

The Modernization of Occupational Health and Safety Laws.

In our last edition, MGA advised members that the Federal Government is proposing to establish uniform occupational health and safety laws throughout Australia.

The proposed harmonization is the first in a series of objectives by the Federal Government to reform the Federal/State systems, including industrial relations laws.

However, it does not appear that the transition will be a smooth one. The South Australian, NSW and Queensland Governments are lobbying to water down the proposed national reform program. These States want what they describe as “consistent” laws rather than “uniform laws,” Mr. Della Bosca, the NSW Minister for Industrial Relations said that NSW would push to retain as much control over its workplace legislation as possible. Employers have already expressed their concerns that harmonized laws could have some aspects of the NSW OHS Act included and these are regarded as the toughest OHS laws in Australia.

The Federal Government has released an Issues Paper which calls for submissions on the content of the model OHS laws. MGA and other employer associations will have the opportunity to advise the Federal Government of their views in relation to the harmonization process.

MGA will keep members informed on all further developments on this important topic.

Cooking Essence being used by youths to become intoxicated

NARGA advises that the NSW Commissioner of Police has reported a small number of instances in which minors have been found affected by alcohol and in possession of large numbers of small bottles of lemon essence purchased from supermarkets and grocery stores.

Apparently, they are making alcoholic mixed drinks using the essence.

The NSW Government is considering its position for the longer term possibility by classifying alcoholic essences as similar to aerosol spray cans, knives and tobacco products.

In the meantime, he has asked that all our retailers be advised that they should exercise caution in selling unusual quantities of lemon essence to minors.

Proposed Tobacco Laws

Both the ACT and NSW Governments are proposing to introduce new laws that will affect the display and sale of tobacco products in supermarkets.

The ACT Government is proposing to amend the Tobacco Act so as to remove all smoking products from view of the public. In addition there will be only one point of sale for tobacco products and this will have to be at least one metre from a customer service area. Price tickets will be reduced in size and the text must be no more than 12 points in size.

In NSW the State Government has released a Discussion Paper which it states is aimed at reducing children’s exposure and access to cigarettes.

The Discussion Paper proposes a number of changes to the current laws including moving tobacco products out of sight in retail outlets, a new licensing system for tobacco retailers, additional proof of age when buying tobacco products, a limit on the sale of tobacco products by anyone under the age of 18 years, and limiting the sale of tobacco products to one outlet.

MGA has written to the Minister for Health in the ACT and expressed the concerns that retailers have in regard to the proposed changes. MGA has raised a number of concerns including the costs and inconvenience of making structural changes to their businesses, the increased costs to service customers separately from other areas and the general inconvenience to customers.

MGA also attended a Forum in Sydney where there was an opportunity to speak to the Government on the difficulties that will be faced by independent supermarkets should there be the changes to the legislation.

MGA will continue to address the proposed new laws with the Governments in the ACT and NSW and will keep members informed of any developments.

The advertisement features a red banner at the top with the text 'NATIONAL SUPERMARKET SAFETY CD' in white. Below the banner, the text 'Protecting your BUSINESS and your STAFF' is displayed. A CD-ROM is shown with a colorful, grid-like design and the text 'health & safety' and 'MASTER GROCERS AUSTRALIA'. A yellow starburst graphic contains the text 'ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY! (03) 9824 4111'. The background shows a collage of various safety-related documents and images.