



PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER JULIA GILLARD

NATIONAL WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY LAW

The harmonisation of Australia's occupational health and safety (OHS) laws was first raised by the Whitlam Government in 1974. In the intervening years, the harmonisation of OHS has experienced many false starts, but the arguments for harmonisation have remained compelling.

Before OHS harmonisation, Australia was regulated by nine separate OHS laws and over 400 pieces of OHS regulation. This situation has caused unnecessary confusion and complexity, it has meant higher costs for many businesses and it has stood in the way of better safety outcomes.

In July 2008, the Commonwealth, States and Territories came together to sign an historic Council of Australian Governments agreement to put harmonised OHS laws in place by 1 January 2012.

The health and safety of workers is a matter of national significance. Around 300 Australians are killed at work each year. Many more die as a result of work related disease and each year around 135,000 Australians are seriously injured at work. The cost of work related injury and illness to our economy has been estimated at nearly 6 per cent of our gross domestic product. The cost to those injured and to their families, workmates and friends is inestimable.

Education is vital for safe and healthy workplaces, and the legal industry has a key role in ensuring people are aware of their OHS responsibilities. I am therefore pleased to commend LexisNexis' *National Work Health and Safety Law* to legal practitioners as a valuable resource for understanding and applying Australia's new harmonised work health and safety laws.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Julia Gillard'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

The Honourable Julia Gillard
Prime Minister of Australia