

Media Release

Builders support better safety, not bigger penalties

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Industrial manslaughter laws are not a proactive measure to improve safety and will not stop worker deaths, say Master Builders Western Australia.

Construction Director Kim Richardson said the building industry cannot support the State Government's move to introduce industrial manslaughter offences but does support boosting WorkSafe inspector numbers, as promoted by Master Builders in recent years.

"Industrial manslaughter laws will not improve workplace safety. Penalties don't save lives, whereas training, education and an ingrained culture of workplace safety does," he said.

"Just last year, the State Government's inquiry into modernising WA safety laws came up with 44 recommendations but industrial manslaughter was not one of them, making this recent announcement a surprising development.

"New occupational health and safety penalties were introduced in October. We need at least three years to see the impact of these before considering further changes to the laws.

"The raised penalties under the OSH Act include fines increasing to \$550,000 for individuals and \$3.5m for companies plus jail terms rising from two years to five years. These are among the highest safety penalties in Australia.

"We believe negligence which contributes to injury or death on a work site should be dealt with by the justice system and those penalties are already in place.

"There has been a steady downward trend in work-related injuries and fatalities since 2007. Both workers and employers are better served by keeping the focus on practical safety instead of a new round of legislative change.

"Master Builders is committed to working with the Government to improve workplace safety, which is the intention behind this legislation but will not be achieved by it.

"A workplace fatality deeply affects everyone onsite and Master Builders has been working to support workers and employers increase their awareness of safety issues at every level of the industry. We believe this education pathway offers the best results."

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