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DECEMBER 2025 THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN FURNITURE REMOVERS ASSOCIATION



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From the AFRA Team



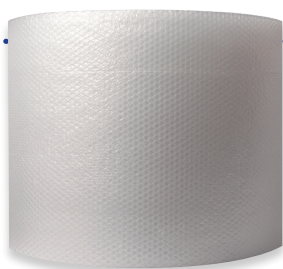
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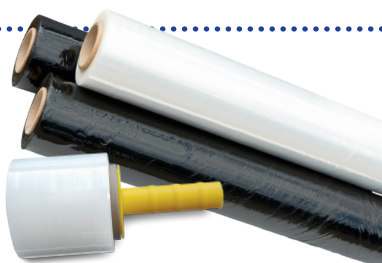
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Boxes & Corrugated



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BY NICKI FRENCH

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

EMBRACING CHANGE AND THE BUZZ OF NEW BEGINNINGS

Change is rarely comfortable. It asks us to step into the unknown, to challenge habits, and to trust that growth lies beyond what feels safe. In our industry, change is constant – whether it's technology reshaping how we connect with customers, compliance requirements adding complexity, or evolving expectations from the people we serve. The question isn't whether change will happen; it's whether we'll embrace it.

Recently, I decided to step outside my own comfort zone and take up beekeeping. At first glance, it seemed worlds apart from removals – but the lessons have been profound. Bees thrive because of collaboration, adaptability, and a clear sense of purpose. They work tirelessly, each playing a role in something bigger than

Together, let's embrace the opportunities ahead and make history in 2026. The changes may be big, but so is our collective strength. United, we will shape the future of our industry.

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themselves. And here's the kicker: the hive only prospers when conditions change – when they swarm, explore, and build anew.

That's a powerful metaphor for us. Our success as an industry depends on our willingness to swarm toward new ideas, explore unfamiliar territory, and build businesses that serve the future, not just the present. It's not always easy. There are stings along the way. But the reward – like a jar of golden honey – is worth it.

As we look ahead, let's commit to being bold. Let's lean into innovation, invest in skills, and support each other through the transitions – especially as compliance changes reshape the way we operate and increase the pressure on costs. AFRA is here to help, providing resources, training, and advocacy to ensure members can navigate these challenges with confidence.

In 2026, we will face the biggest change since AFRA was created more than 30 years ago: a new legal structure and membership model. This transformation will strengthen our association for the future, ensuring we remain relevant, resilient, and ready to lead. It's a significant shift – but one that positions us to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Together, let's embrace the opportunities ahead and make history in 2026. The changes may be big, but so is our collective strength. United, we will shape the future of our industry.

As we move into the summer season madness and upcoming festive season, we return to familiar territory – working hard, focussing on today, connecting with family, friends, and reflecting on the year that's been. I wish each of you a busy, safe and joyful holiday season. ●



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The busy season is upon us once again, and another year is fast drawing to a close. AFRA is finishing the year strong, with several new projects coming to fruition. I've had the opportunity to review Simran's report on the introduction of our new training platform, Cloud Assess. We hope members find the platform more user-friendly, and that any disruption during the transition is outweighed by the benefits of a more modern and accessible system.

We are also updating our CoR, WHS, and general "how to wrap and pack" training modules. Recently, we spent two days filming new training footage, with thanks to Two Men and A Truck for their support. It was a significant undertaking, reinforcing how critical it is to provide staff with correct training from the outset. Best-practice training reduces workplace injuries, improves client satisfaction, and helps minimise damage. We look forward to releasing these updated materials to members in due course.

I recently met with other Transport Association Executive Directors at a forum hosted by Senator Glenn Sterle in Canberra. Glenn brought us together with key ministers and commissioners to discuss the serious issue of sham contracting under ABNs in the transport industry. The Federal Government has established a Taskforce to address this, and it was made very clear that engaging an individual under an ABN when they are, in reality, functioning as an employee will be targeted by multiple agencies. AFRA strongly advises against sham contracting, and is diligent in steering members away from such practice. However, for any members considering engaging team members under sham contracting, now is the time to transition away from this approach. The sham contracting problem is consistently raised with me by reputable members during audit visits, and we know legitimate operators cannot compete against businesses gaining a commercial advantage through unlawful employment practices. AFRA is committed to working with the Taskforce to help stamp out this behaviour.

After more than 30 years of operation, AFRA has reached an important stage of growth that reflects major shifts in both the industry and the needs of our members. To remain effective and fair, the AFRA Council is proposing two key changes: moving to a modern, income-based membership model and reviewing AFRA's legal structure to ensure it aligns with our national scale and operations.

Our current truck-based membership model and NSW incorporated association structure no longer reflect how

removal businesses operate today or AFRA's current size and responsibilities. Transitioning to a gross-income membership model and becoming a company limited by guarantee will provide a fairer, more sustainable system and a stronger, nationally recognised governance framework. These changes will support AFRA's ongoing growth and our ability to serve members effectively across Australia. Thank you to all members who attended our online meeting to discuss these proposed changes and share feedback. There will be further opportunities for consultation and discussion in early 2026.

