

**Aggression Prevention and Management Project Industry Forum**  
**University of Ballarat, Mt Helen Campus, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2006**

**The third Industry Forum of the Safety Development Fund Aggression Prevention and Management Forum was held in conjunction with the Department of Human Services Rural Health Conference “Going for Gold” in Ballarat on 19 April 2006.**

The Forum provided an excellent opportunity for the discussion of issues around “Executive Management responsibility and support” that have already been debated within the Industry Reference Group, and for industry networking. Not only was it an excellent opportunity for information sharing and knowledge transfer, it also represented a “good practice example” for genuine collaboration across the industry, with “buy-in” from Department of Human Services, service providers and WorkSafe Victoria.

A very positive aspect was the strong support provided by senior Department of Human Services’ staff. The personalised Invitation Letters from the Director, Rural and Regional Health Services Branch, certainly encouraged attendance by the target audience: Executive Management and Board Members from across Rural Victoria.

Evaluation forms completed by attendees rated the Forum highly and provided positive feedback for the Presenters.

**Con Lolis, Manager Legal Services & Investigations at the Victorian WorkCover Authority**, spoke about ***“Officer Liability and Key Changes to the OH&S Act”***. Con presented a case for change and explained the new duties imposed by the OH&S Act 2004. **Susan Allen, Program Director, Public Sector & Community Services with the Victorian WorkCover Authority** also attended the Forum to respond to questions and comments from participants regarding the impact that changes to the OH&S Act have had on the health sector. Susan was also available to provide information about priority projects being undertaken by the Victorian WorkCover Authority.

**Graham Dent, Managing Partner in Melbourne at Sparke Helmore Lawyers**, further explored ***“Legal Issues of the OH&S Act”*** in his presentation. Sparke Helmore has been involved in and supported the Aggression Prevention and Management Project from its inception, and Graham has participated in all Project Forums. They have extensive experience in the management of OH&S as well as Occupational Violence and Bullying.

**Cheryl Thomas, Project Officer, Health & Aged Care in Public Sector & Community Services at WorkSafe Victoria**, presented on the ***“VWA Prevention of Occupational Violence in Hospitals Project”***. She explained the project in the context of WorkSafe Victoria’s prevention-based enforcement strategy. The focus of the project so far has been high-risk areas and occupations such as the health sector. The project promotes a change in focus from incident management to risk management, the consideration of the

“Hierarchy of Control” in the risk management process and consultation with both Health and Safety Representatives and employees. There is an emphasis upon the need to fully implement and support prevention measures.

**Peter McGregor, Chief Executive Officer at Northeast Health Wangaratta,** spoke about **“The Executive Effect”** and the importance of ensuring a ‘top down’ commitment to the implementation of effective strategies. He clearly demonstrated a willingness, on behalf of Northeast Health Wangaratta as the Rural Project Partner, to actively engage his peers on this important topic.

The Final Session was a Panel Discussion about **“The Juggling Act - Roles, Responsibilities and Priorities”** and included all speakers.

There was also a good response from the audience to the Forum Facilitator: John Burch, Manager, Operations Rural and Regional Health Services Branch at the Department of Human Services. A number of people commented positively on the active involvement of DHS staff in the Forum.

Evaluation Form responses compared favourably with the two previous Forums organised by the SDF Project. This Forum received a positive evaluation by more than 100 participants, most of whom were senior managers. One attendee, a Board Member from a Rural Health Service commented that it was **“the most useful meeting he had attended in a long time, and the only one to address Officer Liability in a meaningful way”**.