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A Body of Work: Australian Workplace Safety Films (1955-1980)

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Abstract

As a subset of utilitarian or industrial film, the workplace safety film is an ephemeral form, one which has been attended to very little in either historical or theoretical analyses in film studies. This thesis analyses the workplace safety films produced in Australia between 1955 and 1980 in order to discover how they function discursively to facilitate particular understandings of workers, safety and Australian industrial working culture. As one example of a utilitarian 'type', the Australian workplace safety film also provides important insights into how Australian filmmaking outside conventional cinema channels functioned.

To consider these films and how they function discursively, this research involves a content analysis of a sample of thirty workplace safety films from the time period in question, using Foucauldian discourse analysis as an interpretive framework. A further eight case studies provide a more in-depth textual analysis, focussing on how the discourses about worker responsibility for accident prevention are articulated in these films, and how they interpellate a particular kind of working subject.

From these films, so ubiquitous as part of safety instruction that decades of Australian workers would have been required or requested to witness and absorb, industrial workers were given not only a set of behaviours to follow and emulate as safe practice, but also shown behaviours that they were anticipated to possess and exhibit as a matter of course, as an innate part of what being a worker constituted. In their subjectification of the Australian worker, these films give valuable insight into cultural understandings of jobs, of safety and what it means to be a worker in this country.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature: ……………………

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Date: …25th October 2019……………………….

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Chapter One

Introduction: "An illustrative spool of prosaic, evidentiary pictures"

The study of film and film-making, in Australia and internationally, has tended to focus on and prioritise the study of selected types of film. From the industrial and academic privileging of the narrative fiction film, to the legitimising of the discipline of film studies through its relationship to the study of art and aesthetics, the widespread understanding of the motion picture is that it involves not only particular content, but also that it occurs under specific conditions. Even the fields of experimental or documentary film study tend to be regarded as sub-sets or codicils of 'cinema proper'. This orientation, which places the narrative feature at the centre of the study of the moving image, has led to an assumption in Australian film history and criticism that fallow periods of feature film production (such as the post-war period through to the early 1970s) indicate that very little to nothing was happening in Australian filmmaking at the time. According to Ross Gibson, this post-war period was one "where we have customarily been told nothing existed, or at least nothing other than dun imitations of British-style informational programs spoken over an illustrative spool of prosaic, evidentiary pictures" (10). Australian cinema, at this point in history, effectively ceased to exist.

But of course, this is not the case. Cinema and film are not synonymous, and when we look outside the confines of established movie houses, it is evident that this was a time when Australian film production was in high gear. Not only this, but Australian film-watching outside of movie theatres was also prevalent, with portable projection enabling the viewing of film in the home, workplace and at a variety of other civic and social gatherings. As in Australia, so too this kind of viewing happened in other parts of the world, and the recent acknowledgement by film studies of this 'other history' of the motion picture has led to an explosion of scholarly interest in alternative forms of film viewership, and attention to

filmmaking outside the realms of entertainment or art. Dubbed 'useful cinema' by Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson (2011) and 'industrial film' by Vincenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (2009), what I here refer to as 'utilitarian film' includes filmmaking that is "primarily for the functional purposes of instruction, surveillance, quantification or record-keeping" (Broderick et al. 1).

This thesis is the result of research conducted as part of the Utilitarian Filmmaking in Australia (1945-1980) project, an Australian Research Council-funded investigation into the forms of utilitarian film made in this country. The project, conducted by researchers at Monash University, Murdoch University and the University of Canberra was conceived with the aim to:

> discover, document, and analyse a comprehensive overview of client-sponsored, instructional and government-departmental filmmaking in Australia in the post-WWII years prior to the rise of widespread video production in the late-1970s. (Broderick et al. 1).

Some areas of the project have looked to film made by the Australian defence forces, to productions by commercial extractive industries, government security and surveillance film and the moving image work of the labour movement and the Department of Agriculture. My own work, however, is motivated by an interest in a broad site: the industrial workplace; and a broad issue: safety. This thesis takes films made to instruct industrial workers on how to be safe in the workplace as its primary object of investigation.

So, what is a workplace safety film? As might seem obvious, it is a film that takes safety at work as its primary focus (though related, it does not include promotional or instructional film that explains the inner workings of individual industries or tells workers how to execute their everyday tasks). Such films tend to be short, between five and thirty minutes in length.

To limit the scope of the investigation, I have chosen to focus on films made between 1955 and 1980, a period during which many safety films were produced: while the exact number that were made is not known, the films available in Australian archives would suggest hundreds rather than thousands. The scope of the Utilitarian Filmmaking in Australia (1945-1980) project is also limited in that we have chosen to omit most (but not all) films made by the Department of Information, Commonwealth Film Unit and Film Australia, as these have been "adequately analysed within standard categories of conventionally-defined 'documentary cinema'" (Broderick et al. 1).

The workplace safety films made in Australia between 1955 and 1980 were commissioned and produced by a variety of commercial and public bodies, particularly state government departments. The state Departments of Labour and Industry in particular sponsored numerous safety films, though they were also produced by the CSIRO, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Primary Industries, among others[1]. Many were made in collaboration with state film units. Their audiences were workers in a variety of industry settings: construction; agriculture; food production; factories; transport; service industries and more.

As an identifiable style or type of filmmaking, the workplace safety film warrants academic consideration in part owing to its ephemeral nature. At a time in history when the sheer volume of moving image culture forces archival and historic institutions to make difficult decisions about what artefacts are worthy of preservation, utilitarian film is something that potentially could be considered disposable. These are films that are perceived (sometimes rightly) as dull, an example of Gibson's 'dun imitations': clunky, didactic, and almost aggressively prosaic. However, these films represent and reflect Australian culture at a time

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[1] Recent articles by John Hughes, written as part of the Utilitarian Filmmaking in Australia (1945-1980) project, cover some of this history. "From Cold War to Hot Planet" (2018) covers the utilitarian output of the CSIRO film unit, while "Zubrycki's Point: *Amongst Equals,* utilitarian film and the Australian labour movement" (2019) discusses a landmark case study of a film sponsored by the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

where other forms of film production had slowed, and their very utilitarian nature, being as they are for a general, non-elite viewership, means that their presentation of culture is one that reflects a 'common sense' way of thinking. An assumption in and about the films is that they reflect dominant cultural discourses about work, workers, industry, Australia and Australian culture. Given this, it seems reasonable to ask: what are these discourses? What can Australian workplace safety films tell us about attitudes to work and safety, and how did they articulate their discursive content, both in what they actually say and in how they say it, formally and aesthetically? Several hypotheses present themselves when initially viewing the films in question: firstly, that a discourse runs throughout the films of the period where it is assumed that the individual worker is responsible for the accidents that may occur. A corollary of this is the way that workers, as the subjects interpellated by these films (that is, hailed and ideologically constituted by them (Althusser 157, 162)), are expected to exhibit certain attitudes and possess certain identity characteristics. This way of speaking to a particular kind of worker similarly means that the voice with which the films speak (both literally and discursively) is also a relevant concern.

In asking these primary research questions, further questions are raised. For instance, if the discursive qualities of these films indicate particular cultural understandings of and attitudes to work and safety, how did these change over the period in question? Is there an indication that they have changed in the decades since? If utilitarian films are defined by their difference from films for the purposes of art or entertainment, what are the distinguishing aesthetic qualities of workplace safety films and what elements of film form do they utilise to convey their messages? Where do the discourses that they inhabit and convey come from? The questions themselves also indicate further methodological approaches or concerns that might be appropriate. Some of these questions point to logical areas of historical investigation

outside of the films themselves, while others suggest that textual analysis may be the best route to finding answers.

I commence with a chapter outlining the history and background of central concern to this thesis, namely the history of firstly a particular type of filmmaking in Australia (focussing particularly on non-fictional filmmaking, government filmmaking at both federal and state level, and union filmmaking); and secondly the history of workplace safety itself, particularly in terms of industrial work. Following on from this, the third chapter details the methodological approaches that guide the research. These include both content and close textual analysis, and a particular emphasis on discourse analysis in the manner following Foucault, with attendance to cognate areas of Foucauldian theory (archaeology, genealogy, the *dispositif* and biopower). With the fourth chapter, I detail the results of my content analysis of a sample of thirty Australian workplace safety films, with special consideration of how the discursive statements I have identified in the texts function. While this content analysis offers a survey of the messages that Australian workplace safety films as a generic type were conveying, by necessity this is a broad look at them. A closer, more detailed look at workplace safety films in the form of case studies comprise chapters five to seven.

The three case study chapters each investigate distinct types of workplace safety film in detail. Chapter five looks at three films from the late 1950s-early 1960s that utilise techniques familiar from the expository documentary mode to convey their didactic messages: *Safety in the Meat Industry* (n.d., c. 1957-1962), *The Unsafe Act* (1965) and *Don't be Scalped* (1960). Chapter six moves on to discuss three narrative shorts from the 1970s: *It Wasn't Me* (1978), *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* (1974) and *Noise Destroys* (1979), all of which use the techniques of docudrama to tell an instructive story about workplace safety. The final case study chapter is concerned with the ways that union-made and union-affiliated safety films have at times replicated and at other times challenged the dominant discourses about work

and safety that are exemplified in government- and commercially-made workplace safety films, particularly those that identify worker behaviour as the cause of accidents and place the blame for injury at the feet of workers themselves.

While the study of Australian utilitarian filmmaking is still a nascent field, it warrants academic inquiry because of its importance as an employer of film workers, a rich repository of visual history, and a gauge of social and cultural discourses and concerns. As one example of a utilitarian 'type', the Australian workplace safety film provides important insights into how Australian filmmaking outside conventional cinema channels functioned, and into how Australians were acculturated to view their workplaces and their own safety.

Chapter Two

Films and Safety: "not a single unified object"

1. Introduction

Two historical strands deserve attention in painting the picture of Australian workplace safety films – what they are; what they look, sound and feel like; why they were made like this, and who they were made for and screened to. The first is the background to a particular type of filmmaking, while the second is the workplace and what came to be known in the later twentieth century as occupational health and safety. Little research yet exists about the historical production and use of workplace safety films themselves, as while they may be of interest in the fields of training and occupational management, these fields tend to have interest only in their contemporary uses. Film studies, when it has attended to workplace safety films, has primarily been interested in them as a camp curiosity. Sconce, for instance, includes safety training films in his discussion of 'paracinema' and the celebration of 'trash' aesthetics (372). Other interest arose when a noted auteur was involved in their production. This paucity of serious critical engagement with workplace safety films means that investigating their history involves engaging with the broader categories of filmmaking of which they were part. Workplace safety films fit into or exist alongside several similar categories of film, all with particular inflections or characteristics: utilitarian films, industrial films, government films, union films and documentary films. Section two of this chapter will look at these categories and how they functioned within the Australian context leading up to and during the period 1955 to 1980.

In this section I explore the ways that Australian workplace safety films deliver their message. The very utility that makes them utilitarian films has a long history: the history of work, in particular industrial work and the issues of health and safety that pertain to it. I

explore the conflicts relevant to the discourse of health and safety, as well as the factors that have been viewed in the literature as the causes of workplace accidents: people, machines and workplace processes. This is followed by consideration of discourses that work in conjunction with that of safety: masculinity, mateship and class, before the section concludes with some notes about what the legacy of worker responsibility constitutes, after the period the films were made and through to the present day.

2. The Australian Workplace Safety Film: Forms and Institutions

When mentioning this research to others for the first time, on hearing that it concerns Australian industrial workplace safety training films from 1955 to 1980, most people responded non-commitally, or with a polite interest belying how uninteresting they thought it sounded. It struck me that, within film studies, as with many parts of the humanities, research tends to concern texts that in some way excite, appeal, or are simply favourites of the researcher, as Sconce mentions, "most film scholars, one would assume, study the cinema because they were a fan first" (378). With workplace safety films, however, the perception is that they are dull to watch, and therefore dull to engage with critically. Nevertheless, everyone I described this research to had a preconception of what these films were like. Everyone knew what a workplace safety training film was; everyone had some notion of how it might deliver its message. Most frequent were notions that they involved long and slow takes of non-actors going about their jobs; interspersed with occasional recreations of lurid accidents (the most interesting parts!); dry, uninterested voice overs; and that workplace safety films were all the same, despite addressing different industries. These preconceptions are, in many cases, accurate. However, these features are only part of the picture, and the fact of their presence does not indicate where they may have come from, and the types of filmmaking that influenced their style and mode of message delivery, or what is notably Australian about the workplace safety films made in Australia.

This section considers the workplace safety film in relation to several different categories and sub-categories of filmmaking, looking at how this form of filmmaking fits within them (or does not, as the case may be). It also considers several of the Australian institutions or groups of practitioners who made films of this sort or influenced their style. While the following sections on utilitarian, government, documentary and union film primarily discuss how these institutions worked to produce a particular recognisable form and style in these films, I conclude by discussing some aspects of the technology and screening contexts relevant to Australian workplace films.

Throughout this thesis, I refer to the 'Australian workplace safety film' as though this were a singular or obvious type. As this discussion will show, while certain features certainly are recognisable as ones that typify the Australian workplace safety film, this should not imply a complete unity of form, any more than any genre or national cinema implies homogeneity. As noted by Moran and O'Regan:

> Australian film is not a single unified object, but a series of different objects, differently realised. Australian film can be thought of as a series of different discursive constructions, the discourses occupying a series of different institutional sites that variously allow or impede the issue of the discourse as a set of filmic texts. (163)

As with the Australian film here, so with the Australian workplace safety film. As a body of texts, they share a purpose, but how they effect that purpose, and by what means, involves variations and fluctuations over time, place and context. This is where these supposedly dull films reveal their appeal as well as their relevance to Australian film and working culture.

2.1 Utilitarian and Industrial Film

Workplace safety films are made primarily with a basic function in mind; that is, they aim to instruct viewers on how to remain safe and avoid accidents in the workplace. The majority of these films instruct particular industries, especially those that involve risk or have high rates of severe injury, so there exist more films instructing construction or factory workers than films for office workers or teachers, for instance. The workplace safety films produced in Australia fit with Acland and Wasson's expanded definition of utilitarian film, in that they are "didactic films that are fictional as well as non-fictional, narrative as well as non-narrative" (4). Because safety films cover this range, they are sometimes (but not always) classed as documentary and are sometimes (but not always) referred to as 'institutional' or 'government' filmmaking, as institutional bodies or government agencies were often involved in their production.

In Australia, it is notable that the producers of workplace safety films have tended to be government departments or non-commercial entities. While some are made by independent film companies, these are usually works sponsored by other agencies. In the United States of America, workplace safety films made in the 1940s to 1980s tended to be produced by businesses, for example insurance companies, railway corporations and makers of safety equipment and clothing (Ostherr 103). This means that while there are similarities in the ways that workplace safety films discuss safety internationally, the Australian films involve a particular relationship to institutions, and to the nation-state. Given this relationship, I focus on the institutional forms that workplace safety films have taken rather than looking at individual directors or producers. According to Albert Moran, such institutional films "speak with the collective and often anonymous voice of the body that gave rise to the film" (*Projecting Australia* 151) and, as such, ascribing authorial style and message to individuals is counter to uncovering how these films function discursively. The approach taken here is by necessity broad and general, before pinpointing specifics in later chapters.

2.2 Australian Government and Sponsored Film

The Australian government has been involved in the commissioning or sponsoring of films since 1908. In 1911 it began employing filmmakers to produce newsreels and promotional films. Most of this work was intended to entice immigration to Australia from Britain and these films were not screened in Australia for Australian audiences (FitzSimons, Laughren and Williamson 42). In terms of the output produced by the Australian government up until 1945 and the establishment of the Australian National Film Board, Moran claims that prior to this the government produced only sponsored documentaries, including newsreels and other promotional forms under this label (*Projecting Australia* 1). While many of these documentaries were promotional (of aspects of Australian life, industry, tourism and so on), the post-war aims of this promotion and the style in which it was executed involved a particular vision of the nation. D. Williams compares the Curtin and Chifley Labour governments (1942-49) to Roosevelt's New Deal, in that both responded to their national post-war situations similarly: institutional nation-building through strengthening the role of the federal government, social engineering, and social services, coupled with economic free enterprise and growing affluence (84-85).

This institutional nation-building required the:

> articulation of the public sphere as a sphere of national interest immediately recognisable as transcending sectional interests; but there is also the requirement that the individual citizen should be in no doubt as to the importance of the assigned role he or she must play (Higson 84).

This ideological climate helps in understanding the post-war government filmmaking atmosphere: the promotion of a non-sectional, unified Australia and of the individualistic but

nevertheless nationalistically-minded Australians, content in the roles assigned them is a discourse characterising many government-made films of the period.

This is not to suggest that flexibility was absent from government filmmaking or that a homogeneous voice is inherent in government-made or sponsored work. FitzSimons et al. argue that "the concept of institutional voice does not assume that all the works supported by a particular institution have a common voice; indeed a key way in which institutions vary is in how strongly a particular 'house style' pertains" (26). This variance across different sponsoring bodies is also discussed by Moran, who writes: "The space a client allows a filmmaker is partly a matter of personal relations; it is also a matter of the aesthetic freedom allowed, or taken, by a filmmaker in tackling a sponsor's brief", and "authorities have differed on how flexible (or intransigent) they might be with a sponsored brief for a film" (*Projecting Australia* 11). Workload, deadlines and budget have often dictated the extent of this flexibility or intransigence, in the case of workplace safety films.

The aforementioned institutional nation-building discourses that appeared in Australian government-made films took different forms over the period that this research covers. While films do not simply ape the dominant spirit or ideology of the age, they are an active part of the political order, not just reflecting but also absorbing, disseminating and producing the discourses of that order. The post-war discourses of non-sectionalism and nationalism were still present in the 1950s and 60s, but the individualistic streak took on different flavours and aspects. Moran argues that the former post-war discourse of national and personal *struggle* to build a better way of life gave way, under the second term of the conservative Menzies government (1949-66) to an impression that "things were getting better, almost of their own volition" (*Projecting Australia* 60). He also emphasises that increasing industrial production now appeared in film more as a pursuit of inherent value, rather than specifically for economic prosperity. Also prevalent was that the dynamic working-class communities and

groups of workers found in the films of the 1940s were now absent, replaced by depictions of individual workers or of industrial processes with workers relegated to the background (*Projecting Australia* 65-66). This image of the solitary worker, or of smaller groups of disparate workers, is found in many of the workplace safety films made in the 1950s and '60s.

The Australian economic downturn in 1970-71 resulted in fewer funding opportunities for government-made films than had existed in the 1950s and 60s. Under Whitlam's Labor government (1972-75) there was an ideological movement away from "imperial connections, replacing these with a more nationalist emphasis" (Moran *Projecting Australia* 82-3). This move to explore images of Australia as an autonomous nation led to production of films addressing the lacunae that had previously existed: indigeneity, women, migrants, conservation and disability became subjects that government films were interested in addressing. These emphases acknowledge Australia as a place of complex and contested relationships, where a plurality of lives, experiences and problems exist. This meant that in terms of workplace safety films, not only were there fewer being produced, but that those being made were less likely to depict the industrial workplace as an efficient machine, problematised only by careless, lazy or reckless workers and work practices. Instead, in the 1970s we begin to see depictions of the workplace as a site of diverse knowledges and negotiated relationships between workers, unions and management.

The changing depictions of Australia that are seen in government-made and -sponsored films in general involve a move from a self-assured and authoritative nationalism, where individual citizens work towards a common national good, to a more negotiated vision of how that good is to be reached, or even what 'the national good' comprises. Moran characterises the national discourse of the late 1940s and early 1950s as "optimistically of a self-sufficient land and people. The country and the land are the hub of the nation, the source of its wealth and its

national characteristics of resilience and independence" but that by the 1980s "a less confident vision of Australia" was evident (*Projecting Australia* 154). These discourses and their changes and fluctuations provide a background to understanding the discourses apparent in workplace safety films of the era and inform the analyses of them in this research.

2.3 Documentary and Grierson

Discussing government filmmaking in Australia is difficult to accomplish without acknowledging the influence of pioneering documentary filmmaker John Grierson not only on its development but also on the way it has been discussed, lauded, criticised and mythologised. Not just as an advisor to governments regarding national – and nationalistic – use of the medium, but as an advocate for documentary production, Grierson's work in Australia is useful to consider in terms of the workplace safety film's relationship to documentary.

As a representative of the British Imperial Relations Trust, Grierson visited Canada, New Zealand and Australia between 1938 and 1940 "to report on the style of official documentary work in each country and make suggestions about future activity" (Shirley and Adams 165). This led – eventually – to the establishment of the Australian National Film Board in 1945, although, as noted by D. Williams, this was not a case of simple cause and effect (as is implied by Shirley and Adams (1989) and Moran (1991)). However, Grierson's influence was particularly strong among practitioners and lobbyists for a national documentary movement supported by federal policy, which helped change the tide on his initial frosty reception in Australia (D. Williams 12).

