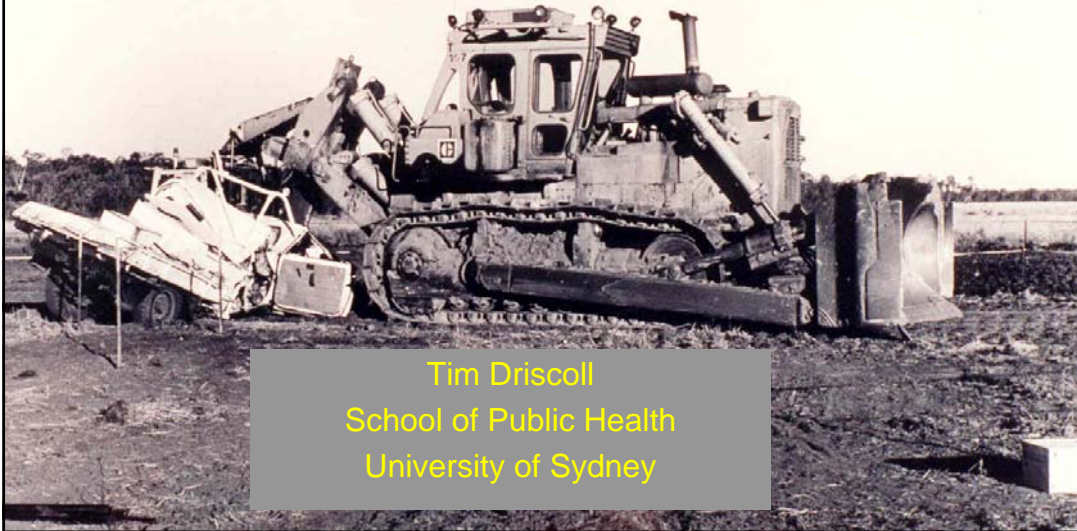


# OHS research and education in Australia – the view from inside



Tim Driscoll  
School of Public Health  
University of Sydney

## Aims

Focus on research and education

Past versus present

Opportunities and challenges

## Outline

- History
- ASCC versus NOHSC
- What has been lost?
- Reasons for optimism
- Challenges
- Does it matter?
- Conclusions

## History

## The “bad” old days

- No national OHS body
- Prescriptive legislation
- Out-dated legislation
- Low profile for OHS



## 1970's: Robens and responsibility

1972: Robens report released

Onus on employer to provide a safe working environment

Self-regulation

## 1980s: expansion and idealism

Introduction of Roben's style legislation in Australia

Establishment of National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC)

Establishment of National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOHS)

Establishment of Australian College of Occupational Medicine (ACOM)

Widespread use of corporate occupational physicians

Increased size of trained OHS workforce

## NOHSC



NOHSC CEO was an occupational physician

Director of NIOHS was an occupational physician



## National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety

- Occupational medicine
- Epidemiology
- Occupational hygiene
- Occupational toxicology
- Ergonomics
- Human factors
- Statistics
- Education

## National Institute Research

- Fire fighters (hot work)
- Coal-workers' pneumoconiosis
- Mesothelioma
- Work-related fatal injury
- Vibration
- Serum bile acids
- Human error
- Competency-based training and assessment

## 1990s: 'out-sourcing' and core business

- Decreased inspection and enforcement
- Self-regulation
- Decreased support for "basic" OHS research
- Effective closure of NIOHS
- Loss of company occupational physicians
- Loss of support for direct government involvement in research and education

## 2000 – 2006: transition

2000: NOHSC moved to Canberra

2005: ASCC established

Increasing self-employment

Increasing individual employment arrangements

Decreasing union influence



## ASCC vs NOHSC

### ASCC

Within DEWR  
Tripartite  
Advisory  
Perception of lack of independence  
Limited in-house research

Perception of improved ability to influence decision-making  
Improving in-house OHS capability

