



## Safety Ownership in the Australian Workplace and its Application to Road Safety

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## Work Related Road Safety

- Total cost work related road incidents in Aust approx \$1-1.5 billion pa (Wheatley, 1997)
- Average total insurance cost of a fleet incident is approx \$28,000 (Davey & Banks, 2005)
- Most common mechanism for Aust compensated fatalities - 35% (ASCC, 2006)



## Work Health and Safety Act 1995 (QLD)

- Statutory obligations to provide safe workplaces, safe plant & equipment, safe systems of work & safety info, instruction, training & supervision
- 'A workplace is any place where work is, or is to be, performed by a worker or a person conducting a business or undertaking'. This includes 'a vehicle supplied by an employer for use by a worker in the performance of work'
- Duties of care to workers & third parties are shared by everyone



## Safety Ownership – Position

- Department & authority linked to safety practices  
(Barrett, Haslam, Lee & Ellis, 2005)
- Management practices associated with low incident rates:
  - prompt action in response to reported hazards
  - comprehensive incident investigation
  - remedial action taken to reduce the chances of further incidents occurring
  - frequent safety communication with employees  
(Bentley & Haslam, 2001)
- Job description & authority may restrict ability to execute safety management

*Hypothesis: WRRS practices & processes will be more developed in areas that align with the competencies & responsibilities relevant to the position of the primary safety owner*



## Safety Ownership – Shared

- Safety critical positions in construction include:
  - MD/CEO, Senior Manager, Operations Manager, Project Manager, OHS Manager, Site Manager, Union Rep., Supervisor & Worker
- Many competencies critical to OHS management in construction e.g.:
  - Identifying, assessing & determining appropriate controls for risks
  - Monitoring, reporting & evaluating safety program effectiveness
  - Applying workers comp. & case management principles
  - Providing OHS leadership & management

(Dingsdag, Biggs, Sheahan, 2007; Dingsdag, Biggs, Sheahan & Cipolla, 2006)
- Sharing safety responsibilities may allow org's to match employees competencies & position responsibilities to managing WRRS practices

*Hypothesis: WRRS practices & processes will be more developed in org's where ownership of safety responsibilities is shared across many of the safety critical positions.*



## Research Design

- 2 Australian organisations
  - Org. A fleet > 200 vehicles
  - Org. B fleet > 2,000 vehicles
- 2 methods of data collection
  - Audits to assess WRRS practices & processes involved reviewing org documents and interviewing 3 managers from each org
  - Interviews to explore ownership conducted with 6 employees from each org



## Audit Results

0 = No practice in place, 1 = Limited practice in place  
2 = Moving towards reduced harm, 3 = Moving towards zero harm

WRRS Practices	Organisation A	Organisation B
Policy	0	2
Selection	1	1
Induction	1	2
Training	1	2
Performance	0	2
Journey planning	1	2
Vehicle selection	2	2
Incident monitor	2	3



## Interview Results

- WRRS responsibilities not formally stated in Job Descriptions
- Organisation A
  - Limited sharing of identifying & determining appropriate risk controls & providing safety leadership (**Fleet Manager**, Risk Management Officer, Supervisor & Driver)
  - Although Fleet Manager was passionate about WRRS, large amount of work necessitated additional support
  - Practices varied greatly btwn Depts consistent with Supervisor support
- Organisation B
  - Ownership shared for all categories of safety tasks (General Manager, **OH&S Manager** & Coordinator, Business Unit Manager, Fleet Officer, Supervisor & Driver)



## Discussion

- Position of primary safety owner was related to WRRS practices
  - Org A (Fleet Manager) most developed in vehicle selection & vehicle incident data
- Shared safety ownership associated with better WRRS practices
  - Advanced WRRS practices in Org B may be effective integration of safety KSAs gained through sharing the ownership of safety responsibilities
  - Both org's - limited selection and no HR ownership



## Application of Findings

- Increase awareness of WH&S responsibilities
- Include managing road safety in job descriptions



## Future Research

- Identify what WRRS management tasks must be performed competently by those occupying safety critical positions
- Consider size of fleet
- Consider OH&S v's WRRS



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