



# Media Release - SafeWork SA

---

5 June 2007

## **'BUNNY BOMBING' INCURS \$22k FINE AFTER FARM WORKER LOSES HAND**

**A Tintinara farmer has been fined over a lack of safety systems with explosives that led to an employee losing his hand two years ago.**

Today the SA Industrial Relations Court imposed a penalty of \$22,400 plus another \$5,166 in costs on **James Ashby**, after he pleaded guilty to breaching Section 19 of the *Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986*, in failing to ensure the safety of an employee whilst at work.

The court heard how in August 2005, a farmhand on the property was instructed to place and detonate gelignite in rabbit warrens as a means of pest control, a practice nicknamed 'bunny bombing'. The length of fuse he was advised to use was less than a third of the minimum recommended for safe use. (30cm instead of a metre)

An explosion occurred and the 53 year old farm worker lost his right hand, as well as sustaining serious eye and ear injuries. He is still unable to return to work.

SafeWork SA described the entire system of explosives work on the farm as 'seriously flawed' and 'a disaster waiting to happen'.

In his ruling on penalty today, Industrial Magistrate Stephen Lieschke noted the following:

- Failure to conduct a suitable risk assessment of the eradication method
- Failure to ensure an adequate and safe length of fuse on the explosive
- Failure to implement a safe method of rabbit warren destruction
- Failure to provide the employee all reasonably necessary information, instruction, training and supervision.

Magistrate Lieschke said the incident could easily have been avoided by taking reasonably practicable measures which were available.

"It astounds us that despite the defendant's son attending a SafeWork SA explosives safety training course, a work system was allowed by Mr. Ashby that was clearly in breach of all the advice and standards outlined by us," says SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson.

"Explosives are dangerous, full stop! There can be no compromising on minimum safe standards.

"As we've seen in this case, there is a heavy price to be paid when compliance with those standards falls short," Ms. Patterson says.