### NOHSC

Separate authority  
Tripartite  
“Decision-making”  
Perception of independence  
National research institute

## ASCC key activities

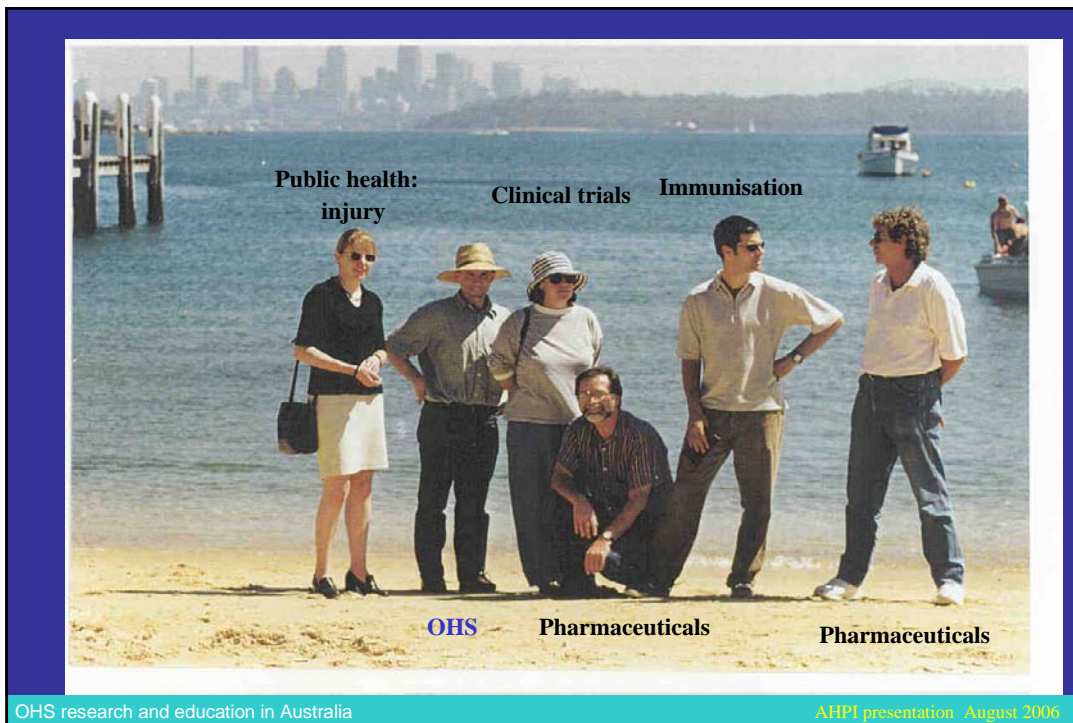
- Lead and coordinate national efforts to prevent workplace death, injury and disease; and to improve workers' compensation arrangements, and the rehabilitation and return to work of injured workers
- Provide a national forum by which representatives of State and Territory governments, employers and employees consult and participate in the development of policies relating to OHS and workers' compensation matters
- To promote national consistency in the OHS and workers' compensation regulatory framework

## Role of the ASCC

- Setting national standards and encouraging consistent application of these standards by all State and Territory Governments
- Improving awareness of OHS through a national communication strategy and specific projects
- Improving understanding of OHS performance through detailed analysis of a wide range of data and research, from Australia and overseas
- Working with specific industry sectors, to identify strategies to improve OHS performance

## What has been lost?

- Loss of research expertise
- Loss of occupational medicine expertise
- Loss of OHS education expertise
  
- Loss of corporate knowledge
- Loss of OHS education opportunities
- Loss of research funding



