

# BLACK ARMBAND DAY

• THURSDAY 3/11/16 •

In the last three weeks, the Australian construction industry has been rocked by the deaths of five workers. It is proposed by the union that on Thursday the 3rd of November, construction workers come together on sites across the country and wear black arm bands as a sign of respect for those we've lost.

**On Thursday October 6th** at around 4 pm, two men were working in a confined excavation at Eagle Farm Racecourse in Queensland. They were installing tilt panels for a large drainage pit. There wasn't any proper access or egress. They had to enter down an embankment to perform the task. The grossly inadequate bracing system being used failed. This caused the first panel weighing 10 tonnes to come tumbling down. The workers managed to scramble out of the way. Tragically within seconds, the second panel came down on top of them, crushing them to death. There wasn't any adequate exclusion zone in their work area as a backup, and they had nowhere to go.

**On Monday October 10th**, while working on Finbar's Concerto apartment project in Perth, 27 year old German backpacker Marianka Huemann was applying sealant to speed wall panels surrounding an air duct when she fell 13 floors to her death. She was working for a builder who repeatedly refused the CFMEU legal right of entry to inspect safety concerns and is well known for employing unskilled backpackers in high risk construction jobs. As if to add to the heartbreak,

builder Gerry Hanssen sent a bizarre email to Marianka's family following the incident which implied that it was her fault, and that she would be sorry for "letting everyone down"

**On Tuesday October 25th**, working on the Porter St project in Ryde, 55 year old Iremar De Silva died when he fell approximately 3 meters from a formwork deck onto reo bars. The bars were appropriately capped, but the fall was enough to take his life. 28% of deaths in the industry are caused by falls from heights, and again in this case, there was no adequate edge protection.

**On Wednesday October 26th** while working on the ProBuild Melbourne Convention Centre expansion A 54 year old boilermaker was killed in a crushing incident while operating a knuckleboom. He leaves behind a wife and two adult children, both in the construction industry. At the time of the incident, he was working alone welding amongst steel frames. Workers and an OHS Rep were the first to attend the scene and made an extraordinary effort to rescue the crushed worker and begin first aid.

On Thursday 3/11/16 we will wear black armbands to remind us of those who have lost their lives at work recently. Every one of these deaths was preventable. We are reminded that our unity and solidarity as workers plays a big role in safety at work, and that we should always stand up and speak out when it's not safe.