



The first **International Association of Labour Inspection** Conference in the Pacific Region
Adelaide, South Australia 12-14 March

Communiqué

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LABOUR INSPECTION 2008 CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

Pacific region labour inspectors are to receive greater technical assistance from Australia and New Zealand as part of a commitment to greater international sharing of expertise and resources.

This was one of several key outcomes of the **2008 Conference of the International Association of Labour Inspection (IALI)**, held in Adelaide, Australia from March 12 to 14.

The gathering of more than 200 delegates from 40 nations also made significant progress towards adopting an international Code of Integrity to govern labour inspection, and also considered ways to benchmark their performance to ensure effectiveness.

The Conference and series of events was hosted by IALI and SafeWork SA (the South Australian government's OHS and industrial relations authority), in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and all OHS authorities of Australia and New Zealand.

"It was pleasing to see such an ambitious agenda at both the conference proper and the preceding regional forums achieve their objectives," said IALI President, Michele Patterson.

The core themes of the Conference addressed 'alliances, ethics and influence', with the scene set by Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Workplace Relations, Julia Gillard, in her opening address:

"We need to work cooperatively to achieve reductions in work injury and improve safety through alliances on an international basis," Ms. Gillard said.

South Australia's Minister for Industrial Relations, Michael Wright, emphasised that safe and decent work is a basic human right that needed protecting.

"Effective labour inspection is the best means to ensure (this) through a strong and committed labour inspection system," the Minister told delegates.

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PACIFIC & SE ASIAN FORUMS

The Conference, the first to be held in the Pacific region, opened on Wednesday 12 March with regional forums addressing issues specific to the Pacific, South East Asia and Australia/New Zealand.

At the Pacific Forum, Australia, New Zealand and 11 Pacific island nations agreed to a set up a program of technical cooperation, to be coordinated by the South Australian OHS and industrial relations authority, SafeWork SA.

The next steps are to finalise funding and develop the formal partnership between IALI and the ILO programs in the region.

Gerd Albracht, the former Coordinator of the Labour Inspection Cluster with the ILO's 'SafeWork' programme emphasised that strengthening labour inspection is now recognised as a key component of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP), and outlined a strong commitment to the emerging Pacific Region.

"The total is worth more than the sum of its parts, " said Werner Blenk, the Director of the ILO's South Pacific Office.

"The success of the technical cooperation programmes will be achieved through working together with Government, IALI, ILO and constituents and integration into the ILO's DWCP's..."

The undertakings by the ILO and IALI were greeted warmly by Pacific nations, as was the help from Australia and New Zealand.

"We welcome that, and I know that there is a very serious commitment on the part of these two countries to give assistance," said Taakei Taoba, Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development on Kiribati.

"And it is also very important that the ILO... with its very proactive role in the Pacific region... it was heartening to hear them take on board some of the issues that were raised... to incorporate these initiatives into the Pacific country programs under the ILO as well."

The South East Asian Forum revealed how well advanced the ASEAN nations, through their ASEAN-OSHNET activities, are with their cooperation in areas such as labour inspection training.

However it also dealt with mechanisms to address specific issues of concern, which could best be progressed via Memoranda of Understanding between inspectorates including Australia and New Zealand

Key topics identified for inclusion in the MOU's included:

- The movement of high-risk plant across the region.
- Ensuring decent working conditions all along the supply chain for goods and services throughout South East Asia.
- Information sharing on workplace safety, through a compendium of best practice.

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AUST-NZ OHS FORUM

At their separate forum, Australia and New Zealand committed to enhancing their training and professional development framework under the guidance of the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities (HWSA), as well as discussing and agreeing to detailed plans for improving the effectiveness of harmonised OHS intervention campaigns across Australia and New Zealand.

In a momentous demonstration of cooperation, all jurisdictions in Australia committed their support for the draft Global Code of Integrity.

“The opening day with the regional forums was remarkable for the attendance, the enthusiasm, and the achievements,” said IALI President, Michele Patterson.

“There is a pressing need for synergies between labour inspectorates in this part of the world, and these forums energised that process.”

GLOBAL CODE OF INTEGRITY

The Australian endorsement of the Global Code of Integrity set the scene for discussion in the full IALI conference, which was told that the draft code already had the endorsement of the international business lobby.

