



## Welcome

Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the first edition of Safety Net for 2006. This edition of Safety Net provides an update on recent health and safety initiatives and information and advice for all departmental workplaces to assist in the promotion and creation of safe and healthy working and learning environments.

### Formation of State wide Committee

The Director-General, Mr Ken Smith has recently established the Corporate Workplace Health and Safety Standing Committee. The Standing Committee provides a forum to review health and safety issues that have state wide implications and comprises key representatives from a cross section of the department including facilities, curriculum, legal and health and safety.

The Standing Committee will meet monthly and provide recommendations and information to the Executive Management Team, Schools and other departmental workplaces on the management of health and safety issues.

### Health and Safety management System Audit for Education Queensland

DuPont Australia has been engaged to complete a Health and Safety Management System of the department. The Audit commenced on 27 March and includes discussion with key departmental representatives and a sample of schools and other departmental sites across selected metropolitan, rural and remote locations.

Representatives from the Queensland Association of State School Principals, Association of Special Education Administrators, Queensland School Registrars Association, Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association, Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Public Sector Union have also been involved in this process.

DuPont Australia has proven success in assisting large organisations implement changes to health and safety management. The audit will identify opportunities to improve organisational health and promote a culture that proactively manages health and safety risks.

### Extra Health & Safety Staff

The Director-General has announced the creation of new regional Senior Health and Safety Consultant positions to ensure that every region has access to an experienced health and safety practitioner. These personnel will work with Schools and other workplaces to ensure appropriate health and safety standards are maintained.

I would like to thank you for your efforts and commitment to health and safety and look forward to a continued partnership in the development of an organisational culture that creates safe and healthy working and learning environments for students and staff.

**Gary Barnes**  
Assistant Director-General  
Office of Strategic Human Resources and Learning

## Hand Washing Facilities Required for Infection Control

The school environment provides the opportunity for the proliferation of communicable diseases. However, the spread of many diseases such as influenza, hepatitis A and gastroenteritis can be prevented through good hygiene practices supported by appropriate facilities.

It is well known that hand washing is the single most important practice to prevent the transmission of such diseases. Appropriate hand washing facilities must be available to staff and students to enable these good hygiene practices to be maintained.

DOEM Policy *HS-18: Infection Control* states that hands should be washed using soap and water and dried with paper towels, for example prior to eating and after using toilet facilities. This applies to staff and students. Schools must ensure that hand washing facilities, soap and paper towels are available at all times.

Policy *HS-18 Infection Control*: <http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/doem/healthsa/hs-18000/sections/procedur.html>

You can display this Hand Washing Poster in your school:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/doem/healthsa/hs-18000/sections/handsgloves.pdf>

## Preventing injuries from Lanyards and Hat Cords

With the increased use of hat cords and gaining popularity of lanyards, Principals should be aware of the potential risk of injury to students.

Students may be injured if wearing lanyards, hats with cords or similar items that do not have break away or safety clips which release if the item becomes entangled or caught.

Intentional or accidental grabbing of a lanyard or hat cord can easily occur during play causing pressure on the throat and neck. Entanglement or catching on play equipment can also occur. Should the student or their clothing be caught and they are unable to touch the ground, the student's weight may be supported solely by the neck and/or the cord. It is important that playground equipment be designed to prevent entanglement or entrapment, however, in conjunction with this measure, clothing and accessories should promote easy release from any entrapment or catch point.

## Free Dress Days impact on Health and Safety

Owing to a number of incidents that have resulted from the clothing and apparel worn by students during free dress days, Principals should remind students of their requirement to wear suitable clothing for the activities they will be undertaking on that day. Particular attention should be given to appropriate footwear and jewellery in practical areas such as Industrial Design and Technology. Thongs would not be considered appropriate footwear on a free dress day.

DOEM *Policy SC-09: Student Dress Code* states that school communities, through their P & C, can decide on a student dress code which reflects the needs and circumstances of that school community.