Finally, amid the intensity of the busy season, I hope you are able to find a few moments of rest and connection with family and friends. From the AFRA team and our families, we wish you all the very best for the festive season, and look forward to continuing to work with you in 2026. ●

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BY SIMRAN KAUR

TRAINING & COMPLIANCE UPDATE

As we approach the end of 2025, it's been a busy and productive few months across AFRA's training and compliance projects. A lot of work has been happening behind the scenes to update, refine, and future-proof our programs, so they remain practical, accessible, and valuable for members.

A major focus for the latter part of this year has been the transition to a new learning platform – Cloud Access. This upgrade will streamline how members access and complete their training, offering a more user-friendly experience with easier navigation, better progress tracking, and centralised access to all course materials. Members will have greater control over their training management, with the ability to monitor who has completed courses and who hasn't, download certificates directly, and access everything easily from their phone or tablet. The transition process is

“As we look ahead to 2026, our focus remains on delivering training that's practical, accessible, and tailored to the removals industry.”

progressing well, with testing and migration underway to ensure a smooth launch at the end of this month.

The new Estimator Course is now complete and ready on the new platform. It's been refreshed with improved learning materials, updated assessments, and a stronger

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BY EILIDH CRAIG

MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES OFFICE REPORT

focus on connecting estimating with customer service and compliance responsibilities.

The redevelopment of the Work Health & Safety (WHS) Training Program is also progressing strongly. The revised course has been simplified, modernised, and aligned with core workplace safety obligations. A new basic version has been created to ensure the content is accessible for all learners, regardless of experience level. Filming for the updated WHS training videos is now being scheduled, bringing real-life industry examples into the program to make learning more engaging and relatable.

Our Chain of Responsibility (CoR) training redevelopment is well underway too. The content is being aligned with the NHVR's Compulsory CoR Topics, and new video-based modules are being scripted and filmed. The updated training will be practical, role-specific, and focused on turning compliance theory into confident everyday practice.

It's been a year of strong progress – the Estimator Course is now live, the WHS and CoR programs are advancing quickly, and the new platform is almost ready to go. As we look ahead to 2026, our focus remains on delivering training that's practical, accessible, and tailored to the removals industry, supporting members to meet their obligations and strengthen safety and professionalism across the board. ●

If you have any training or compliance-related questions, please feel free to get in touch at training@afra.com.au.

Following the success of the 2025 AFRA Conference in Melbourne, we have been hard at work building on that momentum. It was fantastic to see so many members come together to share ideas, connect, and discuss the challenges and opportunities within the removals and transport industry. The feedback received has been invaluable in shaping our next steps and ensuring that AFRA continues to deliver value to our members.

Planning is already underway for the 2026 AFRA Conference, which will take place in Cairns. We're excited to bring the event to such a beautiful location and are already exploring ways to make next year's conference even more engaging, collaborative, and inspiring. Our goal is to create an

experience that not only celebrates the achievements of our members but also provides fresh insights and opportunities for professional growth across the industry.

In addition to event planning, we are currently developing a new website that will offer a modernised, user-friendly experience. The new design will make it easier for members to find information, access resources, and engage with the association online. With improved navigation, refreshed visuals, and updated content, the new site will better reflect AFRA's professionalism and the strength of our membership.

We're also rolling out a new

marketing plan aimed at strengthening AFRA's brand presence and ensuring consistent, member-focused communication. This plan includes refreshing AFRA's visual identity, enhancing digital and print materials, and creating more opportunities to showcase the expertise, stories, and successes of our members. The goal is to highlight the important work being done across the industry and to reinforce the value that AFRA membership provides.

It's been an exciting start at AFRA, and I'm constantly inspired by the dedication and teamwork of our members. I'm looking forward to keeping that momentum going with stronger communication, memorable events, and ways to highlight all the great work happening in the industry. ●

If you have any questions, ideas, or would like to share your story for future features, please get in touch at memberservices@afra.com.au – I'd love to hear from you.



BY GILLIAN BRISTOW

Consequences for removalists and their customers: Supreme Court Case emphasises dual responsibility for worker safety

In August 2025, a case in the ACT Supreme Court highlighted the mutual responsibility for safety that a removalist and their customer both hold toward workers. The point was driven home with the removalist and their customer having 50/50 shared liability for nearly \$1.3 million in damages for personal injuries.

FACTS OF THE CASE: MASON-LEONARDER V BALFRAN REMOVALS PTY LTD & ANOR (NO 2) [2025] ACTSC 363

This case concerned Mr Dean Mason-Leonarder, who had been employed as a removalist by Balfran Removals for six years, including four years as a supervisor.