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<b>Loss of expertise</b>	
<p><b>Occupational hygiene</b>          Tony Findlay Retired          Gary Foster Consultant          Cheryl Murdoch Teacher          Alan Rogers Consultant</p> <p><b>Epidemiology</b>          Tim Driscoll <b>U. Syd / consultant</b>          Sandra Healey Clinical trials          Leigh Hendrie Pharmaceuticals          Brynley Hull Immunisation          Jim Leigh Retired (<b>U. Syd</b>)          John Mandryk Pharmaceuticals          Rebecca Mitchell Public health (injury)</p> <p><b>Occupational medicine</b>          Grahaeme Budd Retired          John Brotherhood Retired (<b>U. Syd</b>)          Gary Baker General physician</p>	<p><b>Occupational toxicology</b>          Neill Stacey Pharmaceuticals          Tony Bonin University (chemistry)          Chris Winder <b>UNSW</b></p> <p><b>Ergonomics</b>          Christine Aitken Consultant          Nick Coleman Consultant          Max Hely Consultant          Airdree Long Consultant          Marcia Lusted Consultant          Barbara McPhee Consultant          Pepe Marlow <b>UTS / consultant</b>          Sharon Phillips Consultant</p> <p><b>Human factors</b>          Anne-marie Feyer Consultant          Ann Williamson <b>UNSW (injury)</b></p>
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## Loss of corporate knowledge

- When NOHSC moved from Sydney to Canberra, only nine (out of over 100 staff) moved - none of the members of the Epidemiology Unit moved.
- The last medical officer at WorkCover NSW left in 2005.

## Loss of occupational medicine expertise in decision-making bodies

- The last medical officer at Work-Cover NSW left in 2005
- There are no occupational physicians employed in the ASCC

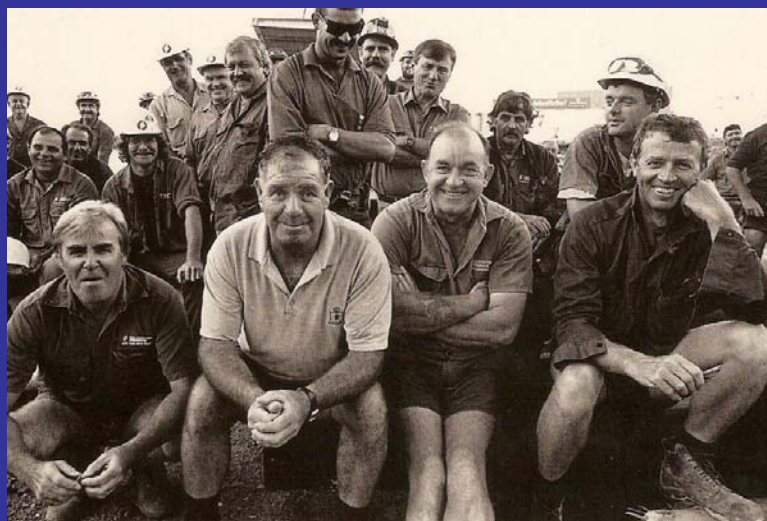
## Loss of OHS education expertise

MOHS closed at the University of Sydney  
in 1996

Closure of University of Sydney  
Department of OHS

Loss of OHS teaching staff to other areas

## Reasons for optimism



## Reasons for optimism - research

Willingness of government to support research focussed directly on policy development.

Improved recognition in NHMRC of importance of public health (?occupational health) research.

Improved recognition of government to base policy on evidence.

Better data sources

## ASCC-supported research

OHS Cochrane collaborations

Design issues in serious work-related injury

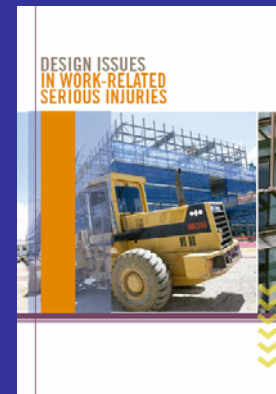
Nanotechnology and OHS

Fatigue and short haul trucking sector

Exposure surveillance

Funding support for Regnet

National OHS conference in 2007



## Reasons for optimism - education

OHS taught in many Universities at TAFE, under-graduate and post-graduate level

OHS being incorporated into other degrees (e.g. engineering)

of New South Wales - School of Safety Science - Occupational Health and Safety Progr - Microsoft Internet Explor...

