

Highlights from Minister Abbott's keynote address

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, expressed strong support for the initiative of the Seafarers Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Authority (the Seacare Authority) to establish the Sea Safe-Work Awards.

The Minister said that the Awards provide an opportunity for leaders in occupational health and safety (OHS) and OHS training in the maritime industry to achieve recognition for their leadership and commitment to improved OHS performance.

The Minister noted that the Government had endorsed a ten year National OHS Strategy to combat the rate of workplace death, injury and disease and that the maritime industry, through the Seacare Authority, would need to play its part in contributing to achievement of the OHS performance improvement targets.

He advised that the national target is to reduce work related fatalities by 20% and workplace injury by 40% across Australia by the year 2012 and that it is important that there be sustained and substantial improvement in Australia's OHS performance over the next 10 years.

Minister Abbott acknowledged that the rate of improvement of OHS performance in the maritime industry over the last 5 years is the best of any industry in Australia and he urged the Seacare Authority sustain this effort. However the Minister noted that the injury rate for the maritime industry was above that of other Australian industries.

The Minister noted that the awards also highlight the excellent work being undertaken at the enterprise level by Australian maritime employers and their employees. He commended the Authority for establishing these awards, and noted the excellent support shown for the awards by all sections of the industry.

The Minister concluded by indicating he looked forward to being kept informed by the Authority about the industry's continued efforts to improve OHS performance.