

Media Release

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COUNTING THE HUMAN COST OF WORKPLACE TRAGEDY

Families devastated by the loss of a loved one at work are using their stories to urge Victorians to make safety a priority and think about the lasting impact of a workplace tragedy.

In 2021, 66 lives were lost in workplace incidents and a further six workers have died this year.

Last year's annual workplace fatality toll was seven fewer than the previous year, when 73 people died as a result of work related incidents, medical conditions or disease.

Among those who know too well the enduring trauma of losing a loved one at work is Simonette Randall, whose 21-year-old son Damien Taifer was tragically killed in a truck crash at West Gippsland in May 2017.

Simonette last spoke to Damien the day before he died when the water truck he was driving rolled while travelling down a steep descent near the town of Noojee.

Damien's employer was later convicted and fined after it was found the poor condition of the truck's brakes was the primary cause of the crash.

The 2021 workplace fatalities show manufacturing was the state's deadliest industry with 14 fatalities, followed by construction with 13 deaths. There were nine fatalities in agriculture, forestry and fishing for the second year in a row.

All but three of the 66 people who lost their lives last year were men while more than two-thirds were aged 45 or older. The youngest, an eight-year-old boy, was among three members of the public included in the toll.

Melbourne's south-east had ten of the year's fatalities, followed by the inner north with nine. The Barwon South West region had the highest rate of deaths in regional Victoria, with nine fatalities followed by Gippsland with six.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

"Workplace fatalities are preventable, so to lose another 66 lives is absolutely devastating for the countless others who knew them."

"The powerful stories of those left behind show no one is immune from the devastating consequences of workplace trauma – and why health and safety at work needs to be everyone's business. We must all redouble our efforts to avoid these tragedies and put safety at the forefront of every workplace."

Quotes attributable to WorkSafe Chief Executive Colin Radford

"It's hard to fathom the pain and suffering the families and friends of those workers who lost their lives last year endured as they spent their first festive season without a loved one by their side."

"WorkSafe is committed to working towards a future where no one loses their life at work, including by taking strong enforcement action against those ignoring their health and safety obligations."