Grierson's influence is apparent on Australian filmmaking in terms of form, message and style. His memorandum to Prime Minister Menzies (1940) details the messages and intents he believes film, particularly documentary, should have. Firstly, "if mobilised in an orderly way

under a determined government policy" film could be used to "break down sectionalism and induce a national viewpoint, by bringing alive Australia to itself in terms of films describing national effort and constructive contributions to the more important fields of national activity" ("Memorandum" Grierson 72). It could also "bring into the public imagination the problems, responsibilities and achievements of government" as well as contributing to the war effort and the positive image of the Commonwealth (ibid). Grierson was not trying to persuade governments of documentary's artistic merit, but rather on "the more utilitarian basis of it being a means of spreading public information and moulding public opinion. The classical documentary form was an adequate instrument to this end" (Moran *Projecting Australia* 50).

Stylistically, elements of the 'Griersonian mode' became influential in Australian documentary-making, both government-made and otherwise which, as Moran suggests, involves use of the classical documentary form. This form, as described by Nichols, is one that features voice-of-God narration providing expository information about the issue at hand, while the images provide support to or illustration of that commentary. They are organised by the voice over, which is "therefore presumed to come from some place that remains unspecified but associated with objectivity or omniscience" (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 168). The classical form of documentary is "an ideal mode for conveying information or mobilizing support within a framework that pre-exists the film" (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 169) – hence its popularity in industrial and safety films, which have a clear agenda and message to convey.

The way that workers are represented in safety films is also largely influenced by this classical expository form, where we are less likely to be shown individuated characters, and instead are introduced to 'types' (factory worker, farmer, electrician, manager et cetera, all of whom embody certain characteristics) whether they are named or not. D. Williams writes that

these 'social character types' have existed almost as long as documentary itself. But he also notes that these ways of representing people were articulated strongly by Grierson (98). For Higson, Grierson's use of types in this way is based on "an emphasis on the narrativisation not of individual desire but of public (social) process" (85).

While the Australian workplace safety film offers variances to this classical mode and does not exclude other modes, it was the form most commonly employed, particularly up until the late 1960s. Nevertheless, in discussing documentary's relationship to the workplace safety film, while it clearly has a substantial influence, this does not mean that workplace safety films *are* documentaries. Nichols employs a Venn diagram to illustrate the relationship between documentary and non-documentary, listing types of film such as newsreels, raw footage, television reports and industrial or sponsored films as falling between the two (*Introduction to Documentary* 146). While the Australian workplace safety film employs documentary characteristics, it also borrows from narrative forms (much as the docudrama does, as will be discussed in chapter six) as well as other types of information communication. As influential as Grierson was on the emergence of a filmmaking landscape in which industrial safety films were produced, and as important documentary made in a 'Griersonian mode' was to the way safety films appear, other institutions and styles were also significant to them. The national filmmaking body of Australia – known at different times as the Australian National Film Board (1945-56), the Commonwealth Film Unit (1956-1973), Film Australia (1973-2008) and today as Screen Australia – was producing films contemporaneously with the workplace safety films studied in this research, and in many ways provided a model for them.

2.4 The Commonwealth Film Unit/Film Australia

During World War Two, the Commonwealth Department of Information (DOI) was the government body charged with producing propaganda and promotional material for the war effort in Australia. This included film production. The Film Division of the DOI was "intended to coordinate government and commercial film activity and to mobilise the film medium for national ends" (Shirley and Adams 166). Post-war and post-Grierson, the Australian National Film Board (ANFB) was established in 1945, and operated primarily as an advisory board to the Film Division, which was renamed the Commonwealth Film Unit (CFU) in 1956 (Moran *Projecting Australia* 5). The ANFB brought together filmmakers from two distinct backgrounds, both of which came to have a significant impact on the sorts of films made by the Australian government for decades to come. The first group of filmmakers were from Australia's burgeoning independent documentary movement. They were interested in film as an artistic and political tool and were predominantly involved in leftist politics. The second group were newsreel filmmakers formerly employed by the DOI, who were more likely to view film as an informational tool (D. Williams 102-103). These radical and journalistic impulses did not always sit comfortably together and, as charted by Moran in *Projecting Australia*, one or the other held more sway over the predominant style at the Unit at different stages.

The films made by the CFU and its later incarnation, Film Australia, varied in style and form. On one hand, the Unit's purview was fostering the Australian film industry and assisting in forming a distinctive national cinema, including both fiction and non-fiction. On the other hand, it also was intended to promote government and government initiatives. In this capacity it produced films sponsored by other government departments, or sometimes engaged independent commercial contractors to produce films on behalf of other departments (Moran *Projecting Australia* 12). These included safety films, but also numerous films for the promotion of various industries, products or events.

There was an increase in the number of these 'departmental' films produced in the 1950s through to the mid-1960s. Moran credits this to a growing political and aesthetic conservatism within the unit, as many of the 'documentarians' (many politically radical and with an interest in documentary poetics) who had worked within the unit during the 1940s had moved on. This left the more conservative filmmakers from journalistic or commercial backgrounds to have more say in the unit's output (*Projecting Australia* 58-9). Several commentators note that the 1950s and 60s are seen as a time of stagnation at the CFU, where the films produced were of little interest, with an over-reliance on the (by then unfashionable) classical expository style, which overstayed its welcome until well into the 1970s (Ansara and Milner 28; Moran *Projecting Australia* 77; Beggs 101). This 'boring' period was a boom time for workplace safety and other utilitarian films. Ansara and Milner suggest that this perception of the 1950s as a dull and quiet time for Australian filmmaking is due to an emphasis on an "Australian film history in which our cinematic heritage is narrated primarily from the vantage point of the dramatic feature film" (35).

While exactly how workplace safety films depict work and workers is discussed thoroughly throughout this thesis, it is worth noting how the CFU represented them, as their 'house style' provided a model for other utilitarian films produced in Australia. In the post-war films and up until the early 1960s, Moran notes a "remarkable" number of films that are about or refer to work in both public service and primary industry, and that while this could be seen as part of the Griersonian influence of the British Documentary Movement, the depiction of labour is also:

> glorious […] heroic partly because it is not ostentatious. It is sufficient reward unto itself […] work is seen in a positive light: every part in the vast system of the nation is busy striving to help build the strength and edifice of the nation (*Projecting Australia* 37, 39)

This depiction morphed somewhat through the 1950s and 60s, where the aforementioned depiction of solitary workers and industrial processes became more prevalent than the inspiring images of united workers. Later on, once the CFU had become Film Australia in 1973, these depictions changed again. As the classical expository style fell out of favour, government-produced films began to recognise the need for highlighting different voices, experiences and perspectives. Films tended to be more self-reflexive and to employ interviews, multiple narrators and subjects speaking to camera rather than the single omniscient voice over that had dominated previously. What this means in terms of the workplace safety film is that the previous certainty and simplicity as to how accidents occur and how to prevent them gives way to a representation of workplace dynamics as being negotiated and complex, and achievement of safety as being far from certain. In fact, the safety films made by Film Australia in the late 1970s and early 1980s are often pessimistic and the accidents in them often maiming or fatal (for instance, *Hospitals Don't Burn Down* (1977), *Accident* (1980)).

2.5 State Government and Departmental Filmmaking

In addition to the films produced by the CFU/ Film Australia, other forms of government filmmaking were taking place at the same time. As mentioned, while some government departments sometimes sponsored films made by the CFU, others operated their own film units. The Department of Agriculture and the CSIRO, for instance, made many films, including safety films, targeted specifically at workers in the industries they were concerned with (the film sample in this thesis includes the CSIRO's *A Matter of Survival* (1963), about proper handling of benzene in the laboratory). As well as departmental films, state governments also operated their own informational film units (Moran "Constructing the Nation" 161-2). At first, these were usually under the aegis of another department (as with the Tasmanian Government Film unit, founded in 1946 by the Lands and Surveys

Department). In the 1970s, some State Film Units (in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and New South Wales) became Film Corporations – government-owned commercial businesses, which meant that commercially driven work became more common for them. In the 1980s, several of these corporations were privatised. The safety films produced by state government departments were usually collaborations between several agencies, both government and commercial: take, for instance, *Safety in Your Hands* (1974), which was made by the South Australian Film Corporation and sponsored by the South Australian Department of Labour and Industry in cooperation with Chrysler Australia Ltd (whose factory and workers appear in the film). As with the national filmmaking body, state film units and state departments often employed small commercial production companies to produce work on their behalf: in the 1970s supporting local documentary producers was part of their brief (FitzSimons et al. 77).

State government units were modelled after the CFU/Film Australia and produced similar work, although without the budgets and creative freedom that existed there. As a result, Moran describes their output as "at best, competent executions of their brief" ("Constructing the Nation" 162). Shirley and Adams, however, are more charitable: "Although much of the product was little more than utilitarian, the number and diversity of the people who made them meant that occasionally a highly inventive work emerged" (191). One might assume state unit or state departmental films might differ from those produced by the CFU/ Film Australia in their approach to the treatment of state interests: the latter tended to omit "any discussion or consideration of the states as distinct political, economic or cultural entities, each with a history that predates Federation" (Moran *Projecting Australia* 139-40). However, this absence of state specificity is evident even in the state government films. The prevalent attitude seems to have been that "the states were seen as parochial, fostering local and regional loyalties damaging to Australia's interests as a whole" (Moran *Projecting Australia*

8). While a few films do look at, say, the economy of the state in which they were produced (*Safety in Rural Industries* (n.d.), for example, looks at agricultural production figures in Queensland), this is done to highlight a nationally significant industry that that state is known for or instrumental in producing, rather than to promote the state itself.

The similarities between safety films made by the CFU/Film Australia and between different state government and departmental films are not due to this form of utilitarian film having a cohesive guiding movement or filmmaking philosophy behind it. Rather, it is likely to do with the commercial pressures of small crews of craftspeople working to tight deadlines (Shirley and Adams 191). The homogeneity with which safety films discuss their subject is therefore part of the wider discourses of health and safety and labour in Australia: these messages are presented as 'common sense' rather than as part of a deliberate agenda. By looking to films made by unions and other left-leaning organisations, we sometimes see an alternative to this message.

2.6 Leftist and Union Utilitarian Filmmaking

Although the majority of workplace safety films made in Australia between 1955 and 1980 were government-made, not all of them were. In addition to commercial productions made by private companies, unions or union-affiliated film units produced a number of safety films. The industrial films made by collectives such as the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit (WWFFU) provide a useful contrast to the government-made works, as they illustrate what was not possible for government-made or sponsored films to discuss (or what they had no interest in discussing).

The WWFFU was established in 1953 in the Waterside Workers Federation Sydney branch and was "made possible through [the union's] unity, industrial strength and large membership, along with the awareness of its officials that film could be a useful tool of

propaganda" (Ansara and Milner 37). The Unit had three central salaried members: Keith Gow, Norma Disher and Jock Levy, who worked collaboratively to write, shoot, direct and produce all their twenty-one films. These included films documenting industrial action, promoting union membership and other subjects pertinent to workers' rights from pensions to housing. They also made films sponsored by other unions, including safety films: *The Bones of Building* (1956), for the Building Workers' Industrial Union and *Think Twice* (1958), for the Boilermakers Society of Australia (Shirley and Adams 196).

In terms of style, the films made by the WWFFU took inspiration from Soviet and European cinema, though they also "appropriated the Griersonian documentary style, changing it from a tool for social control to a tool for social change" (Ansara and Milner 39). The WWFFU films do use an omniscient voice over, expository images showing safe and unsafe working methods, location shooting with non-actors and other tropes familiar from other safety films in the Griersonian mode. However, unlike in government- or commercially-produced film, that voice over argues strongly for robust union representation and for collaboration between workers, union and management to work on existing issues and improve worker comfort and safety. *Think Twice,* for instance, acknowledges that protective clothing is often uncomfortable, but that improving design is possible with this collaboration. Further, these films appear 'worker-minded' in that the benefits of safety are rarely framed as being for industry, nation or productivity; rather they are for workers (as a collective) and their families.

While I have focussed here on the WWFFU as an influential example of how leftist and union filmmaking provided an alternative to government-produced and sponsored workplace safety films, other films, made by bodies such as the Victorian Trades Hall, similarly voiced views that challenged the doxa about workers and workplace accidents. Both *Think Twice*

and the Victorian Trades Hall-produced *The Myth of the Careless Worker* (d. Kim Dalton, 1983[2]) will be included as case studies in chapter seven of this thesis.

2.7 Technology and Screening Contexts

A central concern when writing about utilitarian films is not just what their function was, discernible from the film text itself, but how they function *in situ*, that is, how they circulated, who watched them, where screenings took place and under what circumstances. For most of the twentieth century screening and viewing contexts for many other types of film were a given, so much so that the medium (film) and the screening setting (cinema) are often treated synonymously. However, if we approach technology, audiences, screening location and distribution as facets that strongly influence not only why films look the way they do but also why they come to have particular cultural meaning, these facets take on pertinence. The ways that utilitarian film has operated, both internationally and in Australia, are dependent on a different set of available technologies, different ways of distributing pictures, and different ways of screening and viewing them from the ones associated with film intended to entertain or intellectually and aesthetically stimulate.

Many of the workplace safety films made in Australia from the 1940s to the 1980s were shot on 16mm. The use of this technology was partly economical and partly due to screening convenience: the post-war increase in availability of portable 16mm projectors made it advantageous for screening the types of films that were shown in non-theatrical and sometimes temporary or makeshift locations. Shirley and Adams note that the production of utilitarian films in Australia "helped perpetuate the great post-war boom in the use of this gauge already started by film societies" (191). Despite the convenience and cost-saving

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[2] Though *The Myth of the Careless Worker*'s release date is outside the range that this research primarily focusses on, it has been included as it provides a particularly interesting point of contrast to the discourses typical of other workplace safety films.

afforded by using 16mm, there were technological limitations that had an impact on the way utilitarian films looked and particularly on the way they sounded. As many utilitarian and training films were made cheaply, they tended to be only one reel long and to use non-synchronised sound, at least until the early 1960s at the CFU, and in the less well-funded state film units for even longer (Moran *Projecting Australia* 52). This is another reason for the predominance of "expository films where primary meaning is anchored in narration" (FitzSimons et al. 15). While I do not intend to indicate here that technology *dictated* stylistic choices, it is nevertheless one factor among many that steered their course.

Another reason for the dominance of the expository style in workplace safety films up until the late 1960s involves the ways in which workplace safety films were screened, which again differs from more dominant cinematic forms. For the majority of films, the texts 'speak for themselves' to a certain extent: paratextual material such as posters, trailers and other promotional ephemera may contribute to their meaning, but these tend to be relegated to secondary status. For workplace safety films in the 1950s to 1980s, the film was part of a more complex network of texts, which might include accompanying lectures, other films shown as part of the same programme, and teaching material to test the audience on their comprehension of the film. The simplicity and directness of message inherent in the expository mode better facilitated their use as didactic tools within a learning system. In this way, the additional material could supervise the message these films delivered. The Department of Labour and Industry imply this cohesion of message in their discussion of their film programme:

> The film library of the safety education service has 16mm sound films of some 150 titles dealing with many aspects of industrial safety […] the films are not available for lending but are screened on our own equipment and the screenings are augmented by

lectures by trained safety education service officers. This service is made available on your own premises (*At Your Safety Service*)

With all aspects of the industrial safety information conveyed through the Department, these films would have imparted a particular authoritative voice. Considering also that in several states the Department provided other services such as training, posters and informational brochures, their presence as arbiters of what safety cultures constituted and how discussions of safety might operate have been considerable.

The utility of utilitarian films often gives hints as to who their audience might be as well as to their content. As implied by the workplace safety film, the target audience was workers: this is whom most of the films directly interpellate. However, how and when these workers watched the films is also relevant. As indicated by the Department of Labour and Industry, safety films were shown "on your own premises" i.e. on worksites, to groups of workers. But safety films were also screened to groups of management personnel at conventions or special safety events, as reported in *The Canberra Times* ("Safety Aim In Industry" 6), *The Biz* ("Local 'Safety in Industry' Meeting" 9) and *The Western Herald* ("Safety Convention" 10), which the latter claimed to be "an opportunity for executives to expand their knowledge of modern safety methods". State Departments of Labour and Industry usually hosted these conventions, or the Department of Agriculture in the case of farm safety. Unions were also active in distributing and exhibiting safety films, touring the country in mobile units. This was a way for leftist organisations, usually based in cities, to reach rural, isolated or immigrant workers (D. Williams 33). The Waterside Workers Federation distributed prints of their Film Unit's films to all their branches, and screened them "to many thousands of members through mass stop-work meetings or in the lunch hour. The Unit was able to buy a Kombi van, which doubled as a production vehicle and screening platform" (Ansara and Milner 38). These alternative methods of distribution and screening meant that the whole

discursive apparatus of workplace safety films was considerably different from that of mainstream commercial cinema and even from other utilitarian film forms.

While this section has looked at how certain film histories have shaped the way that workplace safety films were made in Australia up to 1980, the history of work in this country has also played a part in how they articulate their messages about safety. The following section turns to the ways that understandings of occupational health and safety both influenced and were influenced by the workplace safety films produced here.

<div align="center">3. Australian Industrial Safety and Work</div>

The ways that safety in the Australian workplace was discussed and understood is central to understanding the discourses at work in these films, what they consider safety to constitute, and how they present it being achieved. This section outlines the background and history to the ideas about safety and workplaces that are evident in the films under discussion. Starting from their emergence in roughly the 1890s, I follow their development through to the times when the films were made, and contextualise them in terms of how their discourses have evolved or solidified in the decades since. While legislation and jurisprudence are relevant to tracing this history, they are not the central focus. Regulation and legislative measures arise from and thereafter shape knowledge and understanding of safety: in this respect, they illustrative of discourse and arise from particular debates over safety's meaning, importance and processes.

Numerous disciplines with interests in how workplace safety operates enter the picture here: industrial sociology, sociology of health, human relations, workplace psychology, organisational management, industrial relations studies, public health and labour history. All of these have their own ways of discussing safety, and preferred terminology with which to do so: what I am here referring to as 'workplace safety' is also known as 'industrial safety' or

'organisational health and safety (OHS)'. Similarly, there is debate in the literature as to whether the term 'injury' or 'illness' is more appropriate, as well as discussions of the differences and distinctions between 'safety' and 'health' and the possible issues in referring to them in tandem (see for instance Thomas 1991). This terminological debate illustrates how the ways that safety and work are talked about are not common sense or neutral: they are hotly contested, gatekept and shored up through usage and favour from particular powerful groups or areas of knowledge, and are therefore discursive. The discussion of the background of these safety discourses must be understood in terms of a history of opposing views, debate and conflict.

3.1 Dichotomies and Conflict

Major Australian industries such as mining, forestry, construction and factory work were – and still are – workplaces where the dangers to workers are of high consequence (in that they can be lethal), and of a wide variety and frequency. From the 1890s to the 1920s, owing in part to an increase in industrial action in the 1890s, several laws were passed at state and federal levels, intended to protect workers from injury, including for instance, the *Shops and Factories Acts* (for all states except Tasmania, 1873-97) (C. Williams "Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 35), *Lifts and Scaffolding Acts* (all states except Tasmania, 1903-22) (McQueen 27), and the *NSW Mines Inspection Act 1901* (Cumpston 4). From 1912 the *Workmen's Compensation Act* provided income protection for injured Commonwealth employees. While offering a comprehensive history of the laws passed at State and Federal level may give a picture of the sorts of safety issues that came under scrutiny in the country at different points, there is no clear or linear trajectory. According to Johnstone and Quinlan, "in many industrialised countries, preventative laws were introduced from the nineteenth century in *ad hoc* fashion, to deal with particular hazardous workplaces and industries" (11), and in

the Australian context the maze of industry- and hazard-specific legislation is further confused by different state-specific laws coming into play at different points in time.

Passing worker safety laws, either at state or federal levels did not imply a clear or easy path to safe and accident-free workplaces. Enforcement and prosecution under these laws were far from straightforward, and the establishment of inspectorate bodies and boards such as the Wages Boards set up in 1904 in South Australia and Victoria to limit outwork and sweating (C. Williams "Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 39) was also a matter rife with conflict. How much government intervention should be allowed, or should workers perform inspection of their own worksites (Stoodley 26)? Carson (1985), C. Williams (1993; 1997) and McQueen (2009) all point to a major issue: that government-appointed safety inspectors were unwilling to prosecute the financially and politically powerful owners of industry, "who were violating the law as part of their 'normal' work practice" (C. Williams "Class Gender and the Body" 61). This meant that safety inspectors favoured advising employers rather than punishing them, and framing accidents, injuries and deaths that did occur as "sad accidents" due to machine failure or unsafe behaviour on the part of the worker. Carson notes the ongoing practice of establishing *mens rea* before prosecutions of employers were considered ("Hostages to History" 69). He refers to the whole process of failure to prosecute and to instead place responsibility on careless workers as "the conventionalisation of factory crime" (1979).