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### HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Program Authority: Associate Professor Chris Winder**

The Health and Safety Programs offered by the School of Safety Science are the most comprehensive series of articulated program in Australia. The programs have common components so changing between the programs, or to the ergonomics program after initial enrolment is generally possible (depending on enrolment requirements and satisfactory progression).

**GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN HEALTH AND SAFETY AT UNSW**

**Graduate Certificate OHSM**

These courses consist of the fundamental knowledge and core courses of the Graduate Diploma or a selection of courses from a specialist area. The SPQ is the first in the series of articulated programs offered by the School of Safety Science. It

**DANGER**  
**DEMOLITION WORK IN PROGRESS**

Master of Occupational and Environmental Health (Monash postgraduate handbook 2006) - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: http://monash.edu.au/pub/postgrad/postgrad/med-77.html

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Undergraduate handbook 2006

- Units by code
- Units by name
- Units by faculty

Master of Occupational and Environmental Health

Course code: 2312 + Course abbreviation: MOccEnvHlth + Total credit points required: 72 + 3 semesters full-time, 6 semesters part-time

**Study mode and course location**

On-campus (Alfred Hospital, Prahran)  
Off-campus (Alfred Hospital, Prahran)  
Multimode (Alfred Hospital, Prahran)

**Course description**

This course, offered by the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, assists occupational health professionals to prevent and manage occupational health problems. It provides the skills necessary to evaluate health problems in communities thought to be associated with industrial activities. It caters for the special needs of medical practitioners, nurses, allied health personnel, scientists and OHS managers.

**Entry requirements**

Applicants must have an undergraduate degree in an appropriate discipline and relevant professional experience. The department will individually assess applications from students without a three-year degree. In such instances, the department may require completion of the Graduate Certificate in Occupational Health or Graduate Diploma in Occupational and Environmental Health before enrolling in the masters program.

**Course structure**

The course can be taken full-time over 12 to 18 months (three semesters) or part-time over three years. The majority of the program course is offered by off-campus learning, with compulsory block requirements each semester. The course consists of six core units and two elective options of six units.

**Core units**

- MPH2013 Research methods
- MPH2022 Assessment and control of workplace hazards
- MPH2036 Industry and the environment

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**Areas of Study: Occupational Health and Safety**

**Program Description:**

Occupational injuries and diseases have a major impact on the work environment in Western Australia and elsewhere. There are many physical, chemical, biological, psychosocial or organisational hazards that can cause injury, death or disease in the workplace. In Australia, the annual cost of associated ill health is between \$15-37 billion every year. Internationally, there are two new cases each minute, bringing more harm to the global community than from road accidents, war, violence and HIV/AIDS combined. Health and Safety professionals work first to prevent then minimise the incidence and impact of workplace hazards.

From its 1979 inception as the first in Australia, the undergraduate program builds on experience to offer a contemporary, multi-disciplinary approach to health and safety education. The program offers opportunities to relate concepts and principles to workplace practice and to undertake workplace duties under the supervision of supportive, experienced teaching staff, and is offered by flexible means to facilitate enrolment by students already in the paid workforce. Students develop a strong skills base through industry placement and practically oriented assessments that complement theory based subjects. A management orientation prepares graduates for practice in developing and implementing health and safety programs that fit organisational objectives. A broad coverage of subjects is offered, from general science and business studies to more specific study of health and safety management, rehabilitation, safety technology and occupational hygiene. A high level of demand for Curtin's Health and Safety qualification from overseas students has enhanced the international focus of the course.

