

# Media Release

**Ms Ingrid Stitt MP**  
Minister for Workplace Safety  
Minister for Early Childhood



Thursday, 15 October 2020

## **WEST GATE BRIDGE TRAGEDY REMEMBERED ON 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

The Victorian Government today acknowledges the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victoria's worst industrial accident, the collapse of the West Gate Bridge.

At 11:50am on 15 October 1970, two years into the construction of the bridge, a 112 metre span gave way and fell into the Yarra River, killing 35 workers and leaving 18 others seriously injured.

As in previous years, both the Australian and Victorian flags on top of the West Gate Bridge will be lowered to half-mast from 7am to 7pm, to honour those who lost their lives in the tragedy and those whose lives it changed forever.

Many safety initiatives now entrenched in Victoria's construction industry, including standard grief counselling for workers after major incidents, can be traced back to changes made in the wake of the terrible events on this day 50 years ago.

Important reforms to our occupational health and safety laws have been driven by the survivors of the collapse, together with the union movement, who have advocated to make sure we deliver safer workplaces for all Victorians.

The West Gate Memorial Park, which aims to increase awareness of workplace accidents and to promote safe work environments, was opened in 2004 on the site of the bridge collapse.

It incorporates the original memorial plaque listing the names of the 35 victims, that was paid for and erected by bridge workers in 1978.

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions a special commemoration to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragedy at the memorial site in Douglas Parade, Spotswood will be scheduled at a later date.

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt**

*"This anniversary is a tragic reminder of how dangerous going to work can be and why it's so critical to constantly renew our commitment to safety in every Victorian workplace."*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Roads Ben Carroll**

*"Today we acknowledge and pay tribute to the workers who lost their lives and those who risked their own safety to help however they could – safety on our worksites must always be our priority."*

### **Quote attributable to Member for Williamstown Melissa Horne**

*"The collapse of the bridge has had a lasting impact on my community – these men were killed and injured while simply doing their jobs. Every worker should make it home and we must continue to make our workplaces safer."*