



A Look at Some New Thinking

Report on “CSG Talks” video presentation by Kevin Jones, OHS Consultant; Freelance Writer, SafetyatWork Blog; Life Member of CSG

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Kevin provided a review of three of the latest books covering health- and safety-related topics.

1. The Bystander Effect – The Psychology of Courage and Inaction, by Professor Catherine Sanderson, US Psychologist

This book covers the question of why we intervene and the morals that we have when we bring incidents to the attention of others. These incidents could be e.g. bullying, harassment etc. It is the expectation that we express our concerns to the person who is undertaking the actions and point out to them that it could be harmful to the recipient. This action takes courage. The book has chapters on different contexts e.g. schools and workplaces.

Kevin suggested that the easiest way to obtain a copy was as an ebook.

2. The COVID19 Pandemic: Lessons on Building More Equal and Sustainable Societies, by Professor Michael Quinlan and global colleagues

This book is to be published in late June 2020 and is a big picture paper on the lessons learned from the pandemic. It is a long analysis and looks at the consequences of the pandemic, what we should do when we emerge, and how OHS needs to raise its voice to improve the situation.

3. Mental Health, by Michael Tooma, Sydney lawyer and prominent speaker on OHS

This is the latest in a series by the author and the crux is the law, but he also mentions managerial impacts and context. He talks about the industrial manslaughter laws and mental health. If a person were suffering mental health issues and if they were caused by negligence of the PCBU, it would fall under the industrial manslaughter laws. This has been flagged by others, including politicians. The industrial manslaughter laws may also apply if there were a death from mental illness arising from acts and omissions of the relevant organisation. This may motivate change in some workplaces.

Workplace bullying has been identified as a workplace hazard for many years, and our understanding on what causes it has been evolving. Tooma states that workplaces need to address the systemic factors that allow it to occur and flourish. These factors include recruitment, policies, induction, training, supervision, reporting etc. Organisations need to develop strategies for building a more tolerant culture, including unconscious bias etc. It is an approach that also applies to a whole range of issues, including mental harm and sexual harassment. We need to look at the big picture, the structures at work and the organisational culture.

Improvements in health and safety require us to step up, speak out and be more active and engaged. We need to comply to a higher standard than what we are at the moment.

Details of the books are available in the Further Reading section of the website Archives, accessible to Financial members.