



Media Release - SafeWork SA

Friday 3 July 2009

HILLS ABATTOIR FINED OVER SEVERE HAND INJURY

An Adelaide Hills meat-processing firm has been convicted and fined by an Industrial Magistrate today over an incident which left a slaughterman with serious hand injuries.

Lobethal Abattoirs Pty Ltd had already pleaded guilty to breaching section 19(1) of the *Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986* in failing to ensure the safety of an employee.

SafeWork SA prosecuted the company after investigating an incident at the defendant's Lobethal abattoir in November 2006.

In an area known as the 'small stock slaughter floor', sheep carcasses were being processed in stages at workstations set up along the production line.

During this process, the employee concerned came into contact with a mechanical hock cutter being operated near him.

This resulted in the amputation of the middle finger of his left hand, partial amputation of the ring finger and a laceration to the palm. While the affected fingers were all surgically repaired, the worker continues to suffer some restriction of movement and psychological after-effects.

SafeWork SA found that the employer had not dealt with some work practices sufficiently in a safety analysis, nor did it have physical barriers in place either on the hock cutter itself or in the work area concerned.

The court also heard there was a general reluctance at the time to stop the process line because workers were paid by the number of carcasses they processed.

That work system has since been abandoned, while the company has also replaced the hock cutter with a safer model, and fully upgraded its safety systems across the workplace.

Industrial Magistrate Richard Hardy fined the company \$22,000 having discounted the penalty by 25 per cent for contrition, cooperation, an early guilty plea and remedial action.

He said that while the company had attempted to address the safety of its employees through existing procedures, its efforts were nevertheless "inadequate".

For answers and advice on workplace health and safety and the relevant laws, call SafeWork SA's telephone Help Centre on 1 300 365 255. To report serious accidents or incidents, in the workplace call 1 800 777 209