The conventionalisation of factory crime raises questions as to who is responsible for safety and how, but also as to what its ultimate purpose is. According to Thomas, "the motivation to prevent accidents or control their effects is twofold, either on grounds of human welfare or on economic considerations" (4). Is workplace safety about protecting the worker from illness, injury or death, or is it about the best way of maximising productivity? This dichotomy is

based on a fundamental inequality between (potentially endangered) employee and (potentially financially disadvantaged) employer, an inequality that is recognised by the state in the form of compensation after the fact (James 35). Carson argues that safety legislation in effect 'declassed' the relationship between employer and employee in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by purportedly removing "questions of health and safety out of the fraught and, at the time, potentially dangerous arena of industrial conflict, and making them a matter of 'classless' state regulation" ("Hostages to History" 65).

However, the frequently conflicting discourses of safety as being for worker wellbeing or for industrial productivity; of the differing responsibilities of workers, unions and management; and of whether persuasion or punishment is a more effective form of ensuring safety are still apparent not only in legislation but also in the ways that messages about workplace safety are delivered to workers. As will be seen in the workplace safety films of the 1950s-1980s, these often-contradictory discourses frequently appear alongside each other. The next section discusses the background to where the solutions to workplace accidents are located in the discourse of safety, and where these solutions stemmed from.

3.2 People, Machines and Processes

Once the lack of prosecution of employers for safety crimes became normalised in the late nineteenth century, various arguments as to what caused accidents in the workplace became doxic, and were shored up through input from various disciplines and approaches. As Johnstone and Quinlan identify, "the recognition of occupational illness is not simply determined by the accumulation of medical evidence but entails a series of social processes involving the contested claims of different interest groups" (5). The focus of these groups has tended to be on three different factors which contribute to or cause accidents: the people

involved and their behaviour, the machines they work with, and the workplace processes in play.

Firstly, where worker injury or accident was framed as the result of that worker's own ignorance or carelessness, scrutiny of worker behaviour was an area of accident prevention that received considerable attention. Bohle (1993) offers a history of how the field of industrial psychology shaped the ways that workplace safety was discussed and thought about in the 1920s to the 1950s. He refers to influential workplace psychology studies by Stephenson (1929) which framed potential for injury as "accident proneness" (a quality which encompassed factors from inexperience to gender), and described failure to use protective equipment as "perversity" (96). Brown's 1954 study coined terms such as "compensationitis": a supposed tendency of workers to purposely injure themselves for payouts (Bohle 103). Bohle emphasises that this focus on worker psychology leads to foregone conclusions, where there is "a failure to collect adequate information on situational/environmental determinants of injury, while characteristics and behaviour of the worker are exhaustively examined, an approach which virtually ensures that the worker's behaviour will be identified as the primary cause of injury" (98).

The development of the field of Human Relations in the 1940s to 1970s similarly focussed on worker behaviour, but from a slightly different perspective: rather than a pathologising emphasis on internal mental processes, the focus was on the social and emotional conditions in the workplace that affected worker performance. Human Relations' goal was to foster relationships between management and workers that foregrounded "social harmony and mutuality of interests" (Bohle 102), a collaborative focus that is often apparent in the workplace safety films this thesis considers. However, this still points to the solution to workplace injury as being centred in behaviour rather than "work organisation, technology

and physical working conditions" (101), and disregards the inequities of power between employers and employees.

Technological solutions to workplace accident and injury were a consideration in early industrial legislation, and this focus later became part of the fields of ergonomics and engineering psychology after World War Two and through until the 1980s. However, the emphasis on machinery as the cause of and solution to accidents was still affected by the strong influence of the rhetoric that located the cause of accidents in worker behaviour. Johnstone and Quinlan state that "drawing on a British heritage, Australian laws were both formulated then enforced on the basis that there were hazardous machines or machines that could be rendered hazardous by the careless or irresponsible acts of workers" (29), which meant that issues of manual handling or hazardous processes that led to machine related accidents tended to be understated or ignored. Bohle praises the emphasis that engineering and ergonomic approaches have in recognising the importance of the physical workplace environment, but also notes that they tend to relegate the worker to cog-in-the-machine status, with little agency or input into safety processes (104-5). The issues of machinery and equipment and the emphasis on how workers, through their use of machines, render them safe or unsafe is a preoccupation of the Australian workplace safety film. Nevertheless, the hazards that machines, guards, chemicals and so on engender are "created, introduced and employed or tolerated in the workplace only through the agency of a prior set of social or organisational decisions" (Johnstone and Quinlan 29). In other words, workplace accidents and injury are also a matter of the processes that exist in the workplace.

These processes, that is, the ways in which work is actually performed, where, and for what length of time, are aspects of industrial production that are particularly difficult to challenge and change. Since most workplace processes from their outset are intended to maximise productivity, safety concerns are largely seen as interfering with or slowing down production.

Quinlan notes that several sociological studies (e.g. T. Nichols 1990; James 1987; Hopkins and Palser 1987) "have argued that [occupational] injuries are not aberrant occurrences but are embedded in the *normal* social processes of work" (145). Much of the discourse of the field of health and safety has therefore put effort into the justification of these processes, the normalising of injury and emphasis on 'the human factor' as the root issue in workplace accidents.

One area where this justification of extant processes is exhibited is the reframing of safety management as risk management. Risk management "has the objective of guarding and increasing corporate profitability by maintaining maximum protection against catastrophic losses and minimising the total cost of risk within the enterprise" (Thomas 8). This means that it primarily tends to be concerned with high consequence safety issues (such as fatalities), and with ascertaining the potential severity and frequency of accidents that might occur. The alternative approach focused on in safety management is hazard-based, where all possible hazards are assessed as to the potential harm they might cause. This approach allows for recognising not only high consequence issues, but also chronic injuries caused while working (such as repetitive strain and hearing damage), and acknowledges that addressing these issues often involves a modification of the process through which work is done.

Efforts to formally address the safety issues inherent in many work processes in a holistic fashion received some attention internationally in the 1960s-80s, exemplified for instance by the Quality of Working Life Movement. This movement was concerned with both organisational effectiveness and worker participation in organisational decisions (Thomas 42; Bohle 106). It often involved small work groups working for short periods on a wider variety of skilled tasks, such as complete sub-assemblies of car engines, as opposed to single task Fordist assembly lines. The Queensland Occupational Safety Convention in 1972 (Thomas 43-4) highlighted the Quality of Working Life Movement's approaches and while they failed

to catch on broadly and long-term, they provide a useful comparison point to the mainstream discourses regarding work processes, and illustrate how workplace safety ties into wider quality of life issues.

The people, the machines and the processes that are discursively viewed as causes of or factors contributing to workplace accidents are all taken up and considered by the workplace safety films that this thesis analyses. However, other fields impinge on the ways that this discourse functions. Much of the way that workplace safety is discussed or thought about is strongly gendered, it involves a particular way of considering one's workmates, and it involves a complex network of class issues. The following section considers how these aspects of the discourse of health and safety function.

3.3 Masculinity, Mateship and Class

Within the sample of workplace safety films that this thesis considers it is notable that very few depict or interpellate female workers. Of thirty films, only *Don't Be Scalped* (1960) concerns female workers exclusively, and only *A Matter of Survival* (1963), *Don't be Strained* (1963) and *Safety in Your Hands* (1974) present women workers onscreen in non-clerical roles. The worker in industrial workplace safety films is, for the most part, assumed to be male. This reflects the way that workers are thought of within the discourse of health and safety more broadly. C. Williams ("Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 35) argues that the Shops and Factories Acts (1873-1897) were 'protective', that is they were policies which regulated working conditions for the reason of protecting vulnerable workers, in this instance women, teens and children. These kinds of protective policies were implemented in other industries such as mining, shipping, shearing and forestry, and many of them remained in place until the 1970s (C. Williams "Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 40). Legislation limited the work hours of women and youth, the amount of heavy

lifting they could do, where and when they could work (to limit the exploitations of outwork and nightwork), and provided standards for the working environment (to prevent sweatshop conditions).

For C. Williams, the way that 'protection' is built into the Factories legislation strengthened the gender binary on the basis of work, and "strongly reaffirmed the notion that men were not vulnerable and that their work could remain unsafe" ("Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 33). The association of safety with vulnerability, and the viewing of safety practices as therefore un-masculine, is a pre-existing discourse that the workplace safety films do not usually directly refer to, but nevertheless, it is an expectation that they struggle to counter. Further, these films tend to focus on high consequence incidents and injuries, a focus that C. Williams notes is more about safety and danger rather than health. She relates this again to the gender binaries in workplaces: "because of sex segregation, men were frequently exposed to acute harm and women to chronic harm" ("Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 45). In this way, it can be seen that the risk-based approaches (as opposed to hazard-based, which take into account chronic harm) also have a gendered aspect to them.

The films also look at stereotypically masculine behaviour in relation to safety, particularly bravado and what is commonly referred to in the films and their accompanying literature as 'horseplay' (McQueen (74) notes that this is often a euphemism for hazing). The idea that masculinity exerts pressure on workers in terms of their relationships with each other is also one considered by C. Williams – the disavowal of vulnerability is a performance for one's mates. As she writes, "men fear the public humiliation if they do not conform to manhood rules when they are tested by other men, as they are at the workplace" ("Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 34). Conversely, Watson notes that taking risks or engaging in unsafe behaviour could be seen as a source of self-esteem and masculine pride in work, one that might be boasted of "in that traditional male domain – the pub – for many years to

come" (46). This linking of male camaraderie and drinking is notably present in the films. A further deployment of this camaraderie is the notion present in both the films and the discourse of health and safety more broadly that the worker is responsible not only for their own safety but that of their co-workers.

However, while C. Williams notes the impact that masculinity has in relation to safety, she cautions against using it as the sole or primary tool for analysis, in that it "carries the potential for yet another victim-blaming explanation: men choose to take risks in the name of masculinity" ("Class, Gender and the Body" 66). She argues that it *has* to be considered in relation to class, and the ways that working class masculinity deeply intersects with the perception that "danger has to be tolerated as a fundamental tenet of the working class man's right to work, often relegating him to dangerous industries and occupations" (ibid). Further, she notes that working class masculinity has served specific uses within class struggle, particularly in collective bargaining, for example in displays of machismo to intimidate or threaten bosses. This can be seen as part of "attempts by labouring men to make a claim to dignity in the face of authoritarian work relations" ("Class, Gender and the Body" 67), an idea which highlights the problem in simplistically associating masculinity with risk-taking.

The understanding of health and safety as a class issue has been present since its inception, as much of the early legislation and industry standards arose from industrial action. However, this association has not been without conflict and contradiction. Quinlan argues that there has been a tendency in the study of industrial relations to consider occupational health and safety as a separate – or at least minor – issue in the struggle for workers' rights (143). Part of the reason for this surprising separation or downplaying of safety's presence in industrial relations was that the latter emphasises

worker involvement in decision making via the collective representation in bargaining

of trade unions. Indeed, the concepts of bargaining or negotiated conflict were seen

as completely inappropriate and potentially dangerous [in relation to safety] – hence,

rhetoric such as 'safety should not be bargained over' (Quinlan 147).

Another reason (noted by both Quinlan (ibid) and Carson ("Hostages to History" 65)) was

that the historical development of workplace safety legislation meant that it was seen as an

issue to be dealt with by the state. What this means in terms of workplace safety films is that

if they represent unions and their workplace delegates at all, the films tend to regard them as

sympathetic supporters of safety concerns, rather than as active agents of change in

addressing safety issues. An exception is found in the safety films produced by unions

themselves.

While this section has attempted to provide a brief overview of some of the discursive aspects

important to an understanding of the history of health and safety in Australia, these

discourses do not pertain only to the historical context. Many of the ways of thinking about

health and safety discussed here either remain in place today, or have undergone very little

modification. Knowledge of this past landscape "enables us to have an understanding of the

serious limitations of major features of the contemporary power/knowledge discourse of

occupational health and safety" (C. Williams "Women and Occupational Health and Safety"

49). The following section turns to the continuing legacy of placing responsibility for safety

on workers themselves.

3.4 The Legacy of Blame

The "toleration of contravention "(Carson "Hostages to History" 74) of safety laws and

guidelines by employers, and the locating of responsibility for safety with the individual

worker is a continuing aspect of industrial working life today. The effects of global neo-

liberalism in Australia and elsewhere have compounded this through the increased precarity of work for many people. As indicated by James, "vulnerable and poorly unionised workers […] are often not in a position to report injury, let alone seek to eliminate the hazards that give rise to them" (5), which means that the blame inherent in casting workers as responsible for safety continues to be perpetrated.

Furthermore, this creates a situation where employer responsibility to provide a safe working environment continues being voided – to the extent that corporate safety violations are often not recognised as crimes (Tombs and Whyte 196). As Tombs and Whyte acknowledge, the reality is not that workers are never responsible for accidents, but that this discourse is one that weighs heavily on the already vulnerable individual (201). Gray argues that under neo-liberal policy and regulation, "workers are assigned ever greater responsibility for their own safety at work and are held accountable, judged and sanctioned through this lens", despite a rhetoric of theoretical 'equal partnership' between employer and employee when it comes to accident prevention (326).

What this emphasis on equal partnership between employers and employees does, in effect, is place workers in a position where their right to a safe workplace is something they must take steps to insure themselves. This becomes problematic when coupled with a lack of job security or other vulnerability: for instance, as James emphasises, workers in vulnerable positions are less likely to report hazards and injuries for fear of reprisal, being seen as troublesome, or for fear of losing work (34). In Australia in recent years, these discourses are exemplified by the Work for the Dole scheme (1998-present). Under this scheme, those working are not classified as employees (and therefore are not entitled to workers' compensation) (Burgess et al. 87), and as such are rendered vulnerable. However, Work for the Dole participants are still subject to rhetoric which addresses them as 'equal partners' with their employers when it comes to insuring that safety is achieved. Participating workers

are instructed that "Everyone involved in a Work for the Dole activity has responsibility for making sure that it is safe" however the onus is also on that worker to "raise any specific [safety] concerns immediately with [their] host organisation" (*Keeping you safe at Work for the Dole*): in other words, to report being asked to do unsafe work to the very people who are asking you to do that unsafe work.

Bohle acknowledges that effective intervention to improve health and safety would "be greatly enhanced by specific recognition of power relations in the workplace, especially as they impinge on the conflicts of interest between management and workers that are inherent to many OHS problems" (115). These power relations are embedded in the ways that Health and Safety is understood today. The precedents of these discourses are apparent in workplace safety films made in Australia between 1955 and 1980.

4. Conclusion

Analysing the Australian workplace safety film involves consideration of two historical and discursive fields, summarised in this chapter: the history of utilitarian, governmental and non-fiction filmmaking in this country, and the history of how health and safety has been implemented, theorised, talked about and understood. The approaches this thesis takes to discussing this form of filmmaking and making sense of how these films operated, circulated and what they mean culturally is done with a cognizance of these histories, which will guide the lines of questioning taken when performing analysis.

Firstly, studying the workplace safety films made in Australia in this period necessitates understanding how Australia went about making films of this type. I argue here that the imitative and dull post-war films Gibson refers to as "dun imitations of British-style informational programs" (10) have worth in their own right, and by situating these films within the context of Australian documentary-making, government filmmaking (both federal

and state) and union filmmaking, it is possible to understand some of the broader trends of which they were part, or which they were influenced by. The expository, authoritative style many of these films adopted (followed in later years by more conflicted, narrative-driven texts) is distinctive, and coloured by a particular national mode of utilitarian filmmaking and information-conveying. Looking to the broader *dispositif* of texts, images and screening contexts that surround these films also affects how they were, and how they can be, understood as important cultural products.

What I have been identifying broadly as 'the discourse of health and safety' is effectively summarised by C. Williams, who lists seven features of this discourse, which emerged in Australia in the 1890s – 1920s. In this period industrial conditions emerged where

> Categories deemed fragile […] are removed or excluded; it becomes unusual to address or remove hazards; workers' bodies become sites of uncomfortable regulations and precautions; incidents involving injury are deemed 'accidents' and faults of workers and/or their lifestyles; occupational health and safety becomes separate from work processes and industrial relations and finally a scientific discourse emerges which intimidates those outside the discourse such as trade unionists and workers who are subordinated to experts ("Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 40).

This, she argues, remained in place until the 1970s – in other words, until at least the time when the films under investigation were produced.

If these discourses and modes of filmmaking guide and provide background to how these films and their meaning might be interrogated, the question is then raised of how such analysis might proceed. The following chapter describes the methodology and theoretical approaches this thesis uses to conduct its investigation.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Theoretical Approach

1. Introduction

Methodologically, this thesis comprises three central approaches: Content analysis, Textual analysis and Discourse analysis. This chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks and methods employed in the thesis, accounting for how they will be used and offering justification for their use.

As well as a content analysis for a broad survey of the films in question, close textual analysis of a small selection of case studies will also be included: both content and textual analysis are discussed and their use justified in this chapter. Discourse analysis (in the manner following Foucault), which comprises the theoretical frame in which I will then analyse these films, has several cognate terms and methodological approaches which are important to consider (in this case, the *dispositif*, archaeology, genealogy and biopower).

The sections below detail what content analysis does and how this method is useful in researching Australian workplace safety films, followed by a description and justification of the use of close textual analysis. A detailed discussion of discourse analysis and the theoretical terms and concepts derived from Foucault's work that are related and relevant to this research conclude the chapter.

2. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research method used widely since the latter half of the twentieth century, for both qualitative and quantitative work in a variety of disciplines, such as communications research, psychology, film, nursing, journalism, history, public health and marketing, among others. The breadth of information that can be investigated using content

analysis is indicated by the generality of some of its definitions. Lasswell (qtd. in Macnamara 3) defines content analysis as asking

> "who
>
> says what
>
> through which channel
>
> to whom
>
> with what effect",

while Neuman specifies that content analysis is

> a technique for gathering and analysing the content of text. The "content" refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or any message that can be communicated. The "text" is anything written, visual or spoken that serves as a medium for communication (272-273).

Content analysis can be used for both quantitative and qualitative research, and provides a way of understanding the meaning and effects of texts while acknowledging their polysemic nature. One of the primary advantages of content analysis is that it allows researchers to deal with and make sense of large quantities of information, within parameters that allow for extreme flexibility in the research design (Elo & Kyngäs 2007, Harwood & Garry 2003). According to Krippendorff and Bock, content analyses include several steps or factors, namely, defining units to analyse, selecting a sample, coding (that is, developing categories or systems of recording what is notable), and interpreting the resulting data via a specific analytical construct (ix).

Not all scholarly approaches to content analysis agree on its definition, or in what kinds of investigation it can be applied. Neuendorf, for instance, takes the radical stance (one refuted by Krippendorff (2009, 2013), Macnamara (2005) and Shoemaker and Reese (1996), among

others), that content analyses can only be quantitative (Neuendorf 14). Neuendorf's stance here is based on the idea that content analysis is "a numerically based summary of a chosen message set" (ibid). This disregards the final elements of Laswell's definition previously cited (qtd. in Macnamara 3) – that content analyses evaluate "to whom" messages are directed, and "with what effect", steps which require qualitative interpretation. Krippendorff's attention to the analytic construct with which results of a content analysis are interpreted also invites a qualitative approach.

The following subsections explain and elaborate the steps and processes involved in a content analysis and how these function in relation to investigation of the Australian workplace safety film.

2.1 Texts and Sampling

A point Krippendorff emphasises repeatedly is that all parts of a content analysis must be thoroughly explicated, not only so that they are replicable, but also to mitigate or at least account for the biases and assumptions of the researcher. For my work, defining the body of texts and selecting a sample for close analysis involves identifying which films to include and ensuring that they are indicative of the range of films of their type. Krippendorff also emphasises that the texts selected should be "equally informative" (115). Keeping the definition of safety films narrow and specific will mean that the texts will be equally informative in that they are similar in focus and purpose. Nevertheless, some of my sample may generate more discussion in my thesis than others, owing to either their uniqueness or how representative they are of a particular type.

There are various methods by which content analysts can select their sample from the body of texts they investigate: samples can be randomly generated, or systematic (every tenth text in chronological order, for instance), or 'census sampling', which includes every possible text of

its kind. My sample follows what Krippendorff terms a "convenience sample" – that is, the texts are selected from what is available (121). He has some disparaging words for this method, as it "leaves uncertain whether the texts being analysed are representative of the data" (ibid). He does nevertheless acknowledge that convenience sampling is sometimes necessary when dealing with historical texts, where it is more likely that all the texts within a body of work might not have survived, or the extent of the body of work might not even be known. This is the situation I find myself in: it is impracticable for both temporal and financial reasons to track down every safety film made in Australia in the time period in question, and owing to this my sample will be constrained by what it is possible to access. Discussion of the finding and selection of the films analysed in this thesis appears in chapter four.

2.2 Research Questions and Coding

Coding is the first step in a content analysis towards answering the research question. It is the process of isolating, counting and noting salient details of particular elements of text: the elements selected should aid in answering the research question. The question itself should concern matters that are currently unknown or unresearched and should be answerable by examining the texts in question, as opposed to other materials: in other words, my research question needs to be best answered by examining these films, rather than by studying secondary sources.

