

Wednesday, 9 August 2017

Ms Margaret Liveris  
Committee Clerk  
Standing Committee on Public Administration  
GPO: Box A11  
Perth WA 6837

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**UNIONSWA**  
WA's PEAK UNION BODY

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Dear Ms Liveris,

### **UnionsWA submission to Inquiry into WorkSafe**

UnionsWA is the governing peak body of the trade union movement in Western Australia, and the Western Australian Branch of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). As a peak body we are dedicated to strengthening WA unions through co-operation and co-ordination on campaigning and common industrial matters. UnionsWA represents around 30 affiliate unions, who in turn represent approximately 140,000 Western Australian workers.

UnionsWA thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into WorkSafe. Every worker has a right to a healthy and safe work environment, so that all Australians can go to work and return home unharmed.

The modern occupational safety and health system is the creation of the trade union movement. Current occupational safety and health laws (OSH) were enacted as a result of significant campaigning from trade union members and workers. The continuing successful operation of the OSH system depends on workers, through their representative trade unions, having an organised, independent voice and means of prosecution.

The challenges facing occupational health and safety regulators are great. The changing nature of work and the arrival of the 'gig economy' is putting pressure on workers and many new business models are set up to circumvent workers compensation and occupational health and safety responsibilities.

The re-emergence of black lung in Queensland is a timely reminder of the risks of a business-as-usual approach to safety regulation. It also demonstrates that there is always room for improvement for both occupational health and safety legislation and regulators.

The regulation of occupational health and safety in WA in recent years has been significantly lacking. WorkSafe's ability to regulate the safety of workplaces has been hampered by budget cuts, an inadequate database, outdated internal policies and procedures, and a reluctance to cooperate with unions.

To address the Inquiry's specific terms of reference:

