

INQUIRY INTO NANOTECHNOLOGY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Date received: 8/02/2008

Inquiry into Nanotechnology in NSW

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Background

The Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) is a tripartite council made up of government, employer and employee representatives. The Council has representatives from federal government, all state and territory governments, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI).

Through a partnership of government, unions and industry the ASCC leads and coordinates national efforts to:

- prevent workplace death, injury and disease
- improve workers' compensation arrangements, and
- improve the rehabilitation and return to work of injured workers.

The ASCC also:

- provides a national forum for Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, employers and employees to consult and participate in the development of policies relating to OHS and workers' compensation matters, and
- promotes national consistency in the OHS and workers' compensation regulatory framework.

The ASCC is not a regulatory authority and does not make or enforce laws. OHS laws in Australia operate in each of the state, territory and commonwealth jurisdictions, and are administered by jurisdictions' OHS authorities.

ASCC & Nanotechnology

The ASCC and the ASCC's OHS Working Group have received regular briefings in regard to the potential OHS implications of nanotechnology from the Office of the ASCC within the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

In July 2006, the ASCC published a detailed review report (undertaken by Flinders Consulting Pty Ltd) entitled *A Review of the Potential Occupational Health and Safety Implications of Nanotechnology*. This report was commissioned by the Office of the ASCC to provide the ASCC and the Australian community with an overview of issues in this area. The link to the report is:

<http://www.ascc.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/AC17BA49-8BA1-43B8-BC08-219DE53781E6/0/ASCCReviewOHSImplicationsNanotechnology2006.pdf>

The findings in this report and other research were used to inform consideration of nanotechnology OHS issues in the development of the National Nanotechnology Strategy. Federal government funding has been provided to implement the strategy, including funding projects relating to nanotechnology OHS. I am aware that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is managing significant aspects of this work program. ASCC members have started participating in this program of work. The Office of the ASCC is continuing to monitor and report on this issue as part of its emerging OHS issues program of work. This includes consideration of the implications of nanotechnology related issues in developing national standards and codes.