The task for the customer, Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), involved taking a significant amount of heavy furniture, including desks, filing cabinets, safes, etc, via truck to some skip bins on-site and then throwing the furniture into the bins. The CIT Facilities Manager told the removalists not to block the road next to the skip bins (though parking perpendicular to the bins was Mr Mason-Leonarder's preferred method). The removalists were also directed not to open the end of the skip bins and walk the furniture into them (an alternative suggested by Mr Mason-Leonarder).

The team of removalists parked parallel to the skip bins at the loading dock, to throw the furniture from the truck into the bin, though this required furniture to be thrown in by twisting sideways. The court accepted that Mr Mason-Leonarder did call his employer who said, 'I don't care, just get it done'. He had

It is important to be aware of and understand the provisions of your contracts.

to twist his body when throwing a 30kg desk into the bin and felt a sharp pain in his left lower leg, fell off the back of the truck and suffered a significant injury which left him with a long-term disability.

LIABILITY OF THE REMOVALIST AND THEIR CUSTOMER

Balfran Removals accepted that they owed a duty of care to Mr Leonarder as their employee to provide a safe system in which to work, and that they breached this by not having a system for Mr Mason-Leonarder to receive adequate instructions from a superior, including when the Facilities Manager imposed restrictions on how the work could be done. The risk of injury was foreseeable and not insignificant.

Balfran Removals wanted CIT also held responsible for the injury. CIT argued that they weren't liable, as the contract between them and Balfran stated that it was Balfran's responsibility to ensure accessibility to the premises and to provide suitability qualified people to accomplish the job contracted for, and to provide the necessary tools and equipment to ensure the job was performed in a competent manner.

The court held that CIT, in imposing conditions on the way the work could be done and in refusing the two safe methods suggested by Mr Mason-Leonarder, retained this responsibility and breached its duty of care despite the contract.

In apportioning liability, the court found that Balfran Removals and CIT were each negligent and were each 50% liable for Mr Mason-Leonarder's injury, for which he was awarded nearly \$1.3 million plus legal costs.

TAKEAWAYS FOR REMOVALISTS

Comprehensive and defined safety systems for employees to receive instructions, including when running into problems, are important in avoiding injury and subsequent liability.

Breaching your duty of care owed to employees and contractors (to provide a safe system of work – or having a safe system and not enforcing it) can lead to significant liability for customers as well as removalists.

It is important to be aware of and understand the provisions of your contracts and to know when you've assumed responsibility for something.

Although an employer has a principal duty to ensure safe work systems are in place for their employees, if the customer/contractor alters that safe system of work, a court may decide that the employer is not 100% responsible for the injury. ●

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with us via the AFRA hselpline (afrahelpline@bristowlegal.com.au).



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MIGRATING TO CLOUD ASSESS

1. PURPOSE

AFRA is migrating all member training and assessment systems to Cloud Assess – a training platform designed to make training easier, faster, and more reliable.

This change will resolve the technical and administrative issues experienced with the previous system (Axcelerate) and deliver a more efficient way for members to manage training and certification.

2. WHY WE'RE MIGRATING

Current issues being addressed

AFRA members have faced a range of challenges in the existing system, including:

- Difficulty enrolling employees into courses.
- Delays in certificates being issued after course completion.
- Limited visibility of who has completed or not completed training.
- Manual processing causes unnecessary delays and confusion.
- Slow or unreliable access for users.

The migration to Cloud Assess removes these barriers by introducing a fully automated, centralised, and mobile-accessible platform.

3. WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE MIGRATION

Account setup

All existing Axcelerate users will receive an email invitation from Cloud Assess with a link to log in and activate their new account. This will

“The migration to Cloud Assess marks a major step forward for AFRA’s digital training.”

transfer existing records and allow users to continue training without interruption.

Access options

Cloud Assess can be accessed on:

- Any web browser (Chrome, Edge, Safari).
- The Cloud Assess mobile app, allowing users to complete training on their phones or tablets anytime, anywhere.

4. HOW ENROLMENT WILL WORK

1. Managers will receive separate course links for each AFRA training program (e.g. Estimator Course, WHS Course, COR Course, etc.).
2. Depending on the course required, the manager can click the relevant link, enrol, and pay securely online through Cloud Assess.
3. Once payment and enrolment are complete, staff will receive instant access to start the course.
4. Each learner’s progress and certificate will be automatically tracked and available through the manager’s dashboard.

Multiple enrolments

By Christmas, the system will allow multiple employees to be enrolled in the same course at once, simplifying bulk enrolments. Cloud Assess is also in active development to enable multiple course enrolments for multiple employees at once, which will launch in a future update.

5. SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

If you experience any issues accessing your new account, enrolling staff, or downloading certificates, please contact us at training@afra.com.au

We will assist with account activation, troubleshooting, and course access queries.