The choices made in coding can be thought of as a process of taking raw texts and making them analysable in relation to the research question. This is done by looking for themes and patterns, and noting relationships between elements. Coding also functions as a set of instructions as to what to find and note: it is this instructional characteristic in a content analysis design that makes it theoretically replicable. In relation to film, a useful example of

content analysis coding comes from Kracauer's influential studies of Nazi propaganda (1947); his division of propaganda films into commentary, visuals and sound, statements, 'picture units' and 'sound units' and the links between each in particular moments is both replicable and medium-specific.

2.3 Context

Coding may sometimes mistakenly be thought of as a list of things to count: word frequency, or the appearance of particular visual elements. However, as Berelson (17) notes, counting textual phenomena is meaningless on its own, unless what is counted is used to infer information about the context in which the texts exist. Therefore, articulating the context, and information about it, is a vital aspect of content analysis. According to Merten (15, qtd. in Krippendorff 31), "Content analysis is a method for inquiring into social reality, which consists of inferring features of a non-manifest context from features of a manifest text". In this fashion, analysing the content of texts allows us to draw conclusions about social, political and cultural events, material and discourses that are external to the texts themselves.

This is not to suggest that the externality of the context means that its relation to the text is arbitrary. The context chosen to draw conclusions from the text must be supported by textual evidence: "it could be considered the analyst's best hypothesis for how the texts came to be, what they mean, what they can tell or do" (Krippendorff 38). Though external to the texts, their context informs and is informed by their contents. For my own work, the contexts I will be considering include not only the cultural field of the (primarily industrial) workplace, but also the field of occupational health and safety and the particular ways it functioned between 1955 and 1980 in Australia. Moreover, the Australian nation-state itself and the ways that it is understood and articulated in these films is also relevant. All these contexts are relevant to consideration of the *dispositif*, which is discussed further in section 4.4 of this chapter. The

content of the Australian workplace safety films under study will be contextualised in relation to these fields in my analysis.

2.4 Analytical Constructs

As mentioned, considering texts contextually means that the analysis is able to highlight a particular aspect of social reality. The analytical constructs used in the analysis help to explicate exactly what the researcher understands that social reality to be, making clear their disciplinary and political viewpoints. Analytical constructs also aid in making content analyses replicable, and applicable to other, similar studies: for instance my content analysis design, using discourse analysis as its construct, could be replicated with minor modifications to investigate workplace safety films in other national contexts, or to study Australian safety films that focus on fields outside the work context, or to study similarly instructional utilitarian films of a different time period. Krippendorff notes that analytical constructs "take the form of more or less complex 'if-then' statements" (40), i.e. *if* we are given X understanding of a given social field or behaviour, *then* Y interpretation can be inferred.

Moreover, the use of a particular analytical construct not only strengthens the conclusions one derives from a text's content, but functions symbiotically to strengthen both the content analysis process and the analytical framework itself. According to Hansen et al, "content analysis is and should be enriched by the theoretical framework offered by other more qualitative approaches, while bringing to these a methodological rigour, prescriptions for use, and systematicity" (91). In other words, content analysis gives a methodical way of organising content, while the analytical construct – in my case, Foucauldian discourse analysis – allows for in-depth, nuanced and specific treatment of that content.

As indicated, my own research utilises Foucault's writing on discourse and the *dispositif*, and his analytical techniques of archaeology and genealogy. These will form my analytical construct, and will be discussed in detail in section four of this chapter.

2.5 Inferences

As covered so far, content analysis involves finding out about a social context by *inferring* information about it from relevant texts (in light of an overarching analytical construct). The texts in this situation should be the main or the most significant source of information about that social context: this is what makes content analysis a logical choice of method as opposed to any other. In the case of the Australian workplace safety films, their status as historical texts mean that content analysis is very useful for analysing them, as historical research almost always involves inferring social conditions from extant textual sources (Krippendorff 32).

The inferences made in content analysis are of a particular type: they are abductive, that is, they look to specific elements of text (patterns, trends, correlations, representations, aesthetic or stylistic choices) in order to infer information about specific features or elements of their context. Making abductive inferences does not mean that the results are one hundred per cent assured or inarguable however. The inferences are still within a range of probability, which can be refined by considering other contributing conditions or theoretical approaches. Foucauldian discourse analysis provides a particular understanding of the ways that texts and representations function. It allows for the recommended 'if-then' statement when making inferences: *if* the Foucauldian understanding of discourse is shared, then particular inferences about these texts and how they fortify a specific understanding of safety can be made. Different analytical frameworks, based for instance on linguistic discourse, on semiotics or

on formalist or auteurist approaches to film analysis would guide towards different (though not necessarily contradictory) inferences being made.

2.6 Results

The end point of, and ultimate justification for a content analysis is the production of robust results, which must be reliable. Reliability of results can be measured through replication or reproduction of the research design in studying similar phenomena. It functions as proof that the gathering and analysis of data – sampling, coding, inferring and so on – has been conducted correctly. This is done with the primary recognition that the meaning a text has is subjective and dependent on contexts of use. Reliability of content analyses is therefore heuristic to a certain extent, especially with regards to historical texts. According to Krippendorff

> Empirical enquiries into bygone phenomena have no choice other than to presume that the data they left behind can be trusted to mean the same to all of their users. In content analysis, this means the reading of textual data as well as of the research results must be replicable elsewhere, which would demonstrate that the researchers agree on what they are talking about. Here, then, reliability is the degree to which members of a designated community concur on the readings, interpretations, responses to or uses of given texts or data. (268)

Practically, this means that the conclusions reached in a content analysis are to a certain extent supported by discipline-specific understandings. My task in discussing the results of my analysis will be to explicate these understandings as clearly as possible. Clarity when it comes to my analytical construct – Foucauldian discourse analysis – will assist in accounting for many of the interpretations of textual matter I make. The broad investigation that this content analysis makes into the discourses regarding work, workers and workplace safety that

appear in these texts will be supplemented with case studies of individual films, in order to offer a deeper and more nuanced picture of what they say and do.

<p style="text-align:center">3. Case Studies – Close Textual Analysis</p>

Chapters five, six and seven of this thesis will be devoted to the close textual analysis of a small number of films from the sample. On one hand, a content analysis of Australian workplace safety films (1955-1980) offers a thorough survey of the subject matter of these films, the types of representations that appear in them, and the discursive statements made in and by them. On the other, this form of analysis, while excellent for painting a broad picture of what these films are about, does not allow for detailed discussion of individual texts. As such, some of the specificity of how film technique, *mise en scène*, dialogue and voice over work with and against each other to produce a particular discursive statement or affective mechanism is glossed over; hence, case studies will be employed to capture the nuances of these films.

Case studies using textual analysis appear to be such a given in film studies that there is a frequent failure to strongly justify their use as a research method. As noted by Adrian Martin, cinema studies "tends to leave this area of close analysis […] relatively intact and unquestioned […] as an aesthetic building block in our apprehension of cinema. It becomes a protocol, unquestioned and untheorized in any new or significant way" ("Turn the Page"). While my intention here is not to theorise textual analysis per se, I would like to highlight my use of it, as I intend for it to complement the broad 'horizontal' approach of the content analysis, which looks across the genre or form of the workplace safety film. Case studies, employing close textual analysis, enable a 'vertical' (detailed, specific) look at what safety films do and how they function by investigating individual texts as representative or illustrative of the whole form or genre.

Martin stresses the difference between analysis of "new, different, radical, challenging cinema" and "normal, average, conventional or mainstream cinema" (*Mise en scène and Film Style* 95). This categorisation, though a very useful one in cinema studies which tends to focus on one or the other, nevertheless opens up the question of where pedestrian, every day, didactic film (such as industrial and utilitarian film) fits into this equation, particularly when taking an historical vantage point. The approaches outlined by Martin fall primarily into a continuation of the classicism espoused by Bordwell and Thompson which views narrative film as essentially variations on a minimally changing theme; or the post-classical approach taken by King (2002) and Shaviro (2010) amongst others, which sees mainstream film as having undergone a series of radical changes throughout its history (*Mise en scène and Film Style* 96). While this second approach is possibly more suited to studying utilitarian film, it still does not fit comfortably, as the primary goals of this film form are so radically different from both mainstream and avant garde or art cinema. This leaves questions as to how best approach textual analysis of the utilitarian film (and its sub-category of the safety film).

The analysis of specific elements of filmic text in the case studies selected in this research could be usefully executed with attention to what Martin (2014), Kessler (2004) and Comolli (1980), amongst others, call social *mise en scène*. Social *mise en scène* describes scenes, situations and elements of the film frame that "we know and recognise […] in the world beyond cinema; they form a sort of omnipresent theatre of everyday life" (Martin *Mise en scène and Film Style* 129). This can include gestures, forms of behaviour and types of interaction that we understand and that are performed from social experience, or that filmmakers draw attention to in order to subvert for dramatic or aesthetic affect. Following Albera (2000), Martin makes the point that film studies has been slow to attend to the social aspects of *mise en scène*, in part because of the tendency of early *mise en scène* to adopt an auteurist perspective, where the director-as-artist is "the person who essentially creates

cinema on set" (*Mise en scène and Film Style* 130), with *mise en scène* being the 'cinematic language' they use to do this.

Social *mise en scène* is not a replacement for traditional *mise en scène* analysis, but rather a supplement to it and a way of understanding "known rituals that are recreated, marked, inscribed in the flow of the film" (Martin *Mise en scène and Film Style* 134). In narrative cinema, social *mise en scène* usually appears in order to transform or transgress social codes (socially unacceptable behaviour in comedy, socially inexplicable behaviour in suspense, for instance). But in relation to the workplace safety film it appears as a reinforcement of those codes, by demonstrating the physical and mental discipline necessary to navigate a given social space, and the consequences of relaxing this self-policing. Through the workplace safety film, which often sits in an ill-defined place between documentary, re-enactment, propaganda and narrative film, social *mise en scène* can be effectively employed to describe the blurry lines in these films between footage of workers working and workers *performing* working. A further useful way of understanding and interpreting the acting styles seen in the workplace safety film is provided by Ramos, who discusses documentary performance through the lenses of 'direct acting' and 'constructed acting'. 'Direct acting' is observational footage of people behaving as they do regularly in the world but nevertheless influenced by the camera's presence, while 'constructed acting' is a performance associated with re-enactment or illustrative documentary scenes where we see people acting in ways influenced by and similar to performance modes familiar from fiction filmmaking (97-98). Films discussed in this thesis employ both constructed and direct acting, and the differences between these highlight some of the social and bodily disciplines necessary to both the workplace and the acting process.

This textual analysis (utilising social *mise en scène* as an analytical tool) will be done with a view to adding to the findings of the content analysis. Both ways of looking at these films

aim to analyse how they function discursively. Therefore, the textual analysis interrogates how elements of dialogue, sound, image, cinematographic technique, acting, editing etc. work together to produce particular (visual, aural, affective) discursive statements. Identifying what discourses these films contain and exist within can then be used to infer how these discourses function and what their consequences are.

4. Discourse, Historical Methods and Power

The analytical construct and theoretical framework which governs the content and textual analysis and case studies of Australian workplace safety films which I intend to conduct is discourse analysis, in the style developed and practised by Michel Foucault (1926-1984). His work on the penal system, medical industrial complex, power and knowledge are especially relevant, and his work has been enormously influential in the field of critical theory and cultural studies. My own use of Foucault's theory focuses on the way that the power and meaning of texts are put to use by audiences and institutions in order to support particular social relations, power structures and especially, to produce specific subject positions. This method of inquiry is related to recent scholarly approaches to film and media history, particularly those influenced by Foucault's archaeological methods. Several Foucauldian concepts are particularly salient to my work and are worth unpacking further: discourse, archaeology, genealogy, the *dispositif* and biopower.

4.1 What is meant by 'Discourse'

The definition of 'discourse' that I am employing in my work, following Foucault, differs from simply what is said or what linguistic rules govern statements, as the term is sometimes used to indicate, but rather "an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power" (Jäger and Maier 35). Foucault's conception of discourse understands it as a broad-ranging but nevertheless specific set of communicative acts,

practices and techniques (including but not limited to speech, writing and visual information), and the way that they are distributed, exchanged and circulated. Analysing a particular discourse does not just involve looking at these acts, practices and techniques for their content, but looking at what that content does and on what basis. A particular discursive field not only produces statements and practices that define its subjects, its institutions and ways of doing things, but it also appears as an imperative to what must then be done, how subjects will behave and be treated, how institutions will function and so on. Discourse therefore "serves to found, justify and provide principles for these ways of doing things" (Foucault "Questions of Method" 79).

The study of discursive statements is central to understanding a particular discourse. A discursive statement is not necessarily equal to a sentence, an image or a diagram (such as a graph, table, equation etc.), nor is it reducible to its intent or consequence (Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 83). Rather, it is "an element that can be isolated and introduced into a set of relations with similar elements" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 80). Therefore, in a discourse analysis the relationship between statements in the discourse (where they are repeated, where they appear in relation to other particular statements and with what frequency) is what must be considered. This study of relations is extended from the relationships between statements in a discourse to relationships between statements and subjects, between statements and institutions, and institutions and subjects.

Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine list steps that one could take when conducting a Foucauldian discourse analysis, though they are at pains to emphasise that there is no one prescribed way of executing this method (98). Their description of selecting sample texts, identifying discursive statements and the links between them; and then tracking how statements vary over time and what they mean (98-99) invites comparison with the methods of sampling, coding and inferring that are integral to content analysis. This may beg the question of why

this thesis employs a content analysis if the groundwork for a Foucauldian discourse analysis is so similar. The primary reason for this, aside from the replicability offered by the rigorous planning required in a content analysis, is the way that discourse analysis has a tendency at times to be theory-led as opposed to text-led. For instance, Arribas-Allyon and Walkerdine's suggestion that examples of discursive statements be selected *prior* to collection of texts (98) could lead to a situation where the textual material is selected to prove a pre-determined argument, rather than the texts being studied to find out what discourses they contain and how those discourses are used to support relations of power and subjectivity.

Discursive statements and the relationships between them are analysed order to trace what possible subject positions and forms of meaning-making are possible within a particular discourse. Rose states that "what is present in the form of […] a statement has meaning and intelligibility only in relation to a set of discursive and technical connections that are absent, but which make that utterance possible", and that therefore "analysis must focus on the relations that provide the possibility of acting as a speaking subject of a particular type" (54). Studying the relationships between statements therefore highlights not only what their content does, but also what is implied and left silent but that nevertheless informs the statement itself.

Discourse analysis involves looking at discursive statements and practices in order to see how a particular field is constituted, granted authority and what types of subject position it is possible for those within it to hold. As Rose states, discourses

> provide the conditions under which it is possible for a person to take up the position of speaking subject […] Discourses are not merely 'meaning systems', but are embodied within complex technical and practical associations and devices that provide 'places' that human beings must occupy if they are to have the status of

subjects of particular sorts, and which immediately position them in certain relations

with one another and the world of which they speak. (53)

As my thesis is looking at workplace safety films and the discourses about safety spoken through them, it involves looking at what is defined as a hazard, how workers are instructed to respond to hazards, how accidents are shown to occur, who is shown to suffer from them and how, and who is shown to be responsible for their prevention. Who or what in these films is assumed to be the discoursing subject, that is, the person or institution granted authority to make statements and give advice? Are these factors depicted as a set of choices, or are they assumed to be self-evident? For Foucault, discourse analysis is "a matter of shaking this false self-evidence, of demonstrating its precariousness, of making visible not its arbitrariness, but its complex interconnection with a multiplicity of historical processes" ("Questions of Method" 75). This historicising element is central to Foucault's method, making it a very useful approach when analysing and interpreting historical materials.

Furthermore, Foucauldian discourse analysis assists the writer in avoiding some of the pitfalls common to historiography. Firstly, in focussing on the function of practices and statements, it attempts to move away from the subjective interpretation of hidden or intended meaning ("Politics and the Study of Discourse" 60). Secondly, in tracking transformations of or changes to discourse over time, it works to avoid teleological or progress-driven accounts of historical change; by the same token, it also works to avoid historical accounts which search for originatory or ur-text driven explanations (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 15-16). Finally, the focus on the functions of statements and practices means that hero narratives, auteurship and interest in 'great men of history' is effectively avoided. Foucault rejects these approaches as lending themselves primarily to the interpretation of an individual's psychology or intent ("Politics and the Study of Discourse" 63); they can also be

problematised owing to their tendency to uncritically privilege dominant voices and narratives at the expense of minority ones.

In terms of how discourse relates to political practice, Foucault discusses the core assumptions and aims of analysing discourse and how these ideas can be "articulated with the effective practice of a progressive politics" ("Politics and the Study of Discourse" 61). Firstly, he looks at how discursive analysis attempts to get away from historical appeals to never-ending deconstruction, to ideas of a subjectivity prior to discourse which influences it from the outside, implicit meanings and binary oppositions. In relation to workplace safety films, this emphasis also assists in avoiding value- and taste-based discussion, where the 'camp' value of the films to the contemporary viewer is their primary point of interest. Another of Foucault's aims is to emphasise the reality of discourse: that it is not an indifferent, individualising or incidental container for thoughts and expressions, but a real network of meaning that exists and has real effects. He states that "discourse is constituted by the difference between what one could say correctly at one period (under the rules of grammar and logic), and what is actually said. The discursive field is, at a specific moment, the law of this difference" ("Politics and the Study of Discourse" 63). This 'what is said' involves statements and actions that are made possible by concrete rules. It is defining what is said and the rules that govern what is said in a given field that constitutes a discourse analysis.

In relation to the workplace safety films that make up my sample texts, I aim to analyse their content in order to extrapolate and articulate the discourses about safety in them. However, this discourse analysis is performed as part of wider methodological approaches, both archaeological and genealogical.

4.2 Archaeology

According to Schirato, Danaher and Webb, archaeology is "the term used by Foucault to refer to the process of working through the historical archives [...] to bring to light the discursive formations and events that have produced the fields of knowledge" of different time periods (xvii). In this section, I will highlight some of the relevant definitions and considerations involved with this, and how an archaeological investigation (particularly one of media texts) might be conducted.

Firstly, by 'archive' Foucault refers to a system through which discourse is organised: it does not necessarily mean formal archives, libraries, museums or other cultural institutions that conserve historical materials (though his definition leaves room for incorporating all these). The archive is "the general system of the formation and transformation of statements" which "reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and undergo regular modification" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 130). The archive can be viewed as the repository of discourse – while statements within it may survive, it is delimited by discontinuity with the present discursive field. By definition it deals with events, practices and things of the past.

My aims in applying Foucauldian archaeology to film are of course not without precedent. Media Archaeology, a recently popular approach within film and media studies, is a way of discussing and understanding how the history of particular media materials and discourses about a medium's past relate to each other and to their own subsequent historical development, decline, re-emergence or continued presence. A goal of media archaeologists is to rethink and challenge many of the canonised narratives that explain the emergence and history of various media, due to what some see as a reductionism and theoretical stasis that these narratives afford (for instance Elsaesser *Film History as Media Archaeology* 22-23, Lovink 11). Huhtamo and Parikka explain that media archaeology has "begun to construct alternate histories of suppressed, neglected and forgotten media that do not point

teleologically to the present media-cultural condition as their 'perfection'" (3). This relates not only to workplace safety films in terms of their status as neglected media, but also speaks to how one might discuss their continued discursive influence without speaking of the ideas they express simply as an antecedent of current thinking that has since been refined.

Media archaeology, as a theoretical approach, has also been used specifically to discuss film and film history, as exemplified by Thomas Elsaesser's *Film History as Media Archaeology* (2016). Though primarily interested in archaeology as a technique for investigating 'early cinema' (that is, films of the 1890s to late 1910s), Elsaesser's thoughtful and thorough discussion of the uses of media archaeology in relation to film appears applicable and relevant to the discussion of workplace safety films in Australia (1955-1980). He states that archaeology

> does not insist on cinema's uniqueness as an art form and its specificity as a medium. Instead, it sees cinema's past as well as its future firmly embedded in other media practices, other technologies and social uses, and above all as having – throughout its history – interacted with, been dependent on, been complemented by and found itself in competition with all manner of entertainment forms, scientific pursuits, practical applications, military uses (*Film History as Media Archaeology* 19).

This includes utilitarian and industrial uses and *dispositifs,* and forms such as the workplace safety film. Elsaesser's words here also illustrate how workplace safety films can be discussed as filmic texts by relating them to the contexts and practices they existed within, despite how their purposes, uses and modes of address differ so significantly from the theatrical and narrative film forms familiar in the discipline.

Elsaesser places the practice of film history as media archaeology within its context as part of the continuing legacy of Foucault's work. He sees Foucault's understanding of discursive

formations as especially relevant to film, along with "the emphasis on institutions, customs, habits and unwritten rules as historical agents, invariably expressing relations to power" (*Film History as Media Archaeology* 33). The particular power relations Elsaesser gives as examples include struggles between exhibitors and producers with regards to practical or technological decisions that shaped cinema form (film length, the favouring of narrative over spectacle, multi-reel films etc.) Examples in the context of utilitarian and workplace safety film would include relations between sponsors and filmmakers, government distributors and workplaces, workers and management, all of which would have impacted, in more or less significant ways, on how workplace safety films were made, viewed or understood.