Inappropriate dress refers to clothing or apparel that the student wears that is, or could be deemed to be amongst other things, unsafe for the student or others, or likely to result in a risk to the health of the student or others.

## Laminated Safety Glass to Prevent Injury

Injury can result from the breakage of glass windows and glass panels in doors located throughout our schools. Schools should refer to the Department's *Design Guidelines for Education School Facilities* for guidance on this issue. Part 5.3.5 Windows and Glazing for all new facilities states "Laminated safety glass is to be used in accordance with statutory requirements and in the following situations:

- All glass in doors; and
- Where likelihood of human impact.

Where glass doors or windows are broken in schools, and these are repaired by QBuild, laminated safety glass is to be used in accordance with the Design Guideline 5.3.5. Where broken glass doors or windows are not repaired by QBuild, the onus rests with the Principal to ensure repairs are completed in accordance the Design Guidelines, Building Code of Australia and supporting Australian Standards.

*Design Guidelines*: <http://www.qed.qld.gov.au/facilities/strategic/dg-contents.html>

## Queensland Ambulance Service Fact Sheet

During the recent holidays, a number of schools received a fact sheet from Queensland Ambulance Service entitled "*Prevent Heat Related Illness: engaging in physical activity*". The fact sheets were sent directly from Queensland Ambulance Service to state schools and address heat and physical activity. A number of HODs for Health and Physical Education have noted inaccuracies within the fact sheet that may cause confusion. Whilst the brochure contained good information to assist in the management of heat related illness, some of the technical detail around temperatures was incorrect.

The Organisational Health Unit is working closely with the Sports Medicine Australia (Queensland Branch) to address these issues. Sports Medicine Australia information relating to heat and physical activity can be found at: <http://www.sma.org.au/>

## Reminder – Incident Recording !

Principals, managers and officers-in-charge are responsible for ensuring accidents and incidents are recorded. Within schools, the **SMS WHS Module** has been developed for the purpose of capturing these events. The correct and timely reporting and recording of hazards, injuries, illnesses and dangerous events aims to assist identification, analysis and management of risks. Early identification can prevent future incidents and reduce negative impacts on staff, students and others.

Because of the importance of each record and the data which can potentially be extracted from this information, Principals must ensure that information is recorded within the SMS WHS Module and that it is correct with as much detail (e.g. location of incident) as possible. This enables and improves data analysis options and may identify any impact on other areas of the department such as Facilities Services Branch.

## Preventing Manual Handling Risks for Schools Officers

Manual tasks, with their broad variety of associated potentials for risk, such as forceful exertions, repetition and duration combined with awkward postures, are responsible for a great number of injuries and long-term health problems. A review of incidents occurring in January 2006 indicated that a number of schools officers suffered manual handling related injuries as a result of school "start up" & "clean up" activities.

Injuries sustained from manual tasks can result in long recovery periods and reduced function. These injuries may permanently diminish people's quality of life and affect work and home activities. Possible injuries and long term health problems include:

- back injuries – acute and chronic,
- other musculoskeletal injuries,
- fatigue leading to other accidents,
- decreased functional ability,
- abdominal injuries, e.g. hernias.

Principals and managers of School Officers are responsible for ensuring that the risks associated with manual tasks are identified, assessed, controlled and reviewed. Therefore, supervisors need to implement strategies to minimise the known risk factors of repetition, long duration, awkward postures and high forces.

Planning activities where schools officers are extensively involved (e.g. start/end of year and regular tasks) can help to minimise the risk of injuries to our Schools Officers. The following strategies should be used to assist in the control of risk:

- Ensure activities are necessary (Are items being moved currently available in another room? desks, filing cabinets?)
- Co-ordinate tasks to prevent overload (Eg. prevent multiple demands at once)
- Schedule tasks with plenty of lead time (Eg. preparing seating in halls)
- Use equipment to assist (Eg. wheeled trolleys)
- Ensure other staff are available to assist for heavier items or more difficult situations (Eg. Filing cabinets on stairs)
- Schools Officer is able to break up tasks (Eg. Mowing is performed with breaks to change position from seated to standing or performed over several days).

