



OH&S Workshops - Know your obligations

Attention all shearing contractors operating in Victoria:

The SCAA recently held a FREE practical OH&S Workshops. With more planned for 2007, these Workshops are a "MUST" to attend. As an employer there are strict laws requiring you and the workplace owner to understand your obligations with regard to Health & Safety in the shearing shed. The penalties for not providing a safe workplace include jail for those employers and workplace owners who flout with worker safety issues.

The recent **Hamilton Workshop** was a great opportunity for you to quickly and easily understand what your, the farmer's and your staff's OH&S obligations are for running a shearing contracting business.

This informative and practical workshop cover:

- Your OHS responsibilities in regard to workplace hazards.
- Recent changes to the OHS laws.
- How to improve safety and reduce your costs.
- Receive a practical and information guide to OHS in the shearing shed.

This knowledge is not "handy information" - it is essential knowledge that you must understand and continuously practice in the workplace that you control.

The Hamilton Workshop was the fourth in the series practical workshops on OH&S in shearing sheds that have been run throughout Victoria over the past four months.

The Workshops were funded by the Victorian Workcover Authority and were run in conjunction with the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and the Australian Workers Union (AWU), as part of the Victorian Workplace Injury Insurance Fund - Wool Harvesting Improvement Plan Project. Thanks go to Frank Sutherland, Steve Cowley and Bindi Bowman for their time and effort to put this very important program together. Thanks also to Prime Super for their ongoing support of the SCAA and the shearing industry in general.

Over coming months more OH&S workshops are planned, so we encourage you to regularly visit www.scaa.org.au where we will regularly post updated Workshop dates, times and venues.

To celebrate 80 years of support to the shearing industry, The Shearing Contractor's Association of Australia in conjunction with Australian Wool Innovation Limited, presented:

SHEARHARVEST2007

The SCAA in conjunction with Australian Wool Innovation (AWI), Western Institute of TAFE NSW, AWEX and Prime Super conducted two shearing Industry Open days called Shearharvest 2007. The open days were a perfect opportunity for Shearing Contractors, their customers and staff or anyone they know who to keep abreast of the latest developments and standards in the shearing the industry.

Topics and demonstrations included were:

- Shearing: - the 5 pillars of Shearing (World record holder) - Dwayne Black
- Woolhandling: Maximising grower returns in the woolshed through better Woolhandling
- New Technologies in Shearing: Australian Wool Innovation (AWI)
- Shearing shed OHS: Workcover NSW's Rural team.
- Shearing and Woolhandler training programs: Australian Wool Innovation (AWI)
- Shearing and Wool Harvesting Traineeships: TAFE NSW
- Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX) structure and new woolclasser training resources.

A special thanks to all those who attended and to those who assisted in the organisation of this important event.

We at SCAA look forward to organising more informative and practical events in the future.

The future of wool harvesting is all about maximising efficiency in the harvesting process.

Thankyou for coming to see what the future has in store.



Employees Vs Subcontractors

The issue of Shearing contractors engaging shearers and shed staff as subcontractors has been discussed on previously on numerous occasions. It appears that the practice keeps appearing in certain districts and seems to be fueled by shearers moving between contractors with the story "so-and-so employed me as a subcontractor for the past 6 sheds, so therefore it must be ok".

Unfortunately for those unwitting employers who are currently pursuing the practice, they will pay a high price for their error: They will have to pay their workers compensation premium on all monies paid to the "subcontractor" with interest and depending on the circumstances, usually a fine.

What laws prevent the practice?

The laws preventing shearing shed staff from being genuine contractors is state based legislation around workers compensation (and payroll tax). For this discussion, the issue is not Federal laws and the ATO, rather, it is about the States receiving their fair share of workers compensation premiums (and payroll tax). The Independent Contractors Bill (Federal Law) was passed in December 2006 and has added some confusion to the situation and has led some people to believe that circumstances have changed. The situation has not changed as the legislation does not override the State laws that control workers compensation (and payroll tax).

How likely are you to be caught?

While each state will vary, most states will audit all workers compensation policy holders at least every 5 years. It is not a question of "if" but "when".



Elections



The SCAA's Committee of Management election process commenced in November 2006 when nominations for the Committee of Management were called for by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). Eleven nominations were received by the closing date 22nd December. These 11 nominations were declared elected as no voting process was required given that there were less nominations than the 12 positions available.

The election nomination process needed to go through a second round in an attempt to fill the 12th position. This position was filled by Doug Millhouse from Murray Bridge SA.

The final phase of the process will be the internal election of Office Holders within in the Committee of Management. This will be completed in the coming weeks.

The new office holders of the SCAA are Ivan Letchford, Frank Sutherland, Peter Kimber, John McCrae, Austin Grigg, Michael Schofield, Warren Kimber, David Kemp, John Evans, Jeff Connell, Doug Millhouse and Jason Letchford.

Industrial Awards

As you will all be aware both the Federal Pastoral Industry Award and the Woolclasser's Award changed on 1st December in light of the newly formed, Fair Pay Commission's Decision to increase the minimum wage by \$27.36. The Federal Government changes to Industrial laws in March 2006 have left the whole Wage changing process in confusion and disarray.