Archaeology is a tool which looks at historical events, texts and phenomena in order to describe their discursive function. However, to see how this discourse has changed, how it has constituted current understandings of workplace safety, and how it has produced particular forms of subjectification, Foucault's genealogical method will also prove useful.

4.3 Genealogy, the Self and Biopower

While Foucault conceived of genealogy as a separate method from the archaeological approach that characterised his earlier work (in *The Order of Things* (first published 1970); *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (first published 1971); and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973) in particular), the two are in many ways complementary. While archaeology involves looking at historical documents to determine the discursive formations that have shaped particular areas of knowledge, genealogy looks at historical documents to determine how these same discursive formations shape contemporary power relations and fields of knowledge. In this sense, archaeology provides tools for describing discourse, while genealogy gives us tools for explaining and interpreting it (Davidson 223). Foucault refers to genealogical analysis as "a history of the present" (*Discipline and Punish* 31).

A 'history of the present' necessitates looking at historical discontinuities, accidents and unexpected details of historical beginnings and changes. As with archaeology, this focus attempts to avoid the search for historical origins, as these are "an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities [...] this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession" (Foucault *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 142). Genealogy attempts to answer on what basis we form understandings without recourse to such essentialising. Elsaesser elaborates on this: "a genealogical mode of reasoning firmly separates cause and effect, accounting for origins in a non-chronological way and allowing for non-linear clusters of events" (*Film History as Media Archaeology* 33-4). In this sense, genealogical approaches help draw lines between the safety films in my sample, despite the range of time over which they were made, paying attention to their dyssynchronous aspects. This offers another methodological contrast with archaeology: while archaeology looks for regularity and recurrence of statements, genealogy looks for the unexpected and discontinuous to see how these irregularities shaped historical relations.

Foucault's genealogical method follows Nietzsche, in that he argues that "knowledge and truth are produced by struggles both within and between institutions, fields and disciplines, and then presented as if they were eternal and universal" (Schirato et al. xx-xxi). In the essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*), Foucault outlines the symbiotic relationships between truth, power and knowledge, and how these relationships provide a (historicising) way of understanding particular discursive fields. In order to see how this is done, some further explanation of Foucault's conception of power is necessary.

Power, in Foucault's writing, "does not function to repress individuals, but produce them through practices of signification and action" (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 92). It is not

held by individuals or groups, but rather flows through and across relations and systems: Foucault writes, "The idea that there is either located at – or emanating from – a given point something which is a 'power' seems to me to be based on a misguided analysis […] In reality power means relations, a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations" ("The Confession of the Flesh" 198). The main product of power is knowledge: "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose or constitute at the same time power relations" (*Discipline and Punish* 27). For this reason, Foucault often refers to 'the Power/Knowledge nexus', or simply 'Power/Knowledge' as shorthand for these interrelated terms. In terms of my own work, studying what power relations constitute and characterise the discourse of workplace safety also means learning what knowledges are produced by them – information about worker capability and behaviour, about accident rates and causes, about the way that workers and management actually and supposedly relate to each other. While my analysis may touch on some of the legislative aspects of workplace safety, these are not the central focus. For Foucault, legal and judicial considerations of power are of minor interest, as they tend toward analyses that focus on restriction (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 154). The body, however, is of interest as an area where the effects of power are inscribed and about which knowledge is generated.

Genealogy looks at the way that history shapes the body through work, diet, class position, social conditioning and so on. Bodies can be viewed as the sites where power is both manifested and enacted: "Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body" (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 148). With regard to workplace safety films, their depiction of the body shows it to be shaped and subjected by working conditions and class as well as being a site through which

knowledge is generated. The ways that it is shaped by gender and violence are also significant, particularly given the number of workplace safety films that depict mild sexually-suggestive content or gore. In the latter instance we often see the literal destruction of the worker's body: electrocuted, dismembered, maimed, burned and bleeding as a consequence of ignoring safety procedures.

Other ways that a genealogy of Australian workplace safety films highlights the working of power on the body are not as visceral but are of perhaps even more significance. For Rose, a central aim of genealogy is to ascertain "the ways in which different corporeal regimes have been devised and implanted in rationalised attempts to produce a particular relation to the self and others" (31). Workplace safety films therefore do not only have the function of necessary education and protection of workers, but are also instrumental in producing the image of a particular *type* of subject, of articulating the range and limits of the category 'worker' that Australians might recognise. Understanding workplace safety films as a technology which produces a certain type of subject, and detailing who that subject is and how it is produced is a central aim of this thesis.

In this sense, studying the discourses that are articulated in and through workplace safety films is related to what Foucault calls a "technology of the self" (1988). In his later work and up to his death, Foucault became interested in the genealogy of the understanding of the self, and the processes by which individuals work upon themselves in order to achieve happiness, perfection, sagacity or other virtues. He lists four 'technologies' by which people come to understand themselves, all of which work in connection with each other ("Technologies of the Self" 18): technologies of production, "which permit us to produce, transform or manipulate things"; technologies of sign systems, which can be broadly characterised as means of communication – meaning, speech, writing and so on; technologies of power, "which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends and

domination"; and technologies of the self, which are the processes individuals direct on themselves. Care of the self, which amounts to "not only a principle but a constant practice" ("Technologies of the Self" 21) is a significant example of this latter technology. Each of these technologies "implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills, but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes" ("Technologies of the Self" 18). What we see in the discourse of workplace safety is an example of these cooperative technologies. The process of work – a technology of production, is the site with particular associative meanings regarding subjects, culture and social life, where certain relations of power function, and where subjects are exhorted to do a particular kind of work on the self (for the purposes of safety).

Archaeology and genealogy provide ways of looking at how the discourses about safety and work in these films produce, reflect and further articulate relationships of power between subjects. As this section has discussed thus far, power between subjects and between subjects and institutions involves knowledge production and work on the body. But what kind of knowledge is being produced, and how? What kind of bodily work is entailed? Consideration of the concepts of biopower and biopolitics is useful here in interrogating what knowledges and disciplines the workplace safety film articulates and speaks to.

As the term implies, biopower involves a focus on the state of life. For Rabinow and Rose, biopower

> entails one or more truth discourses about the 'vital' character of living human beings; an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth; strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health; and modes of subjectification, in which individuals work on themselves in the name of individual or collective life or health (195).

This definition incorporates the 'individual work' of a technology of the self, as well as being applicable to areas of human activity that involve governing health and the maintenance or extension of life. Given that the dangers of the industrial workplace involve so many threats to life and limb, workplace safety is a province where biopower is enacted.

A cognate term of biopower is biopolitics. Foucault defines this as a set of regulatory controls which are focussed on:

> The body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis for biological processes: propagation, births and mortality; the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary" ('Right of Death and Power over Life', 262).

The distinction between biopower and biopolitics can thus be understood as biopower being a set of disciplines and modes of subjectification of the human body, while biopolitics involves the specific strategies, regulations, controls, knowledges and authorities that affect this bodily discipline and subjectification.

In the case of the industrial workplace, the economic system under which Australian industry operates is of course a primary site of biopolitical power. This is not lost on Foucault, who emphasises that "biopower was, without question, an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production" ("Right of Death and Power Over Life" 263). How capitalism exerts power over workers, how it scrutinises and exploits their physical capacities, are fundamental considerations when observing how safety films work and achieve their aims of informing workers about maintenance and protection of their own bodies.

The films do not do this in a vacuum, however. Contextualising of the films, including attending to the texts that were communicated or provided in conjunction with them, as well as to the methods of screening and distribution, and the industrial environment and legal context will strengthen any conclusions drawn about this discourse and exercise of biopolitical power. This network of texts, contexts, institutions and discourses is what Foucault refers to as the *dispositif.*

4.4 The *Dispositif*

The "complex constellation of media, technology, forms of knowledge, discourse and social organisation" (Heidiger and Vonderau 11) that make up the *dispositif* are elements that have not always been prioritised by film studies. Given the media archaeology approach that views film texts contextually and as imbricated with other media forms, the discussion of the *dispositif* in which workplace safety films are situated is a significant consideration.

As a theoretical concept, the term *dispositif* has been used in several different ways, the most pertinent of which I will outline here. First, I consider the *dispositif* as described by Foucault and theorists following on from his work and significantly, the recent scholarly attention to the cinematic *dispositif*, discussed by Elsaesser (2015, 2016); Francois Albera and Maria Tortajada (2010, 2015); Andre Gaudreault and Philippe Marion (2015); and Adrian Martin (2011, 2014), amongst others.

As noted by several writers (Bussolini (2010), Martin (2011, 2014), Albera and Tortajada (2015), for instance), the English translations of '*dispositif*' tend to render the term as 'apparatus', which insufficiently captures the nuances of the concept, conflating it with the French '*appareil*', which also is used by Foucault and also translated as 'apparatus'. This confusion over translation and terminology is highlighted by Martin specifically in relation to film. He notes Jean-Louis Baudry's distinction between the *appareil de base* of cinema (that

is, the material technology of camera, screen, projector, celluloid etc.) and the *dispositif,* which includes the *social* technologies and configurations of "body in a chair, dark room, light from the projector hitting a screen" and so on ("Turn the Page") – a distinction which translators of Baudry elided by translating both terms as 'apparatus'.

To deal with these issues of translation, Bussolini argues instead for the use of 'dispositive' in English. While his argument is convincing, I have left the term untranslated in this thesis, to avoid both the semantic confusion arising from these (mis-)translations, and the proliferation of further terms which mean the same thing. *Dispositif,* in Foucault's usage, has a specific and complex meaning, the most salient aspects of which I will attempt to describe below.

While Foucault discusses the *dispositif* in several of his later books, particularly *The History of Sexuality* (1978), the closest he comes to giving a precise definition of the term is in a 1977 interview published as "The Confession of the Flesh" (1980). Here the *dispositif* is described as

> a thoroughly heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions […] the apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. (Foucault "The Confession of the Flesh" 194)

Again, as with discourse, Foucault describes a collection of elements where the emphasis is on the relationships between them, and how these relations function to support a particular production and function of power. The difference between the two is that while discourse can be analysed through the statements and practices in which it appears, the *dispositif* is a broader concept, encompassing discourse within it as well as other subjects, objects and institutions (and therefore requiring an archaeological approach to investigate the

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relationships between them). The concept of the *dispositif* allows me to paint a clearer picture of how safety cultures functioned from 1955 to 1980 in Australia, by making room for discussion of texts, laws, workplace activities and habits that were associated with the safety films at the centre of my investigation. As Hediger and Vonderau note, utilitarian films refer to a *dispositif*, bearing traces of the organisations and social contexts they were part of, and making sense of these films involves unpacking what that *dispositif* comprises (11).

Gilles Deleuze's essay "What is a *dispositif*?" (1992) offers some further explanation of the *dispositif* and the relationships between it and Foucault's other theoretical concepts. This is done in terms common to Deleuze's thought: he discusses *dispositifs* as "multilinear ensembles" (159), metaphorically as "machines which make one see and speak" (160), and how historical consideration of a particular *dispositif* must consider not only what we are or have been, but what we are in the process of becoming (164). By "machines which make one see and speak", Deleuze means that the *dispositifs* which make up particular sciences, genres, movements or regimes can be articulated in terms of what they highlight or make visible, and in terms of what they allow one to enunciate. In terms of charting the changes that occur within and across a particular *dispositif*, Deleuze says that "in each apparatus [*dispositif*] it is necessary to distinguish what we are (what we are already no longer), and what we are in the process of becoming: the historical part and the current part" (164).

From the emphasis on what it is possible to see and say, we can relate the *dispositif* to the functioning of discourse, while the attention to 'becoming' and historical change relates the analysis of the *dispositif* to the genealogical method. Bussolini emphasises this directly, writing that "if [Foucault's] genealogical approach to history is one that emphasizes continual change in institutions and concepts, the *dispositif* is an important conceptual development enabling him to elucidate it" (88). Similarly, *dispositifs* "have both a concrete existence […] and a discursive existence" (Albera and Tortajada *Cinema Beyond Film* 11), in other words,

the term describes things that exist materially and also the ways that those things are discussed, understood, circulated and come to have meaning. The *dispositif* is a broad concept, allowing for other Foucauldian terms to be encompassed in it. While some readers of Foucault identify a clear break between his earlier and later work where his interests and ways of understanding social life change, Agamben and Deleuze discuss the *dispositif* with the view that while Foucault expanded and modified his views over time, his work overall shows a contiguous methodological train of thought (Bussolini 100, 102). These links between different methods and concepts reflect that.

Agamben's essay, "What is an Apparatus?" (2009) seeks to foreground the importance of the *dispositif* to Foucault's philosophical thought. For Agamben, history, imbued with internalised systems of belief that are formed by institutionalised rules and impositions, speaks directly to the philosophical problems that Foucault's work is most concerned with. Agamben summarises this concern as "the relation between individuals as living beings and the historical element. By 'the historical element', I mean the set of institutions, of processes of subjectification, and of rules in which power relations become concrete" (6).

Agamben is not only interested in the genealogy of the *dispositif* in regards to Foucault's use of the term. He relates the *dispositif* to the Greek term *oikonomia*, or the economy of the home, which came to have theological significance in the Holy Trinity and the separation of the divine aspects of religious philosophy from the administration and governance of Christian faiths. *Oikonomia*, like the *dispositif*, can be defined in terms of "a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control and orient – in a way that purports to be useful – the behaviours, gestures and thoughts of human beings" (Agamben 12). In this sense, *dispositifs* "must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject" (11). This process by which

workers are subjectified by the workplace safety films under investigation is, as stated previously, a central concern of this research.

The *dispositif* also "has a dominant strategic function" (Foucault "The Confession of the Flesh" 195). This strategic function is about bolstering power: "in order for a certain relation of forces not only to maintain itself" ("The Confession of the Flesh" 206), it must perform strategically, looking to expand its base. This manoeuvre can consist of prohibitions (laws, restrictions, punitive measures and so on) but is more likely to consist of normalising strategies. It is

> always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge which issue from it, but, to an equal degree, condition it. This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge ("The Confession of the Flesh" 196).

Again, in relation to my own work, this normalising strategy is apparent not only in the content of Australian workplace safety films themselves, but also in the ways in which they were screened and the materials that were likely to accompany them. These elements which make up the *dispositif* of which these films are a part provide the researcher with "a tool to think about power in the perpetually dynamic social field" (Bussolini 90) (in this case, the social field of occupational safety).

The purpose of interrogating or highlighting the ways power relationships operate via the *dispositif* is twofold – it can be done to formulate possible strategies of resistance to power, i.e. it can have a political purpose, or it can simply describe structures and relations of how power functions. While Foucault is interested on one hand in strategies of resistance to certain power formations, some of his aims are simply evaluative: "why did that work? How did that hold up?" ("The Confession of the Flesh" 209). My thesis falls primarily into the

latter category: it seeks to map and describe the ways that the *dispositifs* of safety and utilitarian film, bolstered by particular discursive ways of understanding them, serve to normalise particular behaviours and subject positions, shoring up a power structure which has particular political effects. Though it does not aim to provide a manifesto for what should then be done about the particular workings of power and subjectification it describes, the process of describing them is nevertheless politicised, in that it is impossible – and perhaps impractical – to describe them in detail without making apparent the researcher's own stance.

Agamben states that:

> Foucault has demonstrated how, in a disciplinary society, apparatuses aim to create – through a series of practices, discourses and bodies of knowledge – docile, yet free, bodies that assume their identity and their 'freedom' as subjects in the very process of their desubjectification. Apparatus, then, is first of all a machine of governance. (20)

Film studies has also been interested in the ways that this 'machine of governance' pertains to cinema, and how it is made, received and interpreted. As film is an influential artistic, social and mass medium, film theorists have attended to the *dispositif* in terms of how it describes the social aspects of viewing a film, with particular attention to how the spectator fits in not only with the film text, but with the physical, technological apparatus at work in film screening.

Adrian Martin describes the cinematic *dispositif* not as a collection of various elements, but as a kind of 'rules of the game': films alert us, through the configuration of the setting we are in, the screen, the relation of our bodies to the screen and the way the film addresses us through *mise en scène*, style and paratextual or previous knowledge, as to how we should behave, respond, and relate to it (*Mise en scène and Film Style* 179). Definitions of the *dispositif* following Foucault are apt to attend to how subjects are governed and subjectified

by it, whereas Martin's definition allows for not only governing and subjectification, but also spectator agency, and, importantly for cinema, fun and pleasure. It positions the film viewer within the *dispositif* as a player in a complex game, one with rules and order to it, that we learn from embracing the different possibilities that film offers.

According to Martin, "where the basic cinematic apparatus already includes the fact of projection, the *dispositif* adds in the spectator and all that this implies" ("Turn the Page"). 'All that this implies' is of course extremely broad. It includes many facets of viewer behaviour, affect, interaction with and response to the film text. Study of the *dispositif* in film studies involves looking at a variety of questions regarding the spectator, as well as a variety of considerations about the cinematic apparatus. Not all film screenings resemble each other: early cinema screenings differed significantly from those of classic Hollywood, from contemporary art cinema, from home-movie viewing, drive-in screening, museum screenings, utilitarian film and so on. This research aims to look at the technical aspects, screening contexts and audiences of these films, and at how the films attempt to interpellate and subjectify their viewers.

This attention to subjectification is also articulated by Elsaesser, who specifies that, in relation to media, the *dispositif* must entail "a medium (a material support, most often a combination of technologies), an image (a representation) […], and a spectator (liable to be solicited, subjectified, addressed by interpellation or affectively and cognitively engaged)" (113). These necessary elements of the *dispositif* are also detailed by Albera and Tortajada, simply as "the spectator, the machinery, the representation" ("The Dispositive Does Not Exist!" 44). The *dispositif* of safety which surrounds and is spoken to by the workplace safety films scrutinised here primarily speaks to a subject who is a worker. The knowledge produced about those workers by and through these films is related to precise configurations

of power. Outlining how these power relations operate is an essential part of study of the *dispositif.*

Study of the *dispositif* is especially salient to workplace safety films and utilitarian film more broadly, not only as it assists in clearly delineating what is special and different about these films in relation to other forms of cinema, but because it highlights how the discourses pertaining to these films remain relevant today beyond the status of the texts as historical curiosities. For Elsaesser, "the cinematic dispositive – especially its observational, monitoring, and controlling functions – has become a pervasive presence in our everyday lives, joining art and entertainment with the industrial and bureaucratic uses of the moving image" ("Between Knowing and Believing" 58). The social relevance of the workplace safety films under scrutiny here brings light to a little-regarded area of film studies. Albera and Tortajada go so far as to say that discussion of the cinematic *dispositif* is a necessity in the discipline: "The study of cinema *needs* this technical history of the techniques and the construction of the network of discourses, practices and institutions relating them to the representation that cinema is too often limited to (aesthetics)" ("The Dispositive Does Not Exist!" 30).

The *dispositif* and discourse can be seen as interrelated concepts that assist researchers in accounting for how a cultural phenomenon acquires particular meanings and associations and has particular effects on how subjects are understood and how they operate. The historiographic methods – archaeology and genealogy – by which *dispositif*(s) and their related discourses can be extrapolated and their function described are also of relevance. While I have attempted to describe each of these conceptual tools separately here, in my analysis itself, demarcating strict boundaries between them may not always be useful. For instance, the shoring up of certain power structures is a feature of both the *dispositif* and of certain discursive statements; assigning a categorical label of either is perhaps less salient

than describing *what* that power structure is and *how* it is reinforced. Nevertheless, clarity as to how my methods lead to and support the particular points argued is my consistent aim.

5. Conclusion

Methodologically, this thesis could be summarised as consisting of two steps: collation of information (content analysis) and interpretation of that information (Archaeology, discourse analysis etc.). This second step is conducted in two different ways: discussion of the results of the content analysis, and supplementation with case studies of individual films. The collating that is performed in a content analysis involves looking at phenomena such as communicative messages (aural, visual, narrative and rhetorical) and their contexts. According to Shoemaker and Reese, the job of a content analysis is to "impose some sort of order on these phenomena in order to grasp their meaning" (31). This meaning in turn is analysed, in my case using techniques of discourse analysis, archaeology, genealogy and attention to the *dispositif*.

Foucauldian discourse, archaeology and genealogy provide useful concepts and tools to illustrate and explain how Australian workplace safety films made between 1955 and 1980 influenced the ways work and safety are culturally understood today. While the concept of discourse provides my work with a way of understanding the field, archaeology will assist in analysing the film texts under investigation. Attending to the *dispositif* expands the field interrogated by this analysis, placing it in context and thereby strengthening the foundation on which the analysis is based. Genealogy then provides tools with which to go deeper into this investigation of the historical relationships between the constitution of truth, subjectivity, knowledge and power.