# Casting the Net

## Annual Assessment

Schools with a WHSO are required to complete an Annual Assessment to determine their management of health and safety issues. This has been a legislative requirement since June 2003 and many schools are now experienced at undertaking the assessment.

Coordinating the assessment and ensuring the process is completed is the most important function for the WHSO to fulfil. Principals have an obligation to ensure the WHSO is allocated time and resources to complete this task.

The WHSO should coordinate the collection of information - with relevant staff across areas of the school contributing information to the process. Undertaking the annual assessment provides an excellent starting point for the WHSO and provides the opportunity for the school to develop an Action Plan by prioritising systems and procedures to address for the coming term or year

A fact sheet and template have been developed to assist schools complete the assessment. These are available on the Creating Healthier Workplaces website. Regular users will notice the new template for the 2006 year.

You can find all the relevant documents at:  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/healthsafety/annual-assess.html>

## Health & Safety Conferences!

Two enthusiastic WHSOs have planned Health and Safety Conferences for fellow staff this year.

Bruce Clarke at Helensvale conducted his 5th successful event last week with about 100 participants during the day. Topics covered included:

- An overview of Organisational Health
- Construction Blue Card requirements
- Managing health and safety for Principals
- Health & Safety communication in schools

Christine Bird from Thuringowa State High School has followed Bruce's example and is gearing up for the Townsville 'Safety & Schools—It's our Priority' Conference on Friday May 12. Details for the Townsville conference are available on the CHW Discussion List at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/discussion.html>

**Congratulations to Bruce and Helen and all the supporters of these great events!**

## WHSO Courses

Education Queensland has been successfully running its own Workplace Health and Safety Officer Courses and Re-certification courses for the last year. These courses offer school staff a tailored course for the education environment and practical case studies and assessment pieces. The course is also offered at a cheaper price to external courses.

All course details are available at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/whso-train-calendar06.pdf>

## New Information on the Website!

### Machinery Standard Operating Procedures

These resources are now available on the website. Look under Machinery and Equipment and remember to check both the Technology & Design and Agricultural Science sections for information on specific pieces of equipment.

Standard Operating Procedures and Maintenance Records are available. Check out these new resources at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/healthsafety/equip-safety.html>

### Influenza Vaccination Program

Schools and departmental work sites that wish to offer staff members flu vaccination this year can now commence program arrangements. We have again organised a preferred supplier arrangement with Home Therapeutics, keeping the cost at \$20 per person regardless of location or numbers involved. Participation of staff is voluntary and the cost of vaccination is funded by the school or work unit, if approved by the Principal or Manager.

Schools or work units should contact Home Therapeutics directly to arrange a clinic. The fact sheet provided has been developed to assist schools and work units make these arrangements. Please find the contact details for Home Therapeutics and other information on the fact sheet at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/flu-vaccination.pdf>





# School Safety Scribbles

## WHSO Course a Hit!

By Leann Griffith-Baker, Principal—Denison State School

Last year I attended a WHSO Course in Rockhampton conducted by Alan Singleton (Principal OH&S Consultant). The participants were all employed by EQ and they performed many different and important roles in schools; Schools Officers (Facilities), Preschool Teacher Aide, Classroom Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Teacher of Industrial Design, Deputy Principal, Head of Department and a Principal. The diversity of these people bought an interesting and balanced view of practical solutions to creating a safe and healthy workplace. The balance of wit, academic challenge and the sense of making a serious subject relevant, important and a manageable and practical task was embraced by all.

