

**Submission to Agricultural Competitiveness Taskforce
Steve Taylor (Prompt Safety Solutions)**

As a private OSH consultant based in Dumbleyung in the Western Australian Great Southern Wheatbelt with around 10 years of OSH experience, I would like to put forward my submission regarding the inclusion of Safety Management as a vital planning tool into the Agricultural Competitiveness Taskforce White Paper. A Safety Management Plan (SMP) is not only a legislative requirement to reduce/eliminate injuries from the workplace; it increases the productivity and profitability of businesses. This is achieved by ensuring workers are properly trained, consulted, supervised and that they follow step by step safe working procedures to ensure all tasks are carried out systematically, efficiently and safely. This is becoming increasingly important as many rural workers are now seasonal, from other countries or have had little or no previous farming experience. Detailed Risk Assessments, Hazard Identification, Hazard control, training and monitoring systems used in other industries such as Mining have had enormous positive impacts on Safety and Health; and productivity.

In 2013 the Australian Mining industry had 10 fatalities- still far too high (Safe Work Australia). In Western Australia in 2012 the Mining industry had no fatalities. In 2013 there were 59 on farm fatalities in Australia (Australian Centre for Agricultural Health & Safety). I believe that this is a national concern that must be addressed. The personal impact and disruption caused through injuries and fatalities on Australian farms is significant. This is also reflected in the mental health of farmers and rural workers with suicide rates far greater than the general population rates. This also has a major impact on rural communities.

There needs to be significantly more resources allocated for the education of farmers and rural workers in Occupational Safety and Health. At the moment the vast majority of farmers and rural businesses do not have an OSH Management Plan. There are limited resources (if any) in rural areas to advise and train farmers and rural businesses in what is required and how to put a SMP together to match their unique circumstances. The Mining industry has entire Government departments such as the Department of Mining and Petroleum (DMP) to ensure compliance to OHS legislation. You cannot even

operate a small quarry employing only 3 people without a SMP that has been approved by the DMP Chief Engineer. Companies and contractors working in these industries have their own OHS departments to train and ensure understanding and compliance within their organisations. What do we have in Agriculture to support our farmers and rural business?

Over the past 8 months I have been working closely with Worksafe WA Bunbury branch putting together practical Risk Assessment and Legislative requirement tools. From this I have begun conducting workshops for farmers and rural businesses teaching them how to implement these requirements. The feedback that I am getting is very encouraging yet concerning in that this is the first time most have been exposed to an OSH workshop or training. Worksafe WA have been incredibly supportive and helpful in putting this package together especially in bench marking the package to legislation, but it is of no benefit if there is no funding to get it out to the rural areas where it is needed.

There is no direct reference to OSH as part of agricultural business strategy in the Agricultural Competitive Task Force - Terms of Reference – ‘Considerations and Scope’. The closest reference is the below dot point.

- the efficiency and competitiveness of inputs to the agriculture value chain — such as skills, training, education and human capital; research and development; and critical infrastructure;

I believe that it is vital to provide more funding for training and professional assistance to bring Australian Rural industries OHS awareness and compliance in to line with other industries. To reduce the disproportionately high number of fatalities and serious injuries in rural industries, OSH must be included in the Agricultural Competitive Task Force Terms of Reference.

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