

Builders unite to tackle onsite accidents

Matthew Cranston

The construction industry released a best-practice safety guide yesterday in a bid to halt worker deaths, which average one per week on Australian building sites.

Leighton Holdings chief operating officer Bill Wild said the rate of deaths in the construction workplace had driven the industry to fund the guide.

"This is the first time that we have been able to achieve such wide-

spread, across industry support," he said yesterday.

Bovis Lend Lease Asia Pacific chief operating officer Damien Hertslet said the publication included case studies covering every stage of the construction process and "will provide valuable, practical guidance".

John Holland Group managing director David Stewart said the company would support "all efforts to improve safety right across our industry".

But Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union national secretary John Sutton said there was a "major inconsistency" in the position of the major construction companies.

He said if the industry wanted to ensure fewer deaths it should stop trying to set about "smashing" trade unions.

"The best way to secure safety is to ensure that sites are strongly unionised," he said.

"Statistics and history show that

strongly unionised sites are the safest sites."

Federal Employment and Workplace Relations Minister Joe Hockey, who launched the guide, was not surprised by Mr Sutton's comments.

"The union bosses would only be happy if they were running and controlling every worksite in the country," he said.

"While the unions focus on scare-mongering, we're getting on with the job by introducing initiatives to improve safety and productivity."