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Submission to Inquiry: Risk Management in the New South Wales Public Sector

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Confidentiality	General submission
Readers	[All Committees], [Public Accounts], [LA Ecrú]

1) The survey did not explicitly target occupational health and safety (OHS) risk which is a significant issue. Moreover it is enshrined in state legislation and has a significant financial, legal and social impact within the public sector.

2) I fully understand that AS/NZS 4360: 2004 is a generic risk management document. However, I believe occupational health and safety issues should be more prominent, given that a OHS Risk Management Handbook HB 205 - 2004 supports AS/NZS 4360.

2) Furthermore, the Federal Industry Commission Report No 47 (1995) estimates that OHS fatalities and injuries cost approximately \$ 27B nationally. The employer bears 40% of the cost, the employee 30% and society the remaining 30% . The cost amounts to almost 4% of GDP!

In 1996/7, the WorkCover Authority of NSW processed approximately 60,000 workers' compensation claims costing \$864M

3) Within the executive summary the report states that there is no uniform legal requirement to manage risk across the public sector. There certainly is with regards to OHS management.

4) Generally, I believe the public sector approach to risk management is predominantly reactive and at best it is window dressing.

5) Fortunately, AS/NZS 4360 has provided us with a formal structure or hard system. However, its link with organizational informal structures is tenuous and the concept has not been fully embraced. This will entail changing attitudes, behaviour, culture values and beliefs using organizational development techniques and other strategies.

6) On the positive side, I have noticed significant improvements with attitudes towards drink-driving and speeding, following sterling work by the NSW Police Service, RTA and the Staysafe Committee.

Changing individual behaviour is extremely difficult and evolutionary. Risk management concepts and successful implementation should ensure it becomes revolutionary, thanks to much of the work of W D Rowe and James Reason.

7) There is an inadequate delineation of responsibility between particular public sectors. A recent letter in the Manly Daily highlighted the risk of gum tree branches overlapping the Wakehurst Parkway at Middle Creek. This presents a significant risk, yet responsibility is not clearly defined within the public sector.

Is the issue the responsibility of the RTA, the local council or the NPWS?

Alternatively, do we await several fatalities and ensuing civil actions from distraught dependants before fixing the problem!

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