These techniques, all of which follow the work of Michel Foucault, provide me with the tools with which to uncover how the attitudes shown in Australian workplace safety films (1955-

1980) have influenced and impacted on how the site of work, the subject positions of workers, and the practice of safety are culturally understood. Rose summarises the objects of study of these methodological techniques in a way that can be related closely to my own aims. He states that, in genealogical and archaeological approaches

> pride of place is not occupied by the philosophers reflecting in their studies on the nature of the person […] but rather in the everyday practices where conduct has become problematic to others or oneself, and in the mundane texts and programs [...] seeking to render these problems intelligible, and at the same time, manageable. (26)

The workplace is precisely one of these areas where 'conduct has become problematic to others or oneself' (or has the potential to become so), and workplace safety films provide a concrete example of one of these 'mundane texts and programs' whose utilitarian purpose is to make sense of and render this area manageable. Together, these methods allow questions about history and historical materials to be asked and answered without recourse to essentialising or totalising assertions, while providing concrete description and analysis of complex cultural fields, objects and relationships.

Chapter Four

What is in an Australian Workplace Safety Film?:

Content and Discursive Statements

1. Introduction

A methodological issue asserts itself when attempting to discuss the workplace safety film, in that it is rare to come across a film form that is at once under-researched and displays such a uniformity in terms of purpose and message delivery. If you have seen one safety film, it is likely that you will gain a reasonable impression of what other safety films are like. Because of this, while focussing on particular case study films will yield valuable interpretations of how these films individually make their points (both in terms of film form and of direct statements made in the voice over) the question remains of how best to convey broadly what the form or genre of the Australian safety film includes.

In conducting a content analysis of a sample of workplace safety films, the subject matter, stylistic elements and discursive statements these films contain can be discerned, from a larger sample size than would be possible from the exclusive use of case studies. Through content analysis, this chapter will detail the industries, subjects and some stylistic features of the Australian workplace safety film (1955-1980), before discussing in detail the discursive statements that these films make. I commence by describing how the films in the sample were selected.

2. Sampling

The initial step in this research was to compile a list of Australian workplace safety films (1955-1980), from online databases such as Trove and from searches of the online catalogues of specific archives. The film catalogues in the State Library of Victoria collection (*Films on Industrial Safety Available in Australia* (1962) and *Safety Film Catalogue* (1977; 1983)) also

proved useful in sourcing particular titles. All the Australian workplace safety films from the time period that are available to view in the film collections held by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA) were requested and viewed, and extensive notes made. All the films selected for the sample were viewed on 16mm film; while some workplace safety films were viewed as digital files or on VHS, these were excluded from the sample as their release date fell outside the timeframe of the project. In all, 30 films were selected and are included in the sample. A complete list of the films that comprise the sample are listed as an appendix to this thesis.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this research follows a convenience sampling method, with the selection of films made from what is readily available (Krippendorff 121). Some held by the NFSA were unavailable to view as only preservation prints are held (such as *Safety in Construction* (1955)). The 1971 film *Safety in the Sawmill* was viewed but excluded from the sample as only a working print without sound or credits is available, and would therefore not meet the content analysis criteria of being as 'equally informative' (Krippendorff 115) as the other films sampled. Other films excluded were *Safety in the Forest* (1967) and *Cane Harvesting with Safety* (1965), which are available at the State Library of Queensland but for the purposes of this project proved impracticable to access. These exclusions were decided on for practical reasons at an early stage of research planning.

Two films were omitted from the content analysis sample at a much later stage: *Think Back* (1975) and *Static Generation* (1980). Both of these films differ significantly in the presentation, style and delivery of their safety messages from others in the sample, to such an extent that it could be debated as to whether they qualify as 'safety films' at all. *Think Back*, a film aimed at nurses and other healthcare workers, mainly involves practical demonstration, mostly silent, of how to lift and move patients in varying degrees of incapacitation, while *Static Generation* is primarily concerned with the science of how flammable materials

become electrically charged (as a reminder to truckers working with such materials to properly earth their vehicles). A third film, *The Myth of the Careless Worker* (1983) was viewed but omitted from the sample as it was released outside the timeframe that this thesis considers. However, owing to its direct contradiction of the discourses that govern most workplace safety films, it has been included as a case study in chapter seven as an informative point of contrast.

3. Industries and Subject Matter

3.1 Industries

The 30 films in the sample address a variety of different industries. The approach the majority of the films take is to focus on safety issues and hazards in one particular industry and to cover several roles, aspects or activities in that industry where accidents may occur. The industry most commonly addressed is construction, with 11 of the sampled films focussing on construction work. Nine look at factory work, while another four focus on agriculture. Other industries or areas covered include abattoirs, communications, forestry, mining, office work, science, transport and waterfront work.

A few films sampled look at several different industries, usually with some uniting theme or thread. For example, *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* (1974) depicts different industries or fields where explosives are used – agriculture, mining and road construction. Others are linked by the type of hazard, such as *Safety in Your Hands* (1974) which covers hand injuries in both construction and factory work. *The Unsafe Act* (1965) covers several different industries (construction, manual labour such as window-washing and bricklaying, and factory work) with general safety advice and no clear thematic link.

3.2 Subject Matter

Three broad areas indicate the central topics that the Australian workplace safety films in the sample focus on. Firstly, there are general hazards, issues, workplace events or practices that many of the films have in common. Secondly, there is specific equipment that may be discussed at length, and thirdly there are specific injuries resulting from accidents that the films choose to highlight or discuss. Some of these foci are dictated by the industries addressed for instance, equipment and machinery such as ladders, scaffolding and cranes are common because of the preponderance of films addressing construction workers. In others, the interests of the films' sponsors are significant, for instance, several films such as *Private Eye* (1970) and *Safety in Your Hands* address personal protective equipment (PPE) like coveralls, goggles and respirators, and list safety gear manufacturer Protector Sureguard as a producer or sponsor.

Of the general hazards or workplace practices that the sample addresses, the most common is falls, involving either workers tripping and falling, or falls from a height (off scaffolding, buildings or ladders); falls appear in and are discussed in 16 films in the sample, and are mentioned a total of 31 times. Correlated with this hazard is cleanliness (or "good housekeeping" as many of the films term it), as trips and falls often result, according to the films, from untidy workspaces. As with falls, 16 films refer to cleanliness, which is mentioned 27 times across the sample. The most frequently mentioned, depicted or discussed general items are tool and machinery guards, which appear in only 13 films, but are discussed in 47 different instances. This high number of references is likely because often when a film discusses guards, it mentions a variety of guard types throughout the film, often in detail. *Don't Be Cut Up* (1959), for instance, discusses guards on a variety of different types of factory machinery, from power presses to guillotines and bending breaks. Other general subject areas mentioned include electricity, manual lifting, evacuations or emergency response, and chemicals.

The equipment that these films discuss most frequently is personal protective equipment (glasses, coveralls, respirators, gloves, gauntlets, aprons), which are a central topic in films such as *Don't Be Scalped* (1960), a film that addresses female factory employees, and *Private Eye* (1970), which focusses on eye injuries and eye protection in a variety of industrial work. As indicated by the title, *Don't be Incorrectly Dressed* (1962) also deals with safety clothing. Hand tools appear frequently: *Bet Your Life* (1980) addresses the potential fatalities awaiting those who misuse their tools on construction sites, possibly mimicking the pessimistic, fatalistic attitude of the safety films by Film Australia in the late seventies and early eighties (Moran *Projecting Australia* 112). *Don't Be Shocked* (1959) also addresses the use of hand tools, but its emphasis is on the practicalities of tool maintenance – the 'how to' - rather than the potential risks of failing to take care of them. A further different approach is taken by *Don't Be Sawed* (1961), which discusses hand tools and the dangers associated with them through copious use of gory effects, designed, it feels, to entertain rather than frighten. Other equipment that is addressed in the sample includes ladders (*Don't be Let Down* (1960) deals exclusively with ladder safety), scaffolding, fume cupboards or extractors, cranes, explosives and saws.

As well as looking at specific equipment and how it can assist with or contribute to workplace hazards, the films across the sample deal with a variety of different injuries to specific body parts. Injuries to the hands are the most common, appearing in ten different films, followed by eye injuries or sight damage, injuries to feet, back strain, poisoning or toxin inhalation, stress and fatigue, burns, head injuries and ear or hearing injury. Of these, the majority of injuries that the films discuss are acute injuries, serious ones that occur in a specific incident and have grievous initial effect, with possibly a long recuperation period (that is, if they are not immediately fatal). Though the discussions of stress- and fatigue-related injury do point to issues that are or can become incrementally worse over time, the

attention to chronic injuries is minor. *Noise Destroys* (1978), a narrative short about industrial hearing damage, is the only film in the sample to deal with chronic injury exclusively, though several scenes in *Don't Be Strained* (1963) depict women working in a factory suffering from repetitive strain injuries while using an electric screwdriver: "the result? Pain and poor performance", according to the voice over. The film shows how affixing a holster to the bench allows the women to pick up the tool with a less awkward motion, alleviating the damage to their hands and wrists: "as simple as that! With the help of industry, we are developing rhythm, correcting faulty posture, reducing fatigue and increasing production". It is notable here that the emphasis is less on injury and pain reduction, and instead on improved worker productivity.

4.   Human Subjects Represented Onscreen

While workers are the human subjects we most commonly see appearing onscreen, it is notable that when we see them they are usually silent, the voice over narration doing the talking for them. As we find in the Film Australia films of the 1960s, the use of the expository documentary mode and non-synchronised sound meant that the images seen onscreen in the majority of Australian workplace safety films appear as evidence and illustration of the points made in the narration. Moreover, this era was typified by depictions where "the working or the community group as a positive dynamic force is usually absent […] workers are no longer heroic" (Moran *Projecting Australia* 65). If the heroic worker or working collective that appeared in Australian government films of the 1940s was no longer prominent, what we see instead is a worker who is passive and lacking in personality or defining characteristics – for example, the anonymous, obedient and well-organised hordes of office workers who expertly and precisely evacuate their building in *Get Out and Live* (1972). In the case of safe workers, they fit in unobtrusively with the way that industry is supposed to function, their presence onscreen harmonious with and sometimes subservient to

the machines they operate. On the other hand, unsafe workers (those who cause accidents) are problematised for their stupidity and lack of care.

The workers that appear are also almost always men. Women appear in 16 of the films in the sample, but only in nine of them as workers themselves: usually they are incidental characters, the family of the male workers, or objects of desire for the male characters in the film (and/or the audience). As noted by C. Williams,

> Fundamental to class theories […] is the assumption that there is a universal individual. That person is a man. The apparently gender-neutral notion of 'a job' contains the gender-based division of labour, and separation between the public and private sphere ("Class, Gender and the Body" 62).

If the generic figure of 'the worker' is a man, and a "disembodied, rational actor" (ibid) then according to the presentation of work and injury in these films, women are presented as non-workers, caretakers of the private sphere and as the emotional *re*-actors to the accidents and injuries that befall the central male characters. This is particularly evident in the narrative films in the sample (as opposed to those that have a more 'documentary-like' style): *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* and *Noise Destroys* both depict women who are partners or family of the male protagonists and who appear in or represent the domestic sphere (see the case studies in chapter six).

Other subjects that commonly appear in the sample are 'experts'. As noted by Levin, the 'expert' figure in the industrial film is usually a representative of and symbol standing in for the "legitimizing discourses (of science, medicine and the law, for example)" (89). In the sample, these experts are often scientists (in two films), government employees or representatives (in six films) or doctors (in four films – in *Line Up Your Safety* (n.d.) a doctor is the narrator, who appears onscreen sitting behind a desk and addresses the camera). When

an expert appears, it is often to demonstrate a technical process. A common depiction involves the expert giving a lecture or demonstration, either to workers within the film's diegesis or to the camera. These demonstrations might involve using a marionette or audience volunteers to show correct lifting technique, with the expert pointing to how the legs should be bent or where strain might be placed on the back muscles through lifting incorrectly. Such scenes appear in *Don't be Scalped* (1960), *Don't be Strained* (1963), and *One in Seven* (c.1964).

5. Formal and Stylistic Elements

It is worth emphasising at this point that all formal and stylistic aspects of the Australian workplace safety films under study are discursive. Although much of this chapter focusses on what the films say rather than necessarily the way that they say it, the delivery of their didactic messages always takes place within a framework which allows their particular ways of understanding safety and work to be reinforced. The ways that the expository documentary mode and the narrative short (borrowing techniques from docudrama) perform this work are discussed in detail in chapters five and six respectively. Here however, I would like to outline how some of the other notable stylistic choices that occur in the sample function, particularly the use of comedy and of 'exploitation'-style content (especially gore and nudity).

The use of comedy in the sample films on one hand appears intended to capture and hold audience attention – as acknowledged in *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline*, there is a perception that safety films are boring, and that the audience is only submitting to watching them under duress: "I know what you're thinking", the narrator states to the camera, "not another bloody training film". The use of jokes or employment of a comedic tone is intended to alleviate the boredom that viewers are expected to experience. But what is it that is being joked about? Firstly, the jokes employed tend to reflect what can be understood as a typically

Australian comedic sensibility of the 1970s, i.e. the 'Ocker'. The 'Ocker' phenomenon is discussed in relation to language and accent in chapter five, but it is also strongly associated with particular jocular or comedic concerns. It exhibits a set of generic characteristics that include "an invective, usually male, anti-language for bodily functions, sex, drinking and women", and a preoccupation with "the pleasures of the body" (O'Regan 76), to the exclusion and suspicion of intellectuality.

In the safety films themselves, this 'Ocker'-style preoccupation with the body, its functions and their comedic potential are exemplified by the use of women as comic props, which we see in *Private Eye*, where the voice over lasciviously describes how protective eyewear "comes in *all* shapes and sizes", as the camera zooms in on the bodies of women wearing sunglasses on the beach. Similarly, male nudity is treated humorously in *Safety in Your Hands*, where the voice over seriously describes how "in our sports and recreation we take precautions – " [a shot shows a hand carefully lacing boots] " – and dress for the part" [the shot pulls back to reveal the boot wearer has no other clothes on – he streaks across a cricket pitch]. The body, particularly the injured or damaged body, is also a source of humour and prurient interest, as seen in scenes that use gore for shocking or comedic effect. The special effects in *Don't be Sawed* (1961) are particularly notable in this respect, especially in a scene which demonstrates the potential effects of unguarded circular saws. A man passes by the saw as it is in operation, and "the piece of timber, leaving the bench with the speed of a bullet, finds its mark!" – the timber pierces the man's abdomen, and as he falls it can be seen that it has impaled him right through his body. "The tragedy of a situation like this", the voice over explains, "is that one man's carelessness has cost another man's life". However, the images are far more humorous and tongue-in-cheek than the serious voice over implies: the thick red paint splattered over the man, and his agonised clutching of his wounds seem intended to entertain rather than shock or disturb. This interpretation is further supported by

the contrast offered by films such as *Think Twice,* which use unsimulated footage of injury to make similar points: here the images are shocking and unpleasant, with little entertainment value.

6. Discursive Statements

It is immediately noticeable on an initial viewing of the sample that there is a standard or uniform way of discussing safety, as so many of these films make similar points, use similar phrasing for describing safety, accidents and workers, and express similar ideas about the ultimate purposes and ways of ensuring safety. These ways of discussing safety can be described as 'discursive statements', that is, the building blocks from which discourse is built (Foucault poetically describes a discursive statement as "a seed that appears on the surface of a tissue of which it is the constituent element" and "The atom of discourse" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 80)). A whole component of a broad discourse is crystallised in a particular discursive statement: "the analysis of discursive formations really is centred on a description of the statement in its specificity" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 114). For this reason, in order to articulate the ways that Australian workplace safety films reflect specific cultural understandings of and attitudes about safety and work, I focus on what particular statements are, their implications and the understandings they lay bare.

For Arribas-Allyon and Walkerdine, "The analyst must recognize discourse as a 'corpus of statements' whose organization is relatively regular and systematic" (100), and which is reflected in the repetition of statements across the safety film sample, and the similar narrative structures of the films. However, that does not mean that the statements made in the films are necessarily logically consistent. Several of the statements I analyse below stand in contradiction to each other, such as attitudes of blame that may directly state that unsafe workers or practices are stupid, and interpellation of a competent worker – sometimes these

positions may appear in the same film. These conflicting statements do not challenge the effectiveness of the discourse, since the discourses' purpose does not necessarily involve a logical internal consistency. Rather, a discourse or discursive statement provides "a set of possible positions for a subject" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 108), some of which may vary or even be antithetical to each other. Studying these statements in context highlights the rules which make such contradictions appear logical and easy to accept.

Statements have been selected as notable according to how frequently they appeared across the sample: if two or more films appeared to be using the same phrasing or making the same points, these were noted and investigated in other films. Though discursive statements can involve objects or elements other than verbal and written pronouncements, I have tended to focus on succinct spoken sentences, made usually through voice over or sometimes by characters in the narrative films. This is appropriate to the expository documentary form that the workplace safety film so often reflects, incorporates or mimics: as Nichols explains, "whereas the appearance of a narrator speaking in direct address almost invariably ruptures the diegesis of fictional narrative, it can *constitute* the "diegesis" of documentary exposition" (*Ideology and the Image* 184). If the narrators' direct address is constitutive of the diegesis itself, contributing the majority of the information and guiding the evidentiary images, then locating the discursive statements within it appears justified (further discussion of the expository mode and its relationship to the workplace safety film appears in chapter five). Though, as will be demonstrated, the succinct discursive statements made in the films can and do vary in terms of exact phrasing, they convey consistent meanings.

Foucault's understanding of discursive statements involves "the historically contingent rules and conditions" that govern what it is possible to say sensibly (Arribas-Allyon and Walkerdine 99), in other words, what shapes societal understanding of what is normal, common sense and truthful. The following sub-sections identify several discursive statements

that are repeated throughout the sample or appear several times across different films, looking at how they are phrased and what discursive functions they may have.

6.1 "Accidents are caused by carelessness"

Statements to the effect that accidents occur because workers are careless is a strong feature of the Australian workplace safety films in the sample. Appearing in twelve different films, statements assigning blame for accidents to worker carelessness appear thirty times. Sometimes this statement is phrased quite directly, as in *Don't Lose Your Grip* (1961), where the voice over tells us that "Human carelessness is at the root of most [accidents]. Somebody has neglected to take ordinary precautions." Similarly, *One in Seven* (c.1964) shows several scenes of workers not looking where they are going and falling or cutting themselves in their work in a telephone exchange, after which the voice over concludes ""These accidents are mainly the result of carelessness. It would be difficult to imagine a safer place to work than in a telephone exchange. But carelessness and inattention will create risks to life and limb in even the safest places."

A further way that carelessness is emphasised as a central cause of accidents is through detailing the particular ways that carelessness relates to specific kinds of equipment. The argument here appears to be that the equipment itself is not the issue in injury causation, but rather the worker's behaviour. For instance, in *Don't Be a Fall Guy* (1962), we see a man approach an open edge on a construction site, while the voice over states "there is no excuse for this man not to use the pivoted guardrail!". A cut to a wide shot shows two men standing behind a guard rail, past which a loaded elevator freefalls. As the men have to lean quickly out of the way, the voice over continues – "but even a guardrail does not insure against human carelessness". Similarly, ladder safety film *Don't Be Let Down* advises the viewer not to blame accidents on their gear: "men caused them – not the ladders, which after all are

merely tools in the hands of careful or careless people", as does *One In Seven*: "remember, the ordinary screwdriver can become a dagger in careless hands". *Don't Lose Your Grip* primarily addresses construction workers who work on scaffolding and cranes, reminding them that "the careless use of packing can be dangerous too. To throw it down in front of the rack is an invitation for someone who doesn't notice it to trip and suffer a nasty injury!" Such statements in each of these films are accompanied by evidentiary images of careless workers falling from heights, stabbing themselves in the hands or tripping over litter.

A notable exception here is one of the earliest films in the sample, *Don't Be Cut Up* (1959). This film makes the claim that carelessness is an unavoidable part of most jobs, and that proper use of equipment alleviates the need for constant care. Two and a half minutes into the film the voice over informs the viewers that "because all human beings can and do become careless now and again, we must safeguard against accidents. Care is a safeguard, but there are other means much more dependable". The film then goes on to demonstrate how guards on industrial saws and guillotines prevent workers from accidentally sliding their hand under the blades. After a few minutes of demonstration and voice over explanation of these features, the narrator reiterates: "All humans have our weaknesses. One of them is to relax our care sometimes. And this fixed guard will protect you against the consequences of a moment's carelessness". The implication here is that technology and design are a mitigating factor which allows for moments of human fallibility, an idea that other safety films reject in favour of almost exclusive focus on worker behaviour modifications to prevent accidents.

6.2 "Accidents need never have happened"

This idea is repeated in the sample almost verbatim, and sometimes is reiterated several times within an individual film. *Think Twice* (1958), *Don't Be Cut Up* (1959), *The Unsafe Act* (1965), *Bet Your Life* (1980) and *Line Up Your Safety* (n.d.) all repeat statements to this effect

at least three times. Sometimes the phrasing is slightly different, with *Bet your Life* thrice stating that "accidents could be prevented", and at another point stating that they are "foreseeable". All of these emphasise that the accidents could have been avoided, usually through human action.