6. SUMMARY

The migration to Cloud Assess marks a major step forward for AFRA’s digital training. It provides faster access, secure enrolments, instant certificates, and full visibility of staff progress – all through a reliable, mobile-friendly system. This upgrade ensures everyone can complete training efficiently, with fewer delays and better support. ●

KEY FEATURES AND BENEFITS

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION	BENEFIT
Instant Enrolment	Managers can enrol staff immediately using secure links.	Remove manual delays.
Automatic Certificates	Certificates are issued instantly after completion.	No more waiting for reissues.
Manager Dashboard	View who has completed, started, or not yet enrolled.	Clear training oversight.
Mobile App Access	Courses are available via the Cloud Assess app.	Training can be completed on the go.
Scalable System	New courses and group enrolments are being added.	Supports AFRA’s growing training library.

CYBER SECURITY IN THE REMOVALS INDUSTRY: WHY USER AWARENESS MATTERS NOW MORE THAN EVER

The global removals industry has always relied on trust – trust between partners, trust with customers, and trust in the systems that help coordinate every move. But in recent months, our industry has seen a sharp rise in targeted email attacks, account compromises, and fraudulent payment attempts. Cyber-criminals have discovered what many of us already know: removals companies are highly interconnected, share information across borders, and depend on fast communication. That makes us an attractive target.

WHY WE'RE BEING TARGETED

Many removals companies work with large volumes of personal data, shipment information, insurance details, and financial transactions. Attackers know they can disrupt operations – and profit – by compromising just one email account somewhere in the supply chain.

Once access is gained, cyber-criminals often:

- Impersonate staff to request fraudulent payments
- Insert themselves into ongoing customer conversations
- Send malicious attachments to partner companies
- Forward internal information to prepare larger attacks

These breaches rarely stay contained. One compromised account can quickly become an industry-wide problem as attackers use trusted relationships to spread further.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT: OUR BIGGEST RISK AND BEST DEFENCE

While we invest in firewalls, antivirus tools, and secure systems, the reality



is that most breaches still begin with a human clicking the wrong link.

This is why user awareness training is no longer optional – it is essential.

Well-designed cyber-awareness programs help staff recognise the red flags:

- Unexpected changes to bank details
- Emails that create urgency or pressure
- Links that don't match legitimate websites
- Attachments from unknown senders
- Subtle changes in email addresses (e.g., .co vs .com)

Training transforms every employee into a first line of defence, reducing the likelihood of a single mistake triggering a company-wide incident.

WHAT REMOVALS COMPANIES SHOULD DO TODAY

To strengthen your organisation – and protect the industry as a whole – consider implementing the following:

1. Regular User Awareness Training
Short, frequent training modules are far more effective than one-off sessions.
2. Mandatory Multi-Factor Authentication

This prevents attackers from logging in even if passwords are stolen.

3. Email Security Tools
Use threat scanning, link rewriting, and impersonation protection.
4. Simulated Phishing Campaigns
These are powerful for education and identifying high-risk behaviour.
5. Clear Reporting Procedures
Staff must know exactly who to contact if something looks suspicious.

WE ALL SHARE THE SAME RISK – AND THE SAME RESPONSIBILITY

The removals industry thrives on cooperation. A vulnerability in one company can become a vulnerability for all. By raising awareness, investing in cyber-security practices, and encouraging open communication across the sector, we can help ensure our global network remains safe, trusted, and resilient.

Cyber-security is no longer just an IT issue – it's an operational necessity. Together, through awareness and proactive protection, we can build a stronger and more secure future for our industry. ●

TOOLBOX TALKS

WHS IN THE REMOVALS INDUSTRY



DID YOU KNOW?

WHAT IS A TOOLBOX TALK?

Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation, employers and persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) have a legal duty to:

- Consult with workers about health and safety matters (WHS Act, s.47–49).
- Provide information, training, instruction, or supervision necessary to protect workers from risks to health and safety (WHS Act, s.19(3)(f)).

WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

- Toolbox talks are one of the most effective and recognised methods for meeting these consultations and communication obligations.
- Regulators such as Safe Work Australia, WorkSafe, and state WHS authorities strongly encourage regular toolbox meetings as evidence of active consultation.
- In high-risk industries (like construction, removal, transport, or logistics), failing to consult workers regularly – even if toolbox talks aren't specifically named – could be seen as non-compliance with WHS consultation duties.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Hold toolbox talks at least weekly or before major jobs or changes.
- Make it a quick, structured chat – they are often held before the start of a shift or after a job, where the team
- Focuses on one specific safety topic – more if necessary
- Tailor discussions to relevant hazards, incidents, and safe work procedures – for example, highlight recent incidents or near misses, and make sure the whole crew understands how to do their work safely and efficiently.

- Keep written records (topics, attendees, signatures) to demonstrate compliance.

