

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS IMPACTING ON WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Changing demographics and workforce composition

- Over the 20th century, the New Zealand population has moved from a youthful age structure with moderate fertility and high mortality to a period of low fertility, low mortality, and population ageing.
- New Zealand's resident population was estimated at 4 million in April 2003.
- While the population is only expected to grow by another half a million over the next 30 years, there will be some important compositional changes within the population.

Increasing ethnic diversity

- Maori and Pacific peoples will make up an increasing share of our working age population. Both these groups are more youthful than the rest of the population.
- the proportion of Asian people in the workforce is also likely to increase, though this is influenced by migration and therefore more difficult to predict.
- 1 in 4 workers in New Zealand was born overseas.

Migration

- changes in immigration patterns are also contributing to New Zealand's increasing ethnic diversity.
- migrants coming to New Zealand are coming from an increasingly varied range of countries than in the past.
- an increasing proportion of our workforce is likely to be made up of migrants from non-English speaking countries, particularly Asian countries which have become the main region of origin for permanent and long-term immigrants over the past 15 years.

Ageing population

- the baby boom generation is approaching retirement age.
- the older labour force is projected to grow rapidly (up to 65%) over the next 20 years.
- by 2051, half the labour force will be older than 42, compared with a median age of 37 in 1996. In addition, there will be fewer young people entering the labour market.
- the ageing population is a global phenomena. Over the next 25 years Europe's working age population could decline by 65 million.
- as people live longer, and lead healthier and more active lives, older workers may choose to exit the labour force slowly over a longer period of time rather than simply stopping work upon reaching a certain age.

Women and fertility

- New Zealand's fertility rate has been at or below replacement for the best part of a quarter of a century.
- New Zealand's higher fertility rate, relative to most developed nations, is the result of higher fertility for Maori and Pacific peoples.
- the age of mothers giving birth to their first child is rising. Those women who give birth are having fewer children, and a growing proportion of women remain childless.

Occupational changes

- Over the past 15 years, service industries have created most of the employment growth. 3 broad industry groups, all in the services sector, added more than 90% of new jobs:
 - The age of mothers giving birth to their first child is rising. Those women who give birth are having fewer children, and a growing proportion of women remain childless.
 - Wholesale and Retail Trade, Restaurants and Hotels.
 - Finance, Property and Business Services.
 - Community, Social and Personal Services (including health, education, and government administration).
- In contrast, jobs in primary industries such as farming, forestry, fishing and mining are becoming less plentiful.
- Service industries are expected to be the main source of new job opportunities in coming years.
- There is more demand for "white collar" workers with general skills.

Small to medium enterprises

- Small to medium enterprises (businesses employing fewer than 20 employees) are significant employers in New Zealand.
- Some 267,000 businesses (approximately 97% of all New Zealand enterprises) are small to medium enterprises.
- Small to medium enterprises employ approximately 43% of the workforce.

Self employed

- Over the past 10 years there has been considerable growth in the number of self-employed as a percentage of the total workforce.
- Approximately 20% of the labour market (or 362,000 people) are self-employed.
- The number of self employed females has doubled over the last 30 years.
- It is common for workers to move in and out of self employment, at various points in their working lives.
- The self employed tend to be aged 30+.

Changing nature of work

- The nature of work has changed dramatically, and will continue to change in the future.
- Advancements in technologies have brought about much of this change.
- Work is happening in different ways, different times, and different places.

Working arrangements

- over the past 15 years there has been growth in non-standard employment. Part-time employment is the most common form of non-standard employment.
- there has been growth in the number of self employed people, multiple job holders, and dual earner families.
- workers are now likely to experience multiple jobs and career changes.
- technologies such as laptops and mobile phones have introduced more flexibility in terms of where work can take place, and have also blurred the boundaries between "work life" and "out of work life".

Changing hours of work

- the proportion of the workforce who work a standard 40-hour week has fallen from 35% of the workforce to 30% over the past 15 years (much of this change took place in the early part of this period, but it has been sustained over time).
- the share of people working up to 29 hours per week has risen from 17% to 23% over the same time period.
- approximately 9% of the workforce work 60 or more hours per week.

Diversity of workplaces

- workplaces are becoming increasingly diverse; for instance, cars and homes now act as workplaces for an increasing number of people.
- the development of new industries, such as adventure tourism, are challenging the common understanding of a workplace.

Work life balance

- "Work-life balance", which recognises that workers have a number of significant elements in their life other than work, is an approach that has risen in prominence over recent years. This is due to a number of reasons including increased female participation in paid work (which has given rise to more dual earner families), and more sole parents in the workforce.
- As well as recognising that work and life are both significant for people, the other important element of work-life balance is the spill over between work and life (an in particular, the negative spill over). For instance, if someone is stressed or fatigued at work, this will spill over to home. Similarly, if someone has problems at home, these can spill over to their work.
- Balancing work and home life is a growing concern for both employers and workers, and is a strategic priority for the Government.

Work related illness and occupational disease

- Technological innovations have resulted in a number of workplace health and safety hazards being minimised or eliminated.
- Other stressors, such as stress and fatigue, are rising.
- The workforce is becoming increasingly prone to work related psychological illness, stress related illness, and musculoskeletal disorders.
- There is also likely to be a rise in the incidence of illnesses with long latency periods (e.g. mesothelioma).
- The focus on work related health issues is increasing. In the past the emphasis was more on safety related issues.