### What did you enjoy about the course?

I enjoyed the diversity and depth of experience that each of the participants brought to the course and the opportunity that Alan provided for these people to share their knowledge, understandings and the application of practical ways that a safe workplace could be achieved and maintained.

As 'myth busters' we tested theories and I enjoyed finding out that many things that people tell you are indeed myths and are manufactured from misunderstanding of the application of workplace health and safety practices.

### Would you recommend EQ's course to others?

Yes, EQ's own WHSO course is of great relevance and was enhanced by an in-depth analysis of issues that pertain to EQ sites with their unique and diverse circumstances.

The course is economical and presents better value than other advertised courses. The two blocks allow participants to practically apply their learning and seek clarification and follow up for safety audits and apply their knowledge and understanding of their work site to make a plan for action.

It is relevant for all staff who wish to take on the role of WHSO, and a must for Principals or site managers, to assist in their delegation of duties and understanding of the vitally important and practical ways that they can contribute to making a safe & healthy workplace for all.

Whilst learning the necessary industry standards, practical in-depth case studies of real hazards and risks and their management were examined. This allowed me to return to school and use clearly defined thinking and processes to ensure the safety of all at my school.

### Completing the WHSO Annual assessment

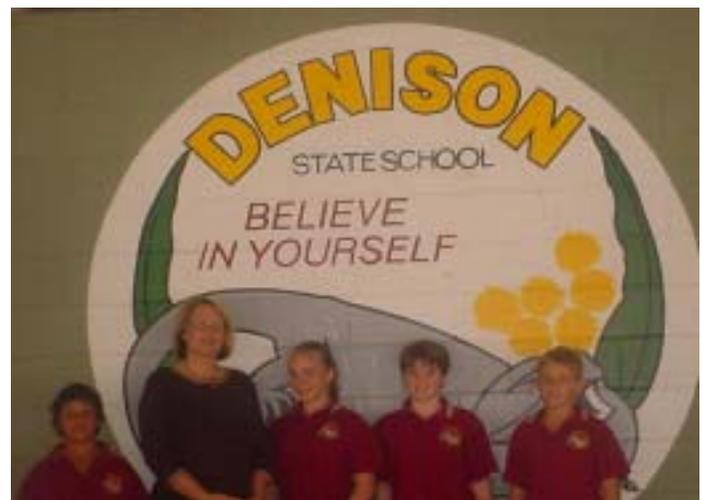
As part of the course, I completed the annual WHSO assessment for my school. The annual assessment was supported by other staff who contributed their observations. It is vital to involve the school staff as they all have different views and can identify different potential risks. Conducting a school audit as an assignment directly provided the information to inform a school action plan. Both of these assignments are relevant and exactly the procedure that schools must follow at least annually.

### What are the benefits of being a school Principal as well as being trained WHSO?

As the Principal of the school it is my responsibility to lead the school and ensure the best possible learning outcomes for students. Through this responsibility I accept my role to ensure that the school is a safe, positive and healthy environment for learning and as a workplace site. My active participation in the WHSO course allowed me the time to think through H&S challenges to my school and to examine in depth the current situation at Denison State School. The reality is that we can not stop all accidents or injuries from occurring but the application of common sense risk management by all staff does significantly reduce the incidents in the workplace!

Participation in this course increased my understanding of what needs to be done (compliance) and what *can* be done to be proactive to increase the effectiveness of operations and reduce injuries and claims. Unnecessary claims dollars filter valuable education dollars from Education Queensland and in real terms schools!

As the Principal I will delegate some of the duties to other staff who will quite capably achieve particular tasks. The course was valuable to me as I have a knowledge of the resources available to the school, the planning cycle for maintenance and an in depth understanding of what is achievable with school resources to make the school environment safe and positive.



**For more information about the school customised WHSO courses and the training calendar for 2006 please contact:**

**Alan Singleton**

**Principal Consultant-OH&S Training & Promotion**

**Phone: 4616 9125**

**Mobile: 0428 736 595**