WHAT A TOOLBOX TALK MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Running regular Toolbox Talks helps:

- Keep safety at the front of mind for all staff
- Ensure everyone understands and follows WHS procedures
- Build a positive safety culture through participation and shared responsibility
- Identify hazards early and prevent incidents before they occur

TOOLBOX TALK SUGGESTIONS:

Here are some ideas you can use for your next Toolbox Talk:

1. Safety In and Around the Truck

Discuss safe loading and unloading areas, maintaining clear zones around trucks, using spotters when reversing, and checking surroundings before moving vehicles.

2. Manual Handling and Team Lifting

Cover correct lifting techniques, planning each lift, using equipment such as trolleys and straps, and working together to prevent strain or injury.

3. Load Restraint and Vehicle Safety

Talk about securing loads properly to prevent movement in transit, inspecting restraint equipment, and following load restraint guidelines.

4. Chain of Responsibility (CoR)

Explain how everyone in the transport chain has legal duties under CoR -from scheduling and loading to unloading. Discuss how decisions made in planning or at the depot can impact safety on the road.

5. Fatigue Management and Fitness to Drive

Discuss how tiredness affects alertness and decision-making, the importance of regular breaks, hydration, and ensuring drivers are fit for work before starting a job.

HERE'S THIS MONTH'S SUGGESTED TOOLBOX TALK TOPIC: WHS IN THE REMOVALS INDUSTRY

1 The WHS Legal Environment

Under the Work Health and Safety Act (WHS Act), both businesses (PCBUs) and workers have legal duties.

PCBUs (like AFRA members) must provide safe systems for work, training, and equipment.

Workers must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and follow company procedures.

Example:

A removalist slips on water from an unprepared fridge. The business is liable if there is no system in place (e.g., pre-removal checklist) to ensure appliances are safe to move.

2 Hazards vs Risks

Hazard: Anything with potential to cause harm (e.g., wet floors, heavy loads, poor access).

Risk: The chance that harm will occur from the hazard (e.g., a worker actually slipping and injuring their knee).

Example:

During a household removal, the client asked the crew to move a washing machine that was still connected to the water supply, saying, "It'll be fine; just pull it out."

Hazard: Unsafe client instruction – wet floor and electrical hazard from the connected appliance.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR AFRA MEMBERS

- WHS is the law – not optional.
- Hazards become risks when ignored.
- Use the risk management process every time.
- Hazard and Risk Assessments before doing the job are vital – unsafe shortcuts cost lives.
- Apply the Hierarchy of Controls.

Risk: When a removalist pulled out the washing machine, water leaked onto the floor, causing them to slip and injure their shoulder.

If the crew had stopped and followed the procedure – checking appliance safety and consulting the client to disconnect properly – the incident could have been prevented.

3 The Risk Management Process

Steps under WHS:

- Identify hazards.
- Assess the level of risk.
- Control the risk (using the Hierarchy of Controls).
- Review and monitor controls.

Example:

A crew member was sent to a narrow residential street without completing a Hazard and Risk Assessment. Because the hazard wasn't identified early, no ferry vehicle was arranged to transport items safely from the house to the truck.

As a result, the truck had to park on the street, and passing cars scraped against it, creating a serious collision risk.

The correct control should have been to carry out a Hazard and Risk Assessment to identify access issues and arrange a ferry vehicle or alternative parking plan before the job started.

4 Consultation and Communication

WHS law requires businesses to consult with workers and health and safety representatives. Workers must speak about unsafe conditions, and managers must listen and act.

Example:

Two workers decided to lower the cupboard over the balcony instead of using the stairs. They didn't consult or escalate the risk. The railing collapsed, causing serious injuries. If they had spoken up, management could have sent more staff or tools and equipment – reducing the risk of injury.

5 The Hierarchy of Control

When controlling risks, always start at the top:

- Eliminate (remove the hazard completely).
- Substitute (replace with safer option).
- Engineer (use barriers, ramps, equipment).
- Admin Controls (procedures, signage, training).
- PPE (last line of defence, not a substitute for higher controls).

Example:

In the month-end rush, staff were pressured with a \$300 "fast job bonus." This was an unsafe administrative control that increased fatigue risk. The safer control would have been to

eliminate the hazard by scheduling realistically and removing unsafe incentives.

6 Common Hazards in Removals

- Slips, trips, and falls (wet floors, cracked pathways).
- Manual handling injuries (lifting fridges, pianos).
- Vehicle risks (blind corners, reversing, narrow streets).
- Load shift during transit.
- Client-imposed unsafe methods.

Example:

At the depot, a forklift operator loaded a container onto the truck, but the driver and offsider failed to check the twist locks before departure. While turning at a roundabout, the container slid off the trailer, narrowly missing another vehicle.

Hazard: Poor load security (failure to verify twist locks).

Risk: Serious injury or death to road users and workers from an unsecured load.

