

The Expanding Role of OHS

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Some Historical Context

- Started with Common Law – workers not required to risk their life
- Moved to Codified Legislation
 - Health & Safety in Employment
 - Smokefree
 - Harassment Personal Grievance ground

Occupational Health & Safety: the early years

- Set up to ensure statutory compliance
- Reactive role – “doing what we have to do”
- Developed comprehensive policies and procedures
- A backroom role – not strategic

Concept of OHS Broadens

- Operational role of OHS has
 - Expanded
 - Become more complex
- New and more difficult issues now seen as a health and safety problem
 - Stress and burnout
 - Harassment definition expanded
 - Drug testing

We Live in Challenging Times

- Information Age = deluge of info
 - Sorting wheat from chaff not always easy and impact on efficiency
- Rising expectations of Health Care
 - Means we have shifting goal posts – the game is never truly won!
- Shortage of skilled staff

The OHS Challenge

- “Harder and Faster” is a basic reality of today’s society
- The OHS Challenge is twofold:
 - Defining and educating
 - Developing strategies to cope
 - Go beyond coping to achieve breakthrough changes

Operational Implications

- OHS still has “business as usual”
- Now needs to strengthen its strategic outlook
- Now needs to support innovation
- Proactivity is to be expected from OHS

From Backroom to Boardroom

- Boardrooms seek high performance
- Healthy workforce/Safe Environment a fundamental requirement
- So, key business strategy is OHS – no delivery without it

Some Suggestions

- Move beyond debating problems to providing tangible solutions
- Health professionals will respond to evidence based results
- Chief Executives want a sound business case
- Be proactive – tie initiatives to business plan achievement
- Become collaborative

A MoH Perspective

- MoH seeks to “make a measurable contribution to the better health of NZers”:
 - DHB’s should lead by example
 - OHS must play a key role
 - MoH wants to work with the sector to make this happen

The Outcome

If OHS can respond positively to these challenges then it will have an important influence on the health culture and performance of entities