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Housing Industry Calls For Moratorium on National Model WHS Laws

The Housing Industry Association, the voice of the Australian residential building industry today called for a moratorium on draft national model occupational health and safety laws.

“State and Territory Governments need to consider the impact of the new occupational health and safety laws on the residential building industry before rushing to adopt and implement the changes,” said HIA Chief Executive - Association, Mr Graham Wolfe today.

“The changes will overly complicate work procedures, scheduling, on-site coordination and off site administration, and add extra costs for both the design and construction of new homes,” said Mr Wolfe.

“This is not about substituting safety for cost efficiency,” Mr Wolfe added. “It’s about addressing workplace health and safety through practical and effective arrangements, not by enacting a brew of complicated additional laws and interventions.”

“The falls from heights’ provisions are a case in point,” Mr Wolfe said. “Depending on how you interpret them, people may need physical fall protection when using a small step ladder.”

“These new laws and regulations are being rushed through with unnecessary and unwarranted haste. The initial timetable scheduled the laws to begin on 1 January 2012. Not only is it difficult to see how they can practically apply in the building industry, the timetable is inadequate for industry to become familiar with the changes, train staff and make any necessary modifications to their business system.

The National Model WHS Regulations package will be debated at the Workplace Relations Ministers Council meeting on Wednesday 10 August 2011.

“The Regulations Package includes over 40 new Codes of Practice, some of which are still yet to be developed. Others have not yet seen the light of day. This uncertainty is not likely to lead to better safety outcomes,” Mr Wolfe said.

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