The correct control should have been to inspect and confirm all load restraints – including twist locks – as part of the pre-departure safety checklist. ●

IR UPDATE

FURTHER AWARD COMPLIANCE HOTSPOTS AND RISKS FOR AFRA MEMBERS

The last edition of On the Move (September 2025, #90) highlighted five key compliance hotspots for removals employers. This article continues our commitment to supporting AFRA members in navigating employment obligations, identifying five further common compliance challenges.

Each presents its own challenges and risks. We encourage AFRA members to consider how they apply to their operations, and seek advice as set out at the end of this article. With the end of the year rapidly approaching, a number of these reminders are particularly timely for the Christmas / New Year period.

COMPLIANCE HOTSPOT

6 Casuals wanting to move to ongoing employment

Eligible casual employees have the right to notify their employers in writing to change to permanent employment (part-time or full-time employment) under the 'employee choice pathway' contained in the Fair Work Act.

Eligible casuals can notify their employer that they believe they are entitled to be employed on a part time or full time basis if:

- They have been employed for at least 6 months (or at least 12 months in a small business).
- They believe they are no longer meeting the definition of a casual employee.
- They are not currently engaged in a dispute with their employer about changing to part time or full time employment.
- During the last 6 months there has not been dispute resolution with the employee regarding moving from casual to part time or full time employment, or the employer has not refused a previous request.

Employers must then:

- If accepting the change, respond in writing to the employee within 21 days of receiving their notification of a shift away from casual employment.
- Consult with the employee regarding whether the new permanent position will be **part time or full time**, what the new hours of work will be, and when the new arrangement will commence.
- If the employer is not accepting the requested change, they must consult with the employee and tell them the reasons why in writing within 21 days of receiving the notification.

An employer can only refuse a notification from an eligible casual employee wanting to move to part- or full-time employment on the following grounds:

- The employee still meets the definition of a casual employee.
- Accepting the change would mean the employer is not complying with a recruitment or selection process required by law.
- There are fair and reasonable operational grounds for not accepting the employee notification of a shift to part- or full-time work, such as:
 - Changing casual to part- or full-time employment would require substantial changes to the way work within the business is organised;
 - Changing the employee to permanent employment would have significant impacts on the operation of the employer's business; or
 - Substantial changes to employment conditions would be reasonably necessary to ensure the employer doesn't break rules (such as those in an award or agreement) that would apply to the employee as a full time or part time employee.

The employee does not have to accept the employer's decision and can take a dispute to the Fair Work Commission. Disputes can lead to mediation, conciliation or arbitration, in which the Commission can make orders requiring an employee to either continue as a casual, or become a part- or full-time employee, and determine the days and hours for part time or full time work.

This is a complex process with added complications, requirements and limitations not identified in this short outline, detailed obligations and processes for employers to navigate, and deliberately limited grounds to refuse requests to shift to ongoing or permanent work.

Any AFRA member with employees seeking to change from casual to part time or full time employment, should consult the Australian Industry Group Workplace Adviceline.

COMPLIANCE HOTSPOT

7 Information statements

Employers must provide various information statements to employees. These are official documents published by the Fair Work Ombudsman that outline key workplace rights, entitlements, and obligations. There are three different information statements, and it is important employees are given the correct statement, at the required time. Failure to get it right in providing information statements can result in significant fines.

Fair Work Information Statement

This statement outlines the role of fair work laws, awards, enterprise agreements, employment contracts, minimum wages, the National Employment Standards, workplace rights, and dispute resolution. It must be provided to all new employees either before or as soon as practicable after they commence employment.

Casual Employment Information Statement

There is a separate information statement for casual employees outlining: how casual employment is defined, casual employment rights, arrangements for changing from casual to ongoing / permanent employment (part-time and full-time employment, see above), and dispute processes.

Employers must give casual employees the Casual Employment Information Statement:

- Before or as soon as possible after they start employment.
- For casual employees working for a small business, again after 12 months employment.
- For casual employees working for medium to larger businesses, after 6 and 12 months of employment, and then after every 12 months of employment.

Fixed-Term Contract Information Statement

The third information statement relates to fixed-term employment. It outlines what fixed-term contracts are, limitations on the use of fixed-term employment, and limitations on renewing or extending fixed-term employment. The statement also outlines various exemptions, however there are periodic changes to these exemptions, and any employer intending to offer, maintain or extend fixed-term employment should seek up to date advice confirming any exemption they intend to rely upon applies to the proposed arrangement.

The various statements can be provided to employees in person, by mail, by email, by emailing a link to the relevant page of www.fairwork.gov.au, by emailing a link to a copy of the statement available on the employer's intranet, by fax, or by another method. Employers should keep records to prove statements were provided (e.g. a

signed acknowledgment or email confirmation from each employee).

COMPLIANCE HOTSPOT

8 Annual Shutdown

An annual shutdown is a temporary closure of all or part of a business, commonly during Christmas and New Year.

