

Media Release

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FOCUSING ON WORKPLACE SAFETY AND PREVENTING FATALITIES

The Andrews Labor Government is reminding employers of the serious consequences for failing to meet health and safety obligations, following the tragic deaths of 65 people due to work related injury or disease in Victorian workplaces last year.

This followed the deaths of 70 people in Victorian workplaces in 2019.

The Labor Government's tough new workplace manslaughter laws have been in place since July 2019 and include significant fines and jail time for employers responsible for workplace fatalities – holding employers who don't prioritise the safety of their workforce to account.

Under the landmark laws, companies can be fined more than \$16 million and individuals face up to 25 years in jail if they fail to meet their occupational health and safety obligations.

The change was one of many reforms to workplace health and safety in Victoria last year, including the creation of a specialised Fatalities Investigation Team responsible for investigating workplace deaths and additional WorkSafe construction inspectors to complete more inspections than ever before.

The criteria defining a workplace death has also been changed to ensure that loss of every life in a Victorian workplace gets the recognition it deserves.

For the first time, deaths from work-related transport incidents – industrial disease, criminal acts, and medical or suicide incidents – have been added to the fatality toll.

This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of deaths reported by WorkSafe, with 20 workers dying in transport incidents and 13 people dying from a disease contracted at their workplace being included for the first time in 2020.

These figures shine a light on the true extent of the workplace health and safety risks Victorian workers face, and the ongoing need for tough laws to prevent these tragedies.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

"One workplace death is one too many, and the loss of 65 workers in 2020 is absolutely devastating."

"We're reforming workplace safety by introducing workplace manslaughter, hiring extra WorkSafe inspectors and implementing tougher penalties for those who flout the law."

"We all have a responsibility to make health and safety our top priority and ensure every worker returns home from work at the end of the day."