Our postgraduate degrees include advanced training for managers of occupational health and safety operations with advanced knowledge and skills in the prevention of disease and injury, as well as to provide graduates and other professionals with the knowledge and skills to assist in making the working environment a safer place.

Upon completion of a postgraduate diploma there are a number of study options that students can undertake. Students pursuing studies by higher degree may apply for scholarships. Information about Australian and International student scholarships, and closing dates, can be found on the [Curtin Scholarship website](#).

**Programs/Courses Offered:**

**Undergraduate**

- Bachelor of Science (Health and Safety)

**Double Bachelor Degree**

- Bachelor of Science (Health Promotion), Bachelor of Science (Health and Safety)

**Post Graduate Certificate**

- Graduate Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety Management

**Post Graduate Diploma**

UniSA Program information - 2006

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**UniSAAlert™ Alert**  
 Wednesday, 16 August 2006 18:15, Database Maintenance: Many services unavailable between 6:15 PM and 7:15 PM

**Master of Occupational Health and Safety**  
 2005 | 2006 | 2007  
 Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences | School of Psychology

**Program Code:** DMCH  
**Program Level:** Postgraduate  
**SATAC code (External Mode):**  
**Home Campus:** City West  
**Program Length (in EFTSL):** 1.5

**Program director/s**  
 • Dr Matthew Thomas (DMOH)

**Announcement**  
 Details about the program structure and courses can be found at the [OHS program website](#).

**Aim**  
 To promote competence of health and safety practitioners in the practical management of health and safety issues by learning to evaluate problems and apply appropriate scientific solutions.

**Entry requirements**  
 A relevant first degree or higher qualification from a recognised higher educational institution, together with a minimum of two years of relevant practical experience is required.

For international applicants for whom English is a second language, the minimum English language requirements are those which are standard within the Division and are outlined as follows:

- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test - a minimum score of 6.0 in Reading and Writing sub scores and a minimum overall score of 6.5;
- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) - a minimum score of 55 (21 in the computer based test) in Reading and Structure/Writing sub scores and a minimum overall score of 575 (232

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**Master of Occupational Safety, Health and Environmental Management**

**UWS Course Code:** 3605.1

**Course Status:** CURRENT  
 This version of the course is available to new and continuing students.

This course aims to provide students with high level professional skills in integrating approaches to occupational safety, health and environmental management that are essential for sustainable development. Students will develop the skills necessary for the development and implementation of integrated occupational environment management plans, as well as situation improvement, change evaluation and professional research.

**Study Mode**  
 One year full-time (no mid-year entry), and two years part-time, but due to the professional nature of the program most students will study part-time. Delivery will be external, by flexible learning, written study packages, WebCT and compulsory workshop attendance. The workshop components will be delivered on Hawkesbury campus.

**Head of Program**  
**Name**      **Email**  
 Debra Moodie-Bain   d.moodiebain@uws.edu.au

**Location**

Campus	Attendance Mode	Course Advisor
Hawkesbury Campus	Part Time	External Debra Moodie-Bain

## Reasons for pessimism



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## Challenges

- Collaborative OHS network
- Translation of research into practice
- Evaluation of intervention initiatives
- Gaining funding from NHMRC, ARC, etc
- Critical mass of researchers and educators
- Self-employed and individual employment arrangements
- Lack of public profile of OHS?
- Supporting regional OHS

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Does it matter?



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**Media Statement¶**

Westcentre-1260-Hay-Street-West-Perth-WA--P.O.-Box-294-West-Perth-WA-6872¶  
 Telephone:-(08)-9327-8777--Facsimile:-(08)-9321-8973--(TTY):--(08)-9327-8838¶  
 E-mail:-safety@docep.wa.gov.au--Internet:-www.safetyline.wa.gov.au¶

¶ November 16, 2005¶

¶ **DEMOLITION COMPANY FINED FOR UNSAFE WORKPLACE¶**

¶ A Malaga demolition company has been fined \$30,000 for failing to provide a safe workplace for its employees.¶