The result was to leave the industry scrambling to make decisions and calculations as to what effect the change the basic wage made to wage rates in awards. Made difficult, given the ambiguity around increases to allowances and loadings.

The confusion around the Federal Pastoral Award was alleviated when the National Farmers Federation (NFF) and the SCAA agreed to the Australian Workers Unions (AWU's) application to vary the Federal Pastoral Industry Award by using the same formula that was been used prior to the new Workplace laws.

At the time of print the Australian Industrial Relations Commission had still not heard the application, however we do know that the changes will become effective as from 1st December 2006. Therefore for all practical purposes, although employers are currently not legally obliged to pay the increase, they are obliged to back pay the increase as at 1st December 2006. The AWU's application will increase Federal Pastoral Industry Award rates by approximately 5.2%.

AGM

The 81st Annual General Meeting of Members for the Shearing Contractors Association of Australia (SCAA) was held in Sydney on 13 January 2007. Minutes from the meeting will be posted on the SCAA website - in the member's area. Should you require a paper copy, please call the secretary.

The meeting was followed by the annual AGM Dinner. In the tradition of trying a new venue each year, this year's diners enjoyed the spectacular views from the Centre Point Tower Restaurant.

SCAA is proudly sponsored by



The importance of Membership



The SCAA is continuously working to look after the interests of members and consequently the industry as whole. Currently the Association is working with Michael Lawrance to secure funding for "return-to-Work" projects for injured shearing industry workers from both the Victorian and NSW Workers compensation authorities.

Over recent years the SCAA has played a significant role in the way premiums are calculated in NSW and as a result have saved members hundreds of thousands of dollars in injury claim "adjustments" to shearing contractor's policies. This, along with other projects such as the Back-harness rebate and OH&S Workshops, the return-to-work project and the establishment of a permanent OH&S resource for the industry, are further examples of the importance of your membership in the SCAA. It is through members premiums that the SCAA can lobby government bodies, that results in the improvements to your industry and cost savings to all shearing contractors.

Safety Clutch Checking Device

A new innovation long overdue in the Shearing Shed is a Clutch Checking Device. Invented by Luke Hall of Australian Shearing Supplies this device is a quick and simple way of checking the tension setting of the clutch in the short gut.

Whilst servicing shearing machines, Luke noticed that clutches were rarely correctly tensioned. Either becoming worn and ineffectual from a previous lockup or have been over tensioned and therefore becoming a danger to the shearer.

To date there has been no "off the shelf" checking tool available with people having to make do with pot luck, or an expensive mechanics tension wrench which in turn was difficult to get a definitive reading from.

All the tools are calibrated to the Victorian Work Safe recommended setting of 26 in/lb.

There is no need to remove the short gut from the machine, just simply walk down the board and check each machine; the operation takes approximately fifteen seconds per stand, a small price to pay for peace of mind for the contractor.

Regional Meeting Dates

The other SCAA regional meeting will be at :

Ballarat:	Friday 25 May 2007	Ballarat Golf Club
Moama	Saturday 26 May 2007	Border Inn Hotel
Narrandera	Saturday 16 June 2007	Ex- Serviceman's club
Adelaide	Saturday 23 June 2007	Earl of Aberdeen Hotel

A special thanks to Ray Sherman who has kindly contributed his excellent photos to both Sheepo and the SCAA website.

Shearing Back Harness Rebate Project

Through the efforts of Frank Sutherland, the SCCA are actively encouraging shearing shed owners to take up the opportunity to permanently install Shearing Back Harnesses above all shearing stands in their shearing shed.

The project is part of the Victorian Workcover authority's Workplace Injury Insurance Fund - Wool Harvesting Improvement Plan (The OH&S Workshops are another part of the programme). The Plan has been allocated \$200,000 in total of which \$50,000 will be spent on a \$50 rebate to the shed owners for each of the back harness supports that they purchase through the programme.

The goal here is to have 1,000 additional back harnesses permanently installed in Victorian shearing sheds. The programme will result in reduced back injury for the shearer, reduced electrocution and fall from heights risk (when temporarily installing back harnesses each time they visit a shed). Furthermore, the programme will also reduce Workers Compensation costs for the contractor and growers as well as reducing productivity losses that result from injured workers.



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Would you like to contribute to Sheepo?

We welcome members contributions to Sheepo. So please forward any information you would like to see in future editions. Fax to 02 9908 3862 or email to secretary@scaa.org.au

Shearing Summit

In November 2007 the first National Shearing Safety Summit was held in Melbourne. The summit was the first time that representatives from Employer, Union, Farmer and Workcover Authorities at national and state levels, along with representatives from and New Zealand bodies for shearing industry health and safety along with the New Zealand's Workers compensation authority have ever convened in the one room — to discuss Shearing safety and the cost of Workers compensation.

The safety summit was a starting point for OH&S and workers compensation issues to be aligned nationally so that 'best practices' can be adopted, resource duplication can be reduced, fairness issues be resolved and in summary, produce better outcomes for all parties involved.

CLUTCH CHECKING TOOL



- Quickly and easily checks the safety clutch in the short gut for the correct setting.
- A must for anybody who employs shearers.
- Essential for the pre-shearing shed safety check.
- Simple to use.

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