An interesting rhetorical sleight-of-hand is being performed with this statement. Firstly, it appears initially that this is a truism: an accident is not a foregone conclusion, much as any other event. However, the repeated use of it asks the viewer to question what its intended meaning is. Sometimes this is posited very clearly, such as in *Don't be Let Down* (1960), where the statement is phrased as a definition: "accidents are events that need not happen". What is happening here is that the sentence is calling into question what the word accident itself means. There are two common definitions of an accident, the first being an event that happens randomly, by chance and without intention. The second is an event that is without an apparent cause, and while it is the first definition that might initially spring to mind when one hears the statement "accidents need never have happened", it is the second that is being subtly emphasised in the films. If the films reinforce the discourse that safety is an issue which centres on human behaviour, then the human causes of accidents are what is at stake, and by modifying their behaviour workers will indeed be able to ensure that "accidents need not happen". Tombs and White note that the use of language like 'accident' to describe workplace injury or fatality "carries with it implications regarding intentionality" (71), and this is spelled out clearly in *The Unsafe Act* (1965), where the narrator hyperbolically exclaims "man, that's no accident! It's murder! A broken grinding wheel can be lethal: this one was. It need never have happened" (as the worker whose grinder has broken and hit a colleague raises his visor in horror). The films drive home their points about worker conduct by conflating the first definition of an accident (an unfortunate occurrence) with the second (an event without cause).

6.3 An address to a competent audience

Despite the blame that is levied at workers in the Australian workplace safety film, several of the films in the sample make it clear, through the attitudes they convey, that they assume their audience to be competent and conscientious workers. It is notable that most of the films that utilise this technique are from later in the sample time period – four of the seven films that address a competent audience were released after 1970 – and these films also tend more than once to include statements that imply a competent audience. The narrator of *Safe Loads* (1974) seems preoccupied and concerned about the idea, returning to it many times as he is shown walking around and between the trucks that the film centres on. He initially wonders aloud to the viewer, "Well I'll tell you what, this film won't be the easiest one we've had to make. I mean how do you tell a bunch of professionals about a subject they've learned the hard way?" After reviewing the statistics of accidents caused by unsafely loaded trucks and insecure loads, he concludes "So there is room for a film about safe loading. But what about you blokes that've been in the industry for six, seven, eight years? Maybe we're not gonna show you much you haven't seen before, but a lot of experienced blokes have ended up in accidents."

This type of address, and the care that is evident to avoid implying that workers don't know what they are doing is possibly due to the 1960s emphasis on worker incompetence no longer being seen as an effective pedagogical approach. One can hazard a guess that workers might have responded dismissively or even angrily to the implications that their own carelessness or stupidity was what caused accidents, implying a viewing *dispositif* where audiences rejected the messages of the training films they were shown – a refusal to play the films' 'rules of the game', as Martin puts it (*Mise-en-scene and Film Style* 179). This later strong emphasis on workers as experts in their own field is testament to a change in approach. What is notable,

however, is that the films often manage to have it both ways – addressing a worker who is competent, but reminding them that not all their colleagues have the same level of experience. This is evident in *You Can't Shift the Blame* (1980), where the crane-driving narrator states "Any experienced driver's gonna know his crane and the controls like the back of his hand. […] But what if he's off sick tomorrow? What about the young fellow who's just got his certificate, who's just stepped in for the day?"

The films also approach competent workers as ones who know their job, but who could still benefit from reminders: *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* tells viewers "You blokes probably all know that when you're using a fuse, you've gotta check its burning rate." This interpellation that says effectively "we know you know this already, but we're going to tell you anyway" is highly unusual, as it begs the question of why safety films are necessary in the first place. However, when we consider that the discourse of safety at large views workers as being responsible for the accidents that befall them, then changing how they behave is the central pedagogical aim of all safety films. This aim is only going to be achievable if the audience does not feel condescended to, berated or patronised about their work and ability. The interpellation of a competent viewer, who knows safety rules but just might benefit from a reminder allows for this subjectification of the worker.

6.4 Benefits to or praise of Australia

The inclusion of patriotic statements, or explanations of how safety benefits the Australian nation are often accompanied by several other cognate discourses, such as economic prosperity and technological advancement. They are also often expressed not only through direct statements in the voice over narration, but through martial or dramatic musical accompaniment, and mise-en-scene that reinforces the impression of grandeur and pride in

urban or rural enterprise. Statements to this effect tend to appear at the opening of a film or at its close, and are usually used as a linking device between the industry that the film primarily addresses and its place in Australia more broadly. For example, *Safety in Rural Industries* (n.d.) claims that "the Australian sugar industry, concentrated in the tropical and semi-tropical coastal regions of Queensland supplies the nation's requirements, and efficiently competes on the world's markets. Mechanisation and bulk handling are factors in this efficiency". As the narrator delivers these lines, swelling strings play over a wide shot of a cane cutter slowly moving up a field, a bucolic pastoral image that stands in contrast to the close ups of machinery and their hazardous blades and moving parts that appear subsequently. Similarly, *Timber Sense* (1961) closes with the statement that "Timber production is playing a big and vital part in this country's progress. You can continue to play your part in our progress by ensuring safety on the job at all times", as we are shown illustrative shots of timber being loaded onto ships for export and slow pans across new suburban subdivisions of timber housing.

Since these films were so often produced by state government departments, on one hand this emphasis on how safety benefits the nation could be explained as the result of the sponsor wishing to promote their 'product': the Australian nation-state itself. In this sense, they "share many of the same rhetorical techniques" with advertisements, (Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* 146) though rather than simply encouraging purchases or consumption they are "promoting a perspective or way of seeing the world" (147) that is commensurate with patriotic aims. If workers are invested in the idea of nation, of prosperity and of their role in contributing to and benefiting from Australia's wealth and growth, then they will want to remain safe not only for their own sake, but for the sake of wider biopolitical aims: an example of the (safe) body and its "integration into systems of efficient and economic

controls" (Foucault "The Right of Death and Power over Life" 261). In this sense, patriotic feeling is harnessed as a tool of subjectification.

6.5 Blaming statements: 'Stupid' workers who are 'asking for trouble'

Some of the most commonly made statements in the workplace safety films of the 1950s to 1980s involve blaming the worker for the accidents that befall them. Sixteen of the thirty films in the sample make some form of statement that indicates that workers are at fault. The most common ways of assigning this blame are through stating that behaviour depicted onscreen is 'asking for trouble', or stating that the unsafe worker or unsafe behaviour are 'stupid'. For examples of the former, we hear in *Don't be a fall guy* (1962) that "to work on a building project with an unprotected head is asking for trouble" while the narrator in *Line Up Your Safety* (n.d.) sounds positively gleeful at the prospect of the onscreen lineman's injury: "Instead of holding this cable with the hand away from the knife, this man is just asking for trouble. And he's got it! A deep puncture wound like this can be very painful." With the phrasing 'asking for trouble', it is implied that the injured worker is somehow deserving of the accident that befalls them. *Don't Be a Fall Guy* (1962), in depicting an apprentice scaling a scaffolding on a dare from other workers, goes so far as to wonder whether it "would be 'moral murder' if he falls". The contempt for any risk-taking, justified or not, is palpable.

As to the claims that an unsafe worker or behaviour is stupid, these statements are usually delivered with clear scorn in the narrator's voice; rarely with consideration of why a worker might elect to behave that way. *The Unsafe Act* (1965) typifies this most clearly, with numerous statements ("Showing off is *stupid,* and most of the time it's far from safe") delivered in a withering tone by the narrator. The lack of acknowledgement of the reasons a worker might have for showing off (such as pressure from colleagues), not wearing safety

gear (such as discomfort or hindrance), or working too fast, working when tired or without due attention (for instance when there is pressure from management to achieve results quickly) is glossed over. As discussed by Bohle, the focus on behavioural determinants of injury can only explain their occurrence as being the result of "perversity" (96), or as in this case, the result of inexplicable stupidity.

The identification of 'stupid' behaviour is often intended to reinforce the competency of the viewer: In *A Matter of Survival* (1963), we see a worker attempt to pour liquid from a keg into a large container, which unbalances, spilling some on the floor, as the narration reassures "don't worry – this isn't benzene, because no one would be so stupid as to handle it like this". In *You Can't Shift the Blame* (1980), the narrator, a crane driver, introduces the film saying "I'm going to demonstrate some of the stupid things I've seen some blokes do that have got them into trouble", again, the implication being that neither he or the viewer are included amongst the 'blokes' mentioned. The invitation to judge the stupidity of others, thereby reinforcing the comparative ability and intelligence of the narrator and viewers and thus engendering a bond between them is most evident in *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline.* In this film, the narrator comments in a casual, observational manner on the scenes of a farmer attempting to blow up a stump: "This bloke's pretty bloody hopeless you know"; "Get a load of this. This bloke's unbelievable"; "He hasn't got a bloody clue, look, the dog'll be blown up next. He's getting worried now, he'll go over and check it and blow himself up. No idea, cobber". The effect of this narrational style in this particular film, at once laconic and intimate, is discussed in further detail in chapter six.

6.6 Collaboration between workers and management

While the tendency of workplace safety films is to focus on worker behaviour and

responsibility, seven of the films in the sample do acknowledge the relationship between workers and their managers or supervisors, and the ways in which safety can be improved through people at different levels in the workplace hierarchy working together. Statements to this effect, or depictions of employers and employees working together harmoniously, tend to be brief, and to come later in a film's running time, and often seem aphoristic. For instance, in *Don't Be Cut Up* (1959), the film closes with the line "your workplace can be made safe by the cooperation of employer and employee. Let us all cooperate to achieve safety in industry!". Likewise, *Safety in the Meat Industry* (n.d, c. 1957-62) closes with "Safety is a state of mind. Safety in the meat industry must come from within. It calls for the free resolution of each individual – employer and employee. All should play their part." These pat summaries suggest an egalitarian vision of the workplace, where aspirations and desires around work outcomes are shared between workers and management. This is in line with Bohle's view that the influence of human relations and organisational psychology in the later half of the twentieth century has aimed to "convince workers to accept and support management's objectives without challenging managerial control" (105), which in this case is done by simply asserting that their aims are one and the same.

However, some other films do discuss collaboration between workers and management in more detail, and this additional detail is often included to delineate what different roles within the workplace involve. *Safety in Your Hands* includes voice over that states

> At work, we form part of a team. Safety in this team can only come about through full cooperation between management, supervisors and workers. We all have a part to play. Management has a responsibility in establishing safe working conditions. It relies heavily on the front-line supervisors to ensure a safe standard of work. He is there to advise and make sure you know your job. Use him. Remember, it is you that

will suffer the pain and hardship resulting from an accident.

This speech takes place over images of an inspector checking fire extinguishers, and then a worker using a rag to move a hot tool and scorching his hand – the supervisor approaches, checks his burns with an impatient air, and then flings away the rag and passes the worker his leather gloves that sit nearby. While this speech does ultimately conclude that the 'pain and hardship' from an accident are the worker's responsibility to prevent (through 'using' the presumably willing expertise of the supervisor), it also suggests that this is a shared and egalitarian aim. The images do undercut this speech to an extent though, as the supervisor's demeanour is so irritable, expressing displeasure and impatience with the onscreen worker's accident.

6.7 "Constant vigilance is required"

A corollary of the idea that worker behaviour is to blame for workplace accidents is that the only way that they can be prevented is for the individual worker to be in a constant state of awareness with regards to their own safety. Statements which suggest this appear in twelve films in the sample. In several films this demand for constant vigilance is based around particular work or workspaces: for instance, *Timber Sense* (1961) reminds the viewer that "loading logs is a dangerous operation that calls for caution at all times", while *Think Twice* (1958) states that "there are many hazards associated with work in confined spaces that demand constant vigilance". Safety itself, rather than particular activities or places, is sometimes what workers are told to be vigilant about, as in *Don't be Shocked* (1959), which employs the catchy line "Safety – that's a word to remember ALL the time!" This is spoken over shots of signs hung on the walls in an electrical power station, which also remind viewers to "keep it safe" and to put "safety first".

Reminders to exercise constant attention or care are also framed around the temporal – one might assume from the phrase that the films are suggesting that workers remain on guard at all times during the course of their working day. However, some films move this concern outside of the workplace itself, suggesting that it is not enough to merely take care while on the job. In *Easy Does It* (1967), we are shown a worker being careful at work in how he lifts and handles heavy materials. The voice over narration observes

> He's so careful nothing can happen. And this goes on, day after day, never a slip. That is, until the weekend." [shots show the worker at home, working in his suburban garden]. "You'd think an expert would carry his knowledge over the weekend, but he stops on Friday" [the worker is shown attempting to lift a bag of potting mix, slipping and falling] "– and for the rest of the week, with a strained back.

The message here is that the lessons imparted via the workplace safety film are ones that are applicable in other areas of life, but when we take into consideration the subjectification at work in these kinds of discursive statements, the implication is that the sort of mental discipline and self-policing that workers are interpellated to perform at work should apply to their entire lives.

6.8 Criticism of Authority

Related to the statements which address a competent audience, two later films also make the unusual move of criticising workplace superiors or authorities more broadly. As with the statements which imply audience competence, these statements appear to be directed to a possibly unwilling, disengaged or skeptical viewer, one who is anticipated to be resistant to the message of the films. The narrative short film *It Wasn't Me* (1978) includes several scenes where the site foreman and business owner are shown to be incompetent, pompous liars, saying on one hand that they are visiting other worksites or attending "important

business meetings" but then shown, with a direct cut, to be having a drink at a bar or going on a date rather than doing the work they claimed. The effect here is to make those in authority appear foolish for the purposes of humour, which reinforces a tone of camaraderie in the interpellation that the film makes (this aspect of *It Wasn't Me* is discussed further in the case study in chapter six).

As well as using humour to lampoon those in authority, we see the criticism of authority put to other uses in the sample. In *You Can't Shift the Blame* (1980), the majority of the film shows observational footage of a crane driver going about his work as part of an outdoor construction crew, the camera panning, zooming and moving to follow the man and the activity on the site. The guiding narration is provided by the crane driver himself, explaining at the outset that he is "going to show you some of the things I keep a look out for. And I'm going to demonstrate some of the stupid things I've seen some blokes do that have got them into trouble". However, every few minutes, the film cuts to a static shot of a clean-cut man in a shirt and tie, who sits in an office and comments on what the crane driver has explained or alluded to, usually expanding on a reference to injuries by providing statistics or extrapolating information to a wider context. These seemingly complementary approaches to giving a rounded explanation of the safety features are undercut slightly by the crane driving narrator's critique of the man in the office. After one of his speeches, we cut back to the crane driver, whose voice over retorts:

> Yeah, well, those blokes in their offices have all got theories on what we should do
> and what we shouldn't do. Well listen, I'm the bloke who's in charge of the crane. I'm
> the one who has to make the decisions. If there's an accident, everyone's gonna be
> looking for someone to blame, and I'm going to make sure it's not going to be me.

The criticism of authority here is employed in a way that highlights the class differences at work between the blue-collar industrial worker (the crane driver) and the white-collar worker (the man in the office) who are here contrasted through academic or merely theoretical experience, and the practical, hands-on experience of actually working on a crane. This is tied to the 'real life' dangers that industrial workers face, and incorporates the resentment that industrial workers are interpellated to feel towards 'suits' telling them what to do and how to behave. In this way, *You Can't Shift the Blame* anticipates and pre-empts criticism that workers might feel towards being told what to do by the film themselves, by having the crane driver as the expert voice of authority in the film, and by having him directly acknowledge the resentment they might carry.

<center>6.9 "The danger is completely eliminated"</center>

There is a tendency in some of the films to describe a safety feature or a particular practice and claim that this entirely removes the hazard or the likelihood of injury. This sort of statement appears mainly in the earlier films in the sample, with the latest example being from 1963's *A Matter of Survival.* A possible reason for these statements appearing only in earlier works is that they are so absolute and self-assured: the prominent deployment of such certain statements was, as Moran notes, socially and politically out of fashion by the late 1960s. This certainty with which statements about danger being eliminated are made is an example of faith in technology, where machines "represent the rationalism of contemporary life, a rationalism that comes up with scientific and technological solutions for physical problems" (Moran *Projecting Australia* 63).

When this type of statement is employed, it is usually in relation to a specific feature of the work process or to a particular piece of equipment. For instance, in *Don't Be Shocked* (1959)

the narrator proudly claims: "here also there is NO electrical risk, because incoming electric energy is connected in such a way that it cannot be easily interfered with", or in *Don't be Cut Up* (1959), "Here is a similar machine which is equipped with proper guards. There is no risk to these operators! This guard removes risk of an accident due to the inattention of either operator". The indication that a safety feature makes accidents effectively impossible further reinforces the idea that workers must be to blame for the accidents that they have, since if danger has indeed been 'completely eliminated", then the only cause of accident must be the wilful disregard for safety (or "inattention", as per *Don't be Cut Up*) that these workers presumably exhibit.

6.10   The financial cost of accidents

6.10.1 Cost to industry

When the films in the sample discuss the financial impact that safety (or its absence) has, that financial impact is often framed in terms of money lost through accidents to the industry concerned. Several films discuss this with regard to the slowing down or loss of production time: "[accidents] mean disruption in production schedules and profit loss", according to the narrator of *Private Eye*, while in *Safety in the Meat Industry*, they "reduce productivity and efficiency". On the other hand, *You Can't Shift the Blame* frames lost production time as collateral damage, an unfortunate necessity in order to keep safe: "OK, you may cost some lost production time while you find out [the maximum load weight], but I reckon a bloke making a lift without knowing whether the crane can handle the weight is looking for a lot worse than lost production time". Loss of production time is therefore indicated to be both the result of accidents *and* the result of following safe practice.

Sometimes the financial costs of accidents to industry are presented through use of statistics.

Safety in Rural Industries presents this discursive statement in two contrasting ways, the first being dry, serious and analytical in tone. The voice over informs us that

> Accidents in rural industries decrease productivity and subtract from the farmer's returns on his land, labour and capital. For example, accidents in cane-growing cost 11 cents for every ton cut. The dairy farmer loses 20 cents for every 8 gallon can of cream produced. Accidents eat up 2 cents of every bushel of wheat harvested.

During this speech, the camera slowly pans past several small shelves, on which we see plastic figurines illustrating the industries mentioned: a tiny plastic cow, a little plastic sheaf of wheat, with the stated statistics on production loss printed below them. The tone then shifts rapidly, as the film cuts to a brief animated sequence, showing an anthropomorphised insect, wearing a mask and carrying a sack. As the insect tiptoes through trees and into a house, the voice over takes on a more light-hearted and cheerful tone: "Meet Mr. Accident Bug! He steals the health and wealth of the rural community, to the estimated extent of $6,577,660 per year!" The impression here is that the film is covering its bases: in the event that the dry and soporific detailing of statistics causes the audience to tune out, similar information is still being conveyed in an attractive and entertaining manner. However, both methods are still based on the assumption that the economic health of the industry is something that workers will feel invested in maintaining.

6.10.2 Costs to the worker

If, however, the worker is not swayed by the argument that safety is in the interests of the industry at large, many films frame the economic benefits of safety as being for the individual worker as well as for the industry. This rhetoric which appeals at once to broader interests and to personal ones is evidenced by *Safety in the Slaughterhouse* (1979), which states

> Injuries to meat inspectors throughout Australia cause the loss of thousands of

working hours each year. This represents a huge financial loss to a major Australian

primary industry, not to mention the physical pain, needless suffering, and more often

than not, the financial inconvenience that these injuries cause to the individual and

their families.

This emphasis on the financial cost of accidents to the worker appears in seven different

films, and many films mention it more than once.

The costs of accidents that fall to the workers themselves are usually framed in terms of time

off work: *Safety in Your Hands* states that "In saving a few minutes' time, you could end up

losing a few days' pay". Often the physical impacts of accidents are mentioned at the same

time as the financial ones, as with *The Unsafe Act* ("injury also costs suffering as well of loss

of work and wages") and *Think Twice* ("serious third-degree burns - like this one, causing

distress and loss of earning capacity are not uncommon"). *Don't Be Scalped* takes the

approach of repeatedly advising the female factory workers it addresses of the financial costs

associated with wearing unsuitable clothing, such as wearing out tight clothing through lifting

and bending, or ruining high heeled shoes if one falls in them (this film is discussed further in

chapter five).

6.11   Human Error

Referring to the cause of accidents as 'human error' occurs in six films in the sample. It is

related to (and often appears alongside with) the discursive statement that 'accidents don't

happen, but are caused', in that the goal of the statement appears to be to reinforce that

worker behaviour is the salient issue in both cause and prevention of accident and injury. If

the errors made are stated to have a human cause, then they are clearly *not* the fault of

machinery failure, organisational pressures, or flaws in the work process – as stated in *Safe*

Loads, "No matter how good the system looks in theory, there is always the human factor".