Awards for removals, clerical and warehouse staff contain rules for annual shutdowns. The Road Transport and Distribution Award allows employers to shut down operations for a particular period, and to direct employees to take paid annual leave during that period. The award sets a number of rules for annual shutdowns, including:

- The employer must give not less than one month's notice of the shutdown period (with limited options for shorter notice, which AFRA members should seek advice on prior to pursuing).
- A new employee hired after the notice is given must be notified of the shutdown as soon as reasonably practicable. In practice, employers often notify new employees of a pending end-of-year shutdown during the hiring process and may include it in letters of appointment / written employment contracts.
- The employer can direct an employee to take paid annual leave the employee has accrued during the shutdown. The direction must be in writing and be reasonable.
- For employees who have not accrued sufficient annual leave prior to a shutdown, the employer and employee can agree to the taking of leave in advance.
- Employers and employees can also agree to employees taking leave without pay during a shutdown, unless the employer has directed annual leave be used.

COMPLIANCE HOTSPOT

9 Illness or caring during annual leave

Employers increasingly face questions from employees seeking to not use annual leave entitlements for periods in which they are ill or need to provide care.

In some cases, an employee is away from work (unwell or caring) leading into a previously arranged period of annual leave. In others, an employee returns from annual leave, informs the employer they have been unwell or had caring responsibilities during leave, and seeks to draw on personal/carer's leave and to have annual leave reccredited to them.

If an employee is sick or injured while on annual leave, the employee can use their paid sick leave instead of their annual leave. This can occur where the employee has previously commenced or be approved for annual leave. Employees can also use paid sick and carer's leave (personal leave) instead of annual leave for caring responsibilities or family emergencies.

Employers can still request employees provide notice and evidence when taking sick or carer's leave (personal leave) while on annual leave. An employer cannot however direct an employee to take annual leave while they are taking personal/carer's leave.

COMPLIANCE HOTSPOT

10 Christmas parties

A well-planned Christmas party can be a great end to a hard year, but it's important to balance fun with clear expectations and boundaries. Planning and proactive communication can help ensure all staff can enjoy celebrations safely and appropriately, without employment law headaches. AFRA members may wish to consider the following going into party season:

1 Reminding staff that the party is still working time

Christmas parties – whether held on or off-site, during or after working hours, are an extension of your workplace. Your human resource and employment policies apply and your legal obligations and liabilities as an employer also apply. It is often useful to remind staff before parties of professional standards and expectations, and that unacceptable and unsafe behaviour can lead to disciplinary action.

2 Clearly communicating expectations to employees

Some employers send pre-party emails, or use face-to-face meetings with staff to emphasise expectations in relation to Christmas parties, such as:

- Responsible use of alcohol, and expected standards of conduct, dress etc.
- Party start and finishing times, with employers increasingly making it clear when official events end.
- The use of social media, reminding staff not to post inappropriate content, and not to link posts to the business or individuals without their consent.
- Ensuring any gifts are not offensive or insensitive to other staff.
- Where applicable, who the senior (and sober) contact will be for the function.

3 Review and Update Policies

Employers should consider before their end of year function, ensuring anti-harassment, workplace behaviour, and alcohol policies are up to date, accessible and effectively communicated to staff.

4 Arranging safe options for transport home

Many organisations include the cost of taxis or other paid transport in Christmas function budgets and offer this way of getting home safely to staff who may wish to have more than a couple of drinks and wish to take up this option.

It should also not be forgotten that some employees also attend other organisations' functions in the

“The specialist services of Australian Industry Group Workplace Lawyers are available to AFRA members at discounted member rates.”

course of employment, particularly at Christmas. For example, a manager may attend a string of parties or events held by advisers, suppliers or contractors to the organisation.

These events present the same risk and liability issues as internal functions. AFRA members need to ensure employees attending outside gatherings in the course of their employment understand the required standard of conduct and consider providing transport options to ensure their safe passage home.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of all employment obligations. There are many more issues, concerns, risks, and compliance challenges to watch out for, and numerous other elements of awards, and employment standards that will apply in particular circumstances, for specific employees, tasks and working patterns.

This article is also not intended to substitute for taking advice appropriate to particular circumstances, which AFRA members have access to from the Australian Industry Group as set out below. However, this is hopefully a further useful reminder to AFRA members of the importance of:

- Complying with award and other Fair Work Act obligations.
- Periodically confirming you are on the right track in employing and paying your people.
- Setting standards and expectations for your workplace, particularly going into the holiday period.
- Seeking advice.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Australian Industry Group's Workplace Advice Line, provides Australia's leading authoritative source of employment advice and assistance to employers, including on the issues outlined above. AFRA members can contact this service free of charge, on 1300 55 66 77.

AFRA members also have access to high quality and highly effective legal representation and practical advice where problems occur and claims are made against your business, or where government inspectors approach you. The specialist services of Australian Industry Group Workplace Lawyers are available to AFRA members at discounted member rates.

