andreia know if you would be interested in participating in this project. It is a future project, perhaps commencing next year under Andreia's leadership.

ACTION FOR YOU	<p>Think about this project and how you can create an appropriate tribute in the form of a quilt square.</p> <p>If you have quilting experience, let Andreia know (on 0433 249 085) and perhaps you can help Andreia with the design and preparation of the project.</p> <p>I personally can only do horse-stitches, but I would probably be good at scanning photos and things like that.</p>
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12. REGISTRATION STATUS

We are still in the process of registering as an incorporated association. I will advise everyone when this has been completed. I am also arranging to go and see the Tax Office in the next couple of weeks, to register as a not-for-profit organisation, register as an employer and for BAS, and to find out the correct process of us getting *Deductible Gift Recipient Status*. Our counterpart organisation in Victoria has already achieved this status. Will let you know how we go in future. We will of course require group insurance to cover those of us who go to job sites and meetings on behalf of the group.

13. MEMBERSHIP OF OUR GROUP

As supporters of our group, because we are going through the registration process to become an incorporated association, I would ask that each of you please complete the attached Membership Form and return it by mail to Unit 10/13-17 Coast Avenue, Cronulla NSW 2230. Alternatively please complete and scan the Membership form, and email it to me as an attachment to wendylark@workplacetragedy.com.

PLEASE DO NOT DATE THE FORM - WE WILL COMPLETE THE DATE FOLLOWING OUR REGISTRATION.

Under our new Constitution, Joining would cost \$1.00 and the Annual Membership Fee is \$2.00 pa.

However, we have decided to waive this (and raise money to cover the joining and membership fees from paid speaking engagements) as the collection would be too difficult for us to maintain. However, if you would like to make a donation of \$3 via EFT, please ensure you put your name in the *Transaction Description*.

Our bank account details are:

BSB **062 194**

A/C **1027 5898**

A/C NAME **WORKPLACE TRAGEDY FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP**

It is very important to us that you fill in the form (whether you are a supporter or person who has experienced a work-related death in the family). It will allow us to have a stronger voice when advocating for families' rights following a work-related death. **All names and details will be kept completely confidential**, and included on our membership register.

Additionally, if you have any friends or colleagues who you think may wish to become a supporter, please encourage them to do so.

Well that's about it folks. Heaps more has happened, but this is all I can think of at the moment.

Please feel free to contact any of us by email or phone - **even if it's just to let us know you still support us and what we are doing** - helping to ensure that none of our loved ones have died in vain.

Best regards

WENDY LARK

Facilitator 0418 698 553 wendylark@workplacetragedy.com

ANDREIA JONES

Coordinator 0433 249 085 corey_makayla@optusnet.com.au

CHERYL ROMER

Convenor 0420 865 450 cherylromer2000@yahoo.com

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF ASSOCIATION

- WORKPLACE TRAGEDY INC

(incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*)

I,
[full name of applicant]

of
[address]

.....
[occupation]

Email:

Telephone:

hereby apply to become a member of the above-named incorporated association. In the event of my admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the constitution of the association for the time being in force.

.....
Signature of applicant

THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF WORKPLACE TRAGEDY

PROPOSER

I,
[full name]

a member of the association, nominate the applicant for membership of the association.

.....
Signature of proposer Date

SECONDER

I,
[full name]

a member of the association, second the nomination of the applicant for membership of the association.

.....
Signature of seconder Date

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKPLACE TRAGEDY INC
(a family support group)

The association's main aims and objectives are:

- a) To provide comfort and support to those persons who have been affected by a work-related tragedy;
- b) To improve industrial safety by raising awareness of the impact of a work-related death on families;
- c) To ease the impact of a work-related tragedy on family members, and to assist in reducing unnecessary pain and suffering by families following a work-related tragedy.
- d) To assist persons to cope with a work-related tragedy
- e) To educate members, and to encourage their participation in forums and with other groups regarding work-related occupational health and safety, workers compensation and work-related tragedies.
- f) To work with, or otherwise combine with, any association, having objects similar in whole or in part to the objects of this Association.
- g) To hold, purchase, lease, sell, mortgage or otherwise deal in property.
- h) To enter into contracts and agreements for the purpose of furthering directly or indirectly any one or more of these objects.
- i) To raise funds for the purpose of carrying on the objects of Workplace Tragedy.