¶ Murphy Demolition was convicted in the Magistrate's Court of WA Perth of failing to provide and maintain a safe workplace, and by that failure, causing a serious harm to an employee after a young worker was left paralysed.¶

¶ Company directors Patrick and Daniel Murphy were also convicted over the same offence and fined \$5000 each.¶

¶ In November 2003, the company was demolishing a building in Nollamara using an excavator with a bucket fitting attached.¶

¶ The excavator was fitted with a "quick hitch" that allowed various attachments to be attached to the boom of the excavator. The quick hitch included a safety pin secured by a short chain designed to ensure attachments did not fall off.¶

¶ Prior to the day of the incident, one of the accused directors cut the pin off the quick hitch to make it easier and quicker to change the attachments.¶

¶ When the bucket was swung around it detached from the excavator, flying through the air and striking an 18-year-old employee on the upper back, severing his spinal cord. The employee is now paralysed from the mid-chest down.¶


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Department of Consumer  
and Employment Protection  
Government of Western Australia



WorkSafe

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 Telephone:-(08)-9327-8777--Facsimile:-(08)-9321-8973--(TTY):-(08)-9327-8838  
 E-mail:safety@docep.wa.gov.au--Internet:www.safetyline.wa.gov.au

August 30, 2005

**FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH WORKSAFE NOTICES LEADS TO FINE**

A Bickley orchardist was convicted last week of failing to comply with a WorkSafe Improvement Notice that directed him to fit rollover protection structures (ROPS) and seat belts to his tractors.

Eric Altinier was fined \$2500 in the Magistrates Court of WA Midland.

An improvement notice was issued to Mr Altinier when a WorkSafe inspector visited his orchard and found that the tractors used there did not have rollover protection or seatbelts and that there was a risk of them overturning.

Mr Altinier applied for a review of the notice, and after the WorkSafe WA Commissioner visited the orchard, the notice was affirmed and the compliance date extended.

Mr Altinier then applied for a further review of the notice through the Safety and Health Magistrate, and the notice was once again affirmed and the compliance date extended.

Two months after this compliance date, WorkSafe inspectors visited the orchard and found that the required actions had still not been taken.

Although one tractor on the property had been fitted with a ROPS, the other two had

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The screenshot shows the Queensland Cancer Fund website. The header includes a search bar and the text 'Queensland Cancer Fund Home'. A navigation menu on the left lists categories such as 'How we can help you', 'How you can help', 'Our news', and 'Our vision'. The main content area features a news article titled 'Study finds 5000 Australians develop cancer at work'. The article text states: 'Every day 1.5 million Australians are exposed to carcinogens at work and about 5000 people a year develop some form of cancer due to occupation. A study by the Queensland Cancer Fund, published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, found the rate of occupational cancer in Australia was much higher than the 2 per cent generally accepted in the past. The study was a joint collaboration with the University of Sydney and found one in 10 male workers and one in 50 female workers developed cancer every year due to workplace exposure to carcinogens. Lung cancer was one of the cancers most often caused by occupation, affecting heavy industry workers exposed to airborne chemical particles and hospitality workers exposed to passive cigarette smoke. The Queensland Cancer Fund's Associate Professor Lin Fritschi pointed to the lack of research in the area of occupational health as a serious failure. "People are not particularly interested in occupation as the cause of cancer," Dr Fritschi said. "There are thousands of chemicals being used in industry today, and most of them have not been evaluated properly. "In addition, most people exposed to carcinogens in the workplace don't develop cancer until much later in life.'

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## Conclusions

- The approach to OHS in Australia has definitely improved over the last three decades.
- The ability to tackle OHS issues is probably worse now than 15 years ago due to a number of factors related to funding, a suitably qualified workforce, institutional support and focus on individual.
- There are opportunities for improvement, which is particularly likely to come through collaboration between researchers, educators, government, workers and industry.