The Australian Industry Group also offers an audit service in which experienced employment lawyers review how you are paying your people, your compliance with award and minimum wage obligations, and identify any areas in which changes need to be made to meet legal obligations. This is backed up with practical recommendations to provide reassurance that your business is complying with award and other requirements. AFRA members can access these services at discounted rates. ●

This is the second in a two-part series on common award queries and risks for AFRA members. Compliance Hotspots 1 to 5 were outlined in On the Move #90 (September 2025).

Statement on industry standards and the NSW Government investigation into the removals industry

The recent report in the *Daily Telegraph* highlighting the New South Wales Government's investigation into the removals industry has drawn renewed attention to the issue of workplace injuries and safety standards. While the current focus is on the Sydney metropolitan area, the findings may well prompt a broader review across the state – or even nationally – should the expected concerns be confirmed.

One of the proposals already under discussion is the introduction of mandatory industry training. While this is a positive step in principle, past experience shows that government-run programs, such as those delivered through TAFE, rarely meet the specific professional standards required by the removals industry.

As an industry, we must acknowledge that this situation has not arisen overnight. Despite AFRA offering an award-winning, industry-recognised training program for many years, uptake among members has been limited. Too often, the ongoing costs of damage, incidents, and staff turnover are accepted as part of doing business rather than being addressed through structured training and capability development.

AFRA has long served as the peak body representing the removals profession, and the standards it upholds directly affect public confidence in our industry. However, the volume and severity of complaints AFRA has had to mediate over recent years indicate a noticeable decline in service quality and consistency. There appears clear evidence – both documented and observed – of a widening gap between best practice and what is being delivered in the field.

It is widely understood that our sector faces challenges in attracting and retaining skilled staff, but this



“AFRA and its members must demonstrate leadership by strengthening compliance, enforcing existing standards, and prioritising participation in accredited training.”

cannot excuse a lack of investment in proper training. Without renewed commitment to professional development and consistent standards, the removals industry risks further decline – especially among those operators who should be leading by example.

The current government investigation should serve as an important wake-up call. AFRA's self-regulated structure is one of its greatest strengths, but if it is perceived as ineffective, that independence could soon be lost to external regulation.

Now is the time for decisive action. AFRA and its members must demonstrate leadership by strengthening compliance, enforcing

existing standards, and prioritising participation in accredited training. Doing so will not only protect the industry's credibility but also reaffirm the professionalism that has long defined AFRA membership.

Interested in raising standards within your team?

AFRA's accredited training programs are designed to enhance safety, service quality, and staff retention across all levels of operation.

Enquire today to find out how our training can support your business and ensure you remain at the forefront of industry professionalism. ●

Contact AFRA Training at
training@afra.com.au

5 MINUTES WITH..

The AFRA office team comprises four permanent team members and one casual contractor. The team deliver services and support to AFRA members, and drive forward the projects established by National Council. In each edition of *On The Move* we spend five minutes getting to know a team member. This month we chat with....

Eilidh Craig

Easy to say, hard to spell.

Role: Member Services, Marketing and Events Officer

Do you have a nickname?

Eils

Tell us a little bit about yourself – where have you trained? Studied? Worked before?

Born and raised in Glasgow, I studied my Undergrad in Marketing and my Master's in UX Design. I've worked



in marketing and digital design, always trying to make things look great *and* make sense. Now I'm bringing that mix of creativity and logic to AFRA, where no two days are ever the same.

How did you end up at AFRA?

I moved to Australia and knew I wanted to keep working in marketing. I like to think of it as fate... or maybe just a well-timed job ad.

What is the biggest challenge facing associations or our industry?

Keeping the industry visible and relevant in a crowded digital world – making sure people understand the expertise behind every successful move.

Coffee or tea?

Coffee

Favourite holiday destination

Thailand – great food, great weather, great people!

Do you have a hobby/play a musical instrument/play a sport? Snowboarding. Mostly downhill, occasionally horizontal.

If you were stuck on a desert island, what food would you be unable to live without?

Cadbury's Marvellous Creations! Unreal. ●

AFRA COMPLIANCE ESPRESSO

A QUICK AND CONCENTRATED SHOT OF AFRA REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

AFRA code of conduct 13 Advertising – *The member must not advertise, nor hold itself out as providing, services that are in fact not provided and must not in any other way engage in false or misleading advertising.*



AFRA identifies a breach of this clause as the promotion of so-called “paper depots.” Members must not claim, whether on their website or through any other advertising medium, to operate from a location where no removals business is physically based.

For example, using the address of a solicitor, accountant, or any unrelated business as a supposed operating depot constitutes a breach of this code. A member will be considered in breach if a

reasonable person viewing the advertisement would believe that the member operates a removals business from that location when in fact they do not.

A practical way to test compliance is to consider whether AFRA has been notified of, and audited, the location.

If AFRA has not been advised of the site and no audit has been conducted there, it is unlikely that genuine operations exist at that address. In such cases, members must not advertise or promote themselves as operating from that location on their website or elsewhere. ●



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