

Safe Work Bill changes are needed to strengthen workplace health and safety laws

All politicians should accept the Senate amendments to the *Safe Work Bill* and allow a swift passage for the legislation, says the ACTU.

The *Safe Work Bill 2008* will create a new national workplace health and safety body to oversee major reform of the nation's health and safety laws.

The Bill returns to the Senate today (4 December 2008) after being twice rejected since September.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Geoff Fary said:

"Unions support the development of harmonised occupational health and safety laws throughout Australia.

"We know from more than 30 years experience in this country and around the world that workplace health and safety regulatory bodies are more successful when they are genuinely tripartite and independent.

"Our concern is that the body being proposed in the original Bill is neither of those things, that is why we support the amendments that have been previously moved in the Senate.

"Accepting the amendments will help ensure there is cooperative, tripartite approach to improving safety standards and developing national plans to reduce workplace death and injury.

"It is important that today's Senate vote does not weaken the capacity of employers and employees to work together to reduce the unacceptably high rate of death, injury and illness at work.

"It is essential that Australia continues to make progress towards reducing death, injury and illness at work and the passage of the amended Bill will be a useful next step," said Mr Fary.

Media Contact: Amanda Tattam 0418 479 455 email: atattam@actu.asn.au