“The code of ethics for labour inspection will contribute to economic wellbeing and social justice,” said the Chief Executive of Business New Zealand, Phil O’Reilly, representing the International Organisation of Employers.

“The rule of law and code of ethics are both important... to economic development and the success of nations,” he added.

The union movement sees strong, well-resourced labour inspection as complementary to its work.

In a joint presentation, Sari Sairanen and Lyle Hargrave of the Canadian Auto Workers Union and Igor Nossar of Australia’s Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union said a key strategy for effectiveness is to involve unions and employers in labour inspection policies and activities.

“There needs to be a willingness to be creative on how we can regulate the supply chain contract network...”

“Through tripartite cooperation we can address this issue at state, national and international levels,” they said.

Nick Edgerton, a research analyst with Australia’s AMP Capital Investors, told delegates that companies committed to safe and decent work are opening up promising growth opportunities, and labour inspection was a vital partner.

“Ethical labour inspection plays a vital role in building public trust and investor confidence in these organisations,” he said.

“Adoption of this code will be vital in enhancing the transparency and credibility of labour inspection,” said IALI President, Michele Patterson.

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“It will also raise awareness of the high standards of personal and professional behaviour required of labour inspectors worldwide, and in so doing will provide assurance to employers and employees of fair, impartial and professional dealings.”

The Global Code of Integrity will be presented to IALI's General Assembly in Geneva for final approval in June.

BENCHMARKING LABOUR INSPECTION

In probably the most ambitious objective of its agenda, the IALI Conference considered ways to appropriately and accurately benchmark the performance of labour inspection across the world.

The gathering was told that a need for benchmarking exists as a means of ensuring effectiveness and continuous improvement.

IALI's Senior Technical Advisor and former head of Norway's Labour inspectorate, Nils-Petter Wedege, outlined possible ways forward such as using the 'scoreboard approach'.

This was originally developed by the Nordic countries, and is now used by EU nations. Most recently, it was adapted for use in other parts of the world, such as by SafeWork SA in South Australia.

The session examined the range of tools and innovative approaches labour inspection can use to foster attitudinal change to OHS and influence good OHS practice.

Benchmarking therefore could be seen as helping create an environment in which inspectors' work is understood and valued.

“The challenge is how to shift from doing more to doing better... from compliance to influence,” said Mike Munnely of Workplace Services, New Zealand.

John Merritt of Victoria's WorkSafe agency advocated for the human perspective to be factored into this process.

“We are in the influencing and leveraging business...everybody cares about somebody else.

“As a modern regulator, we must use our regulatory powers in a constructive, accountable, transparent and effective manner,” Mr. Merritt explained.

Dr Eleftheria Lehmann, the General Director of Germany's *Landesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz NRW*, argued that a difficulty with benchmarking has traditionally been the focus on measures such as injury statistics, which are only compiled *after* the event.

She said effective benchmarking needs to take better account of the more positive outcomes of preventative measures.

“Traditional monitoring systems focus on deficits.

“Focussing on variables such as values, leadership, working conditions, networking and health can provide a basis for a framework of monitoring the quality of work,” Dr. Lehmann said.

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SUMMARY

The conference was held in the midst of a record breaking heatwave in Adelaide, however delegates enjoyed the finest South Australian hospitality culminating in the official dinner at the spectacular and picturesque D'Arenberg Winery, at McLaren Vale to Adelaide's south.

Site visits were also staged at the GM Holden auto assembly plant at Elizabeth and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation complex at Edinburgh, both in Adelaide's north; the Angas Zinc mine at Strathalbyn in the Adelaide Hills; the Yalumba winery in the Barossa Valley; and the award-winning Hospitality School of the Regency Institute of TAFE.

Together these experiences complemented the achievements and optimism expressed on the conference floor.

Werner Blenk, the ILO's South Pacific Director, was confident a solid foundation had been laid to enhance and expand the influence of labour inspection.

"When we put together all our energy, we can produce synergies that produce change on the ground.

"This conference is about participation and establishes a platform upon which we can build technical cooperation," Mr. Blenk said.

IALI President, Michele Patterson said while much work still remains ahead, the gathering was a significant one.

"The Adelaide IALI Conference will be remembered as a milestone in the development of cooperative labour inspection efforts in the Pacific, South East Asia and the Trans-Tasman.

"And more so, because it laid the foundations to transform labour inspection into an international profession through the Global Code of Integrity," Ms. Patterson said.

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