

# Government Blamed for 'Inaction' as Fatality Toll Rises

The Federal Government has been accused of 'dragging its feet' on work health and safety reform, as new Safe Work Australia statistics reveal the national work-related fatality has increased for the first time in more than a decade.

SWA's Key WHS statistics Australia report shows that while the fatality rate has decreased by 53 per cent since a 2007 peak, 183 workers died during 2019, 38 more than in 2018, with the biggest increases coming in transport (58 compared to 38) and across NSW (61 compared to 47).

The data also shows the rate of claims through workers' compensation for serious injuries increasing in agriculture, manufacturing, transport and logistics as well as health, community, and personal services.

The ACTU has since accused the Federal Government of failing to act on the recommendations of a 2018 review of national WHS legislation which recommended industrial manslaughter provisions.

Recommendations from the national review of the model WHS laws also included regulations governing psychological injury and ill health which would mean factors contributing to mental illness in the workplace would be treated like physical hazards.

ACTU assistant secretary Liam O'Brien said the Government had caused the increased fatality toll through this inaction.

"Every worker has the right to go to work and come home safe. Sadly, this data shows the appalling toll of Government inaction on workplace health and safety."

"The Morrison Government has been sitting on recommendations from the national WHS Review for 2 years. That inaction has made Australian workplaces less safe, and it has caused the first increase in workplace deaths in more than 10 years."

The ACTU noted that the increase in transport fatalities likely downplays the "horrific rates" of injury and death for delivery workers in the gig economy as many work-related deaths which occur on our roads are counted as traffic accidents, rather than workplace fatalities.

"The rates of injury and death in the transport sector, in no small part due to the appalling conditions faced by delivery workers in the gig economy, is a national disaster. More than one worker a week died in transport alone in 2019," O'Brien said.

Key findings from SWA's report include:

183 people were fatally injured at work in 2019 machinery operators and drivers had the highest number of fatalities by occupation (72 fatalities) in 2019 there were a total of 114,435 serious workers' compensation claims in Australia in 2018-19 the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry had the highest worker fatality rate in 2019 body stressing was the leading cause of serious workers' compensation claims in 2018-19, accounting for 36% of all serious claims vehicle collisions accounted for 43% of worker fatalities in 2019. Original

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