Risk and public works go hand in hand. Each project will have its own unique characteristics that make the process of identifying and managing these risks a challenge. There are many types of risks associated with public works: financial risk; contractual risk; operational risk; environmental risk; and work health and safety risk. While organisations across our sector allocate significant time and resources to developing policies, processes and procedures in an effort to mitigate these risks, we continue to see areas for improvement.

One specific area that is encountered on a daily basis is managing work health and safety risk. A recent study by Safe Work Australia examined the work health and safety practices, motivations, attitudes and perceptions of employers and workers in the construction industry. This report found that implementation and use of work health and safety practices and compliance activities is high within the construction industry. At the same time, it was also identified that approximately 50% of workers believed that risks are unavoidable in construction work and that workers were more accepting of risk taking than employers. One of the conclusions of the study was that there are differences in expectations between employers and workers in terms of accepting risk in the workplace.

Some of the findings that reinforce this conclusion are:

- Employers by and large believed that safe work practices were used in their workplaces while the works did not share the same level of agreement.
- 90% of employers felt that there was good communication in their workplace about safety issues and that safety information is always brought to the attention of workers, while 70% the workers agreed with this statement.
- Almost one third of construction workers agreed that conditions in their workplace stopped them from working safely, which was much higher than reported by employers.
- While workers and employers were equally likely to agree that risks are unavoidable in their workplace, employers were much more likely than workers to agree that they never accept risk taking even if the work schedule is tight.
- One quarter of construction employees indicated that they accepted risk taking at work as a part of their job.

The study has highlighted while our sector has very good systems and processes in place to manage work health and safety risk, there is a very real gap in the practical implementation of these strategies.

In response to the conclusions from this study, IPWEAQ has developed a Construction safety and risk management workshop. This program will explore the difference in the perception of the employer and the workers with regard to work health and safety risk. It will also provide attendees with the knowledge and skills to provide an environment that will promote the wellbeing of all people impacted by the works.

Topics covered include:

- Your role, responsibilities and accountabilities
- Safe attitudes and behaviours
- Enforcement or cooperation
- Consultation
- Risk management strategies and tools
- Working in a hazardous environment
- Record keeping

If you have any questions in relation to this or any other professional development program, contact Craig.Moss@ipweaq.com on 07 3632 6805.