Moreover, the idea of 'the human factor' or of 'human error' as the cause of accidents

explicitly makes the very humanity of the workers in question their essential flaw. If

accidents are caused by 'human error', then the answer to that problem is to circumvent the

flaws and missteps that make one human – through strict discipline. As the doctor who

narrates *Line Up Your Safety* states, "[thinking accidents won't befall you personally] is a

very human mental attitude, and it requires active and continued effort to overcome it". This

is a direct call to employ techniques of self-awareness, restraint and self-policing in order to

achieve perfection in the workplace. As with statements like those about employing constant

vigilance, this is in effect an impossibility, but nevertheless these films continue to emphasise

them in place of any other method of accident prevention.

6.12 "Leave it to the specialists or shop"

One thing that is striking about the Australian workplace safety films in the sample is that

there is an assumption about the types of provisions that worksites make for their employees.

This is exemplified through the references made to the site 'shop' or on-site specialists whose

job it is to fix equipment or provide aid and safety gear, and through references to reporting

channels. While these are important workplace processes to have in place, to follow and to

understand, where they become discursive is in the assumption that they exist in all

workplaces and are easy for employees to access and use. It is notable that four of the five

films that include statements to this effect were released earlier in the sample – *Safety in Your*

Hands (1974) is the only film that mentions reporting or a site shop post-1970, perhaps due to

changes that meant that fault reporting or equipment checking was less likely to function in a

uniform way across the worksites where the films might be screened.

A typical scene using this form of discursive statement is one from *Don't Be Shocked*. Here, the narrator's voice over appears to guide and comment on the images we see, as a worker considers taking a screwdriver to a broken appliance: "Maybe you could fix it yourself-". He pauses, reconsidering: "don't do it!" A cut shows the worker carrying the appliance to a window marked 'Tool Store' and handing it to the man behind the counter: "Take it back where it belongs." Similarly, *Private Eye* uses images of someone inexperienced attempting to solve a safety issue, and then contrasting it with specialists doing so: "If you are unlucky enough to get something in your eye, don't let amateurs practice first aid. The aid station in your factory is run by experts who understand how to treat foreign bodies in the eye quickly and efficiently". Both scenes tell the viewer about the workplace the film envisions them being in: one that provides facilities devoted to repairing equipment and with a fully staffed medical station. From this information we can deduce more about the *dispositif* of these films and the types of workplaces they appeared in, and the levels of support that workplaces at the time may have provided to their employees.

6.13 Narratives of progress and civilisation

Related to the discursive statements that praise Australia or suggest the benefits of safety to the nation are statements that couch their discussion of safety within the discourse of civilisation and industrial, national and technological progress. This teleological view of history is often employed to suggest that safety has improved over time, but this view also appears as an end in itself, that is, that forward progress is by its nature a good and desirable process.

One way that these narratives are expressed is by comparing ancient or supposedly primitive cultures to contemporary Australian industry. Sometimes this is done favourably, showing

that prior knowledges are valuable ones that modernity has benefited from, as seen in *Easy Does It*. In this film, the camera pans over still images of ancient Egyptians erecting pyramids, building ships and so on. As it does so, the voice over states "Early civilizations found that manual handling was an expensive means of transport. The efficiency of the human muscular motor is low, and the fuel - food - is an expensive source of energy." The shot changes to a montage of machinery, trucks, forklifts and so on: "Even with great advances in mechanical methods, some lifting jobs still have to be done by hand" – an introduction to discussion of proper lifting methods. This progress narrative justifies technological change by implying its superiority, while still reinforcing the necessity and use of 'early' techniques of manual handling and human labour.

Other films take a different approach in their comparisons with 'past' or 'primitive' cultures, which is to suggest that the present is superior to those that have come before, and that technological change follows a path of constant improvement and refinement. *Don't be a Fall Guy* shows still images of houses and huts on what appears to be a contemporary Pacific island, and men building more of them. This then cuts to a shot of a bustling city street and high-rise buildings in urban Australia. The voice over during these shots tells the viewer that "building has been mankind's task since he ceased to be a cave dweller. If erecting this type of structure [i.e. the island house] has its hazards for the primitive tradesman, how much more complex are the hazards for the builder of today?" Aside from the conflation of contemporary non-Western culture with primitive cave-dwelling, what we see here is an articulation of the modern first world as not only more technologically advanced but also more complex, and therefore more rife with potential risks to safety.

6.14   The responsibilities of management and supervisors

As well as the mentions made of collaboration between workers and management (see section 6.6 of this chapter), eleven films in the sample also discuss the responsibilities of management or supervisors beyond their role in this collaboration. This is often where we see reference to regulations or laws, in that the films are informing viewers of what their bosses are legally obligated to provide or do, though they rarely depict any responsibilities they might have beyond that. Sometimes this information about regulations is of a general variety, as in *Waterfront Safety* (1966):

> Ships' derricks are worked under supervision. It is important that supervisors make sure that all gear and equipment supplied in use for loading and unloading cargo is of the standard required by regulations, and suitable for the purpose for which it is intended.

In other films specific guidelines or laws are mentioned, for instance in *Don't Be Let Down*, where a shot of a man descending a batten ladder is superimposed with an image of a booklet entitled "Scaffolding and Lifts Act (1912-1958)". The narration meanwhile informs the viewer that "This batten ladder is prohibited too. Employers are obliged under regulation to provide safe ladders to give access to all working positions". Likewise, in *One In Seven,* there is discussion of the specific official form (number P-400) that employers must use when filing hazard reports.

Discursively, there are a number of factors at play in this framing of employer responsibility in terms of regulation and law. Firstly, it makes the work of supervisors, management and business owners appear rarified, in that their area of responsibility is enshrined in official documentation. Secondly, it makes the duties of employers appear to consist of ensuring relatively straightforward provision of suitable equipment. This can be contrasted with the work of remembering and enacting the range of safe processes that are said to be the

responsibility of workers (see section 6.18), which is often presented as work of discipline and interpretation, varying depending on the context of the particular work and site. In this sense, the framing of employer responsibility appears to be following a set of prescribed rules (mandated by law), while the responsibilities of workers are far more nebulous.

6.15   Safety benefits family

As discussed in section four of this chapter, the subjectification of the worker enacted by and through the Australian workplace safety film means that not only do the films interpellate a worker, they interpellate a worker who fits into specific identity categories that function in specific ways. One of these ways is that the worker we see in the Australian workplace safety film is expected and assumed to be a family man, and the primary way that this expectation is articulated is through statements that mention how safety will benefit the worker's family, or conversely, how accidents will cause them distress and suffering. Sometimes this is done through voice over, sometimes through including scenes where the worker's family appears, or both. The assumption that the worker in these films is a family man reinforces how "the apparently gender-neutral notion of 'a job' contains the gender-based division of labour, and separation between the public and private sphere" (C. Williams "Class, Gender and the Body" 62).

When the voice over makes statements about the benefits of safety to family, it is often done casually, the reference feeling almost incidental and little more than a reminder that the worker is responsible for others rather than just themselves. For instance, in *Line Up Your Safety,* the narrating doctor advises that "It's up to you to read these pamphlets for your own sake, as well as that of your family", and in *Safety in the Meat Industry* the viewer is told that "preventive maintenance, coupled with safe working conditions and safe working practices,

will lead to another accident-free day for the worker and his family". In some films, the mention of family is made in the concluding lines of the film, often in the context of mentioning nation and wealth as well: an ideological visioning of who and what Australians are. In *Safety in Rural Industries,* a farmer is shown parking his tractor in the barn and then joining his waiting wife and children outside their farmhouse, while the narrator states, "In our vast country areas, the rural communities are working to ensure that the fruits of the earth will help make Australia prosper. Be a safe farmer, and prosperity will surely smile on you and your family." This prosperity is occasionally specifically linked to suburban growth as well. According to Moran, "the family was a symbol of suburban society", imbricated with aspirational ideas regarding leisure, consumption and home ownership (*Projecting Australia* 66). In *Timber Sense* a wide shot pans across a new suburban subdivision at the close of the film, while families survey the land and the narrator states, "timber production is playing a big and vital part in this country's progress. You can continue to play your part in our progress by ensuring safety on the job at all times. And the families that depend on you will continue to enjoy the security and happiness they deserve." In this way, the growth of industry, nation, and the nuclear family are all tied together through the discourse of safety.

Conversely, accidents, injury and lack of safety are depicted as detrimental to the family – this is an approach taken more frequently by films in the 1970s, reflecting again the more pessimistic attitude of the films in this period. As will be discussed in chapter six, the protagonist's family in *Noise Destroys* are shown to suffer due to his industrial hearing damage. In *Safety in The Slaughterhouse* (1979), interviews with injured workers are utilised to give a personal, intimate perspective on safety issues, and in their discussion of family, the shame of being injured and thereby making things difficult for their loved ones is apparent. As one worker sadly and sheepishly states to camera:

[We] had a few money problems at the time, we'd just bought our house, and uh, I

wasn't getting any overtime so I thought, this is no good, I'm home, I got plenty of

time, and I can't earn any money. I got me hand all bandaged up, so uh, my wife had

to go to work for a while so we could pay a few bills.

This brief speech illustrates the hegemonic nature of the type of masculinity that is depicted

in these films and that viewers are expected and assumed to inhabit and perform. Not only are

these workers men, they are family men, who provide financially for their family. Moreover,

they are expected to be the sole financial providers: the meatworker's doleful expression

when he relates that his wife had to take on this role indicates that for her to do so was

shameful to him. This is utilised by the film as a deterrent to behaving unsafely, showing that

injuries are not just painful and inconvenient to oneself and one's family, they are also a

source of emasculation and shame.

6.16 Safety benefits your mates or fellow workers

According to *Don't Lose Your Grip* (1961), "When an accident happens, the best comes out

in men through their eagerness to help an injured mate." The associations of masculinity in

Australian workplace safety films with a particular kind of male camaraderie and mateship

are utilised to reinforce not only that workers need to look out for others, but also to shore up

discourses around the loyalty, mutual care and friendship that co-workers are expected to feel

and demonstrate towards each other, particularly in the working class milieu in which the

films take place. If safety benefiting the family is a reminder that safety and accidents affect

the private sphere of the home, then reminders about safety benefiting one's mates tell us

something about how accidents affect the public sphere (the workplace and its social

dynamics).

Timber Sense illustrates how specific tasks are conducted in the forestry industry, with men working in pairs. This provides opportunity for the film to frame mateship as an integral part of work practices: "if you must work under a hanger, get a mate to keep a good lookout. You won't hear a limb coming when the chainsaw starts!" This also reflects how collegiality is not just produced through proximity and working together, it is also a result of how dangerous many of the working environments are in the sample. If your colleagues are tasked with ensuring your survival during the working day, then the level of trust that intimate friendship produces appears as a workplace necessity. But there are rules to this performance of mateship, which are dictated by the hegemonic performance of masculinity mentioned in the previous section, as well as the class specifics that are associated with the forms of work that Australian workplace safety films usually address.

One of the ways that the films in the sample encourage care for one's mates is similar to the way they frame how families benefit from the worker's safety: through implying that care for one's mates is a source of masculine pride, and conversely, through implying that failure to ensure a mate's safety is a source of shame. The former is most strongly articulated in the narrative films in the sample. In *Noise Destroys*, for instance, the protagonist's struggle to force management to acknowledge his hearing damage is praised by his colleague, who indicates he too suffers from the same condition, and that he is concerned for "the young blokes" who will face the same fate if nothing is done. In another narrative short, *It Wasn't Me* (1978), a character who 'covers for' a mate's absence is described as 'honourable'. On the other hand, *Bet Your Life* opens with a funeral scene, zooming in on the face of a man whom, the narrator informs us, "is responsible for a mate's death", one that is later shown to be the result of a simple mishearing of information, but is nevertheless framed as the worker's fault for not "being careful" about relaying and double-checking communications in

a noisy construction site. The shaming of workers who supposedly cause the deaths of their colleagues is an example of the individualising of workers. These relationships with 'mates' are never depicted as the basis for collective action. Rather, workers are "rational actors with free choice" (Gray 329) who should choose, in the name of the social bonds of family and friends, to assume responsibility for the safety of others as well as themselves.

6.17   Safety procedures and equipment are inconvenient

As noted in chapter two, changes to the processes by which work is done are often more effective than the exclusive focus on changing worker behaviour. Similarly, improvements to design of the protective clothing workers use are a strong incentive for them to actually wear it. However, six of the films in the sample refer to how following procedure or using safety equipment is inconvenient or uncomfortable. While this is an acknowledgement of why workers might elect not to follow the safest processes available, these films usually argue that following them anyway, despite discomfort, is what workers should do.

In *Safety in the Slaughterhouse*, a dynamic scene of workers talking in the pub addresses some of the inconveniences of working safely. The camera cuts quickly from one man's face to another, as they argue about how easy it is for them to cut themselves with blunt knives, since they must use stronger pressure when cutting into a carcass with a blunt knife. But this presents further issues: as one man puts it,

> If you're on a moving chain, and they're coming through all the time and you've got a blunt knife you haven't got time to stop. If you stop the chain, you've got the company screaming. How would you stop a chain to sharpen a knife?

However, while this acknowledges the pressures of keeping to fast production schedules, it is presented as a problem without a clear solution. In *Don't be incorrectly dressed*, the one

solution offered is to put up with a bad deal: the final scenes of the film depict workers

posing awkwardly in protective clothing, while the narration concludes

> protective clothing may be grotesque, clumsy and uncomfortable, but it was designed
>
> for the sole purpose: to ensure that the people who wear it and work in dangerous
>
> trades can go home to their families at the end of the day secure in the knowledge that
>
> their health is in good safekeeping.

This acknowledgement of the unsuitability of poorly-designed protective gear and the

physical discomfort it causes (and by the clear social discomfort of the onscreen workers

wearing it), while simultaneously simply reiterating that one *must* use it appears to be part of

the unwillingness of these films to acknowledge an approach to safety that looks far beyond

worker behaviour as the cause of and solution to accidents.

6.18   "Safety is your responsibility"

By far the most commonly employed discursive statements that appears in the sample are

those that place responsibility for safety on the individual workers themselves. Statements to

this effect appear in twenty-two of the thirty films sampled.

Often the discussion of responsibility is framed in terms of safety practices being "up to you".

In *Think Twice* the narrator states "The protective measures are well known – it's up to you to

put them into practice", while in *Private Eye* "Eye safety comes back to you, the man on the

job". Sometimes statements are framed in terms of the threat of injury that awaits the workers

should they elect to avoid their responsibility. *One in Seven* reminds workers, "Don't think

that you can't be one in seven [the rate at which the film states postal workers are injured].

Unless you are careful and take simple safety precautions, you can be!". *Farm Machinery*

Safety states "Any tractor can overturn under certain conditions. Can you ignore the

importance of positive thinking and accident prevention?" However, more common than this focus on what might go wrong for the worker are statements that frame responsibility as empowering, a choice that the worker is making that will be of self-benefit. We see this in *Waterfront Safety*, where the narrator explains that "Safety at all times depends as much on the voluntary efforts of the workers as on safety regulations", and in *Don't be Strained,* workers are encouraged "You can do something about it yourself! Workers can avoid strain injuries while carrying out manual handling work". This positioning of safety as a set of actions that workers, acting as individual free agents, choose or decline to perform involves a particular set of discursive assumptions about the freedom that workers have in any given workplace. According to Mascini, when accidents occur "it is assumed that the people involved in the incident are either always free to comply with the rules, or take a calculated risk when breaking them" (473). It is this assumption that is at the core of the discourse of safety as it appears in these films, and it places primary emphasis on following rules. As the narrator of *Safe Loads* puts it:

> [safety] depends on the people involved in the operation, and that's YOU. If you're in the business of loading, that load is your business. Your responsibility. You know the rules. Use your common sense to apply them the right way.

Workers exercising their responsibility to follow rules, the films assure us, is what will prevent accidents from occurring.

7.   Conclusion

This chapter summarises what the workplace safety films made in Australia between 1955 and 1980 take as their primary foci in terms of subject matter. It has mapped how they frame safety discursively through the statements made in and by them. In order to address how these films speak about accidents, about workers and how this has shaped Australian understandings of workplace safety, analysing a number and range of films has yielded a

variety of ways in which the discourse is built and articulated.

Firstly, it is evident that the safety film not only depicts working subjects, but that it circumscribes the possibilities for the subjectivity of the working audience: that is, there is a process of subjectification at work in these films. The subject that the films depict is a working class one, predominantly male, with particular attitudes towards their world and their work. This includes appreciation for mild bodily humour; pride in work, industry and country; an acknowledgement of the nuclear family and of the 'mates' that one works with. This subject is also expected to share the attitude that the films have towards unsafe behaviour, to disapprove of it and to work to prevent it willingly, as a conscious and considered choice. These films make evident too, however, that discursively, the choice to behave unsafely is not really a choice at all, seeing as the reasons for why one might do this are effectively foreclosed, and only wilful stupidity or ignorance could be reasons for breaking safety rules.

While this chapter has considered the meaning and significance of recurring discursive statements, the way that these statements appear in the context of the individual films themselves will also reveal much about how the discourse of safety functions. The following chapters address individual case studies of selected films from the sample to discuss in detail. Films using the techniques of the expository documentary mode of filmmaking comprise the first case studies.

Chapter Five

"Can you keep a few important thoughts in front of you? Don't forget ANY of them?":

Safety in the Meat Industry **(n.d, c. 1957-62),** *The Unsafe Act* **(1965) and** *Don't be*

Scalped **(1960)**

1. Introduction

Australian workplace safety films, while not documentaries per se, are strongly related to the documentary form. Particularly in the 1960s, techniques shared with the expository documentary mode were used in conveying issues of safety and informing workers about how to stay safe. This chapter takes three films as case studies to elaborate on what films that share characteristics with this mode looked like, how they conveyed their messages, and what sort of cultural work they were doing. I focus particularly on how these films interpellate their audience and speak to a particular subjective position, which is characteristic of utilitarian filmmaking of this period.

The three films this chapter considers speak to a working subject that sets the standard for the depiction of workers in safety films for decades to follow, or alternatively a subjective position to work against or in reaction to. *Safety in the Meat Industry,* produced by Cameracraft for the Queensland Department of Labour and Industry sometime between 1957 and 1962 (no director or specific date of release are known), illustrates the typical way that workers were depicted and spoken to by safety films of the 1960s. *The Unsafe Act* (produced by R.D. Hansen and Fortune films for the New South Wales Department of Labour and Industry, 1965) also provides an example of this. Its very direct interpellation of a particular type of worker, and its very clear statements regarding responsibility for safety and causes of accidents make it a strong exemplar of Australian safety films that use expository documentary techniques. Finally, I turn to an earlier film, with a slightly different subject-

address: *Don't Be Scalped* (also produced by R.D. Hansen and Fortune films for the New South Wales Department of Labour and Industry 1960), a film directed at female factory workers. Examining a film targeting women throws into relief some aspects of the working class male subjectivity spoken to be the other two films.

Before discussing these three films in detail, it is important to note what type of films they are, what they look and sound like, and how they operate. I also describe some of the approaches I take to exploring their significance. Firstly, some explication and theorising of the interpellation of subjects at work in these films provides a ground for analysing not only these films, but also those from subsequent decades discussed in chapters six and seven. Secondly, I want to make very clear the stylistic and discursive characteristics of the expository documentary mode, as these strongly inform the ways that these films address their audience and assist in painting a picture of what these films were like formally.

2. Interpellation and Subjectification

A central aspect of the cultural work the Australian workplace safety film performs is in the way that it addresses and interpellates a particular kind of subject. In interpellating a subject, the film (encompassing the text; its makers; the ideology that governs its making and cultural assumptions) 'hails' a subject (Althusser 162), with the implication that the subjects hailed recognise and respond to the address made to them. This occurs not only when the films (in voice over, or in direct address from a narrator or expert appearing onscreen) direct their statements to camera, specifically referring to 'you' the audience member, but also when they depict workers in particular ways, with the implication that these people or characters are stand-ins for the type of workers that make up the presumed audience. Not only are viewers implicitly expected to recognise the workers onscreen as being 'like them', they are also expected to agree with the perspectives the film presents, modifying their behaviours and

ways of being so that they align with the subject positions they are interpellated into. In this way, we are not only shown specific kinds of subjects, but also given particular subject-positions to occupy; in other words, the film depicts subjects and performs subjectification through interpellation.

This is not the only function interpellation has. According to Althusser, interpellation is a necessary part of the construction of *ideological* subjects, conditioned to perform and behave in ways that are in line with the aims of the dominant cultural and state apparatuses. Ideology here has an 'imaginary' (mental, liminal) component, but it is also material (Althusser 157). The understanding of ideology as incorporating both these aspects means that it is in many ways commensurate with how we understand Foucault's conceptions of discourse's role in subjectification, with several key distinctions. For instance, Althusser sees the interpellated subject as already constituted by ideology (163), while for Foucault, "the individual does not pre-exist his or her interpellation as a subject but emerges as a result of strategies and practices of individualization" (Montag 75)). What we are seeing in the context of the workplace safety film are subjects being hailed in a particular way: the question is who or what they are being hailed by and what the effects of this are. To understand this, I return again to Foucauldian understandings of how subjects are constituted under and by discursive regimes, through disciplinary power and/or through work on the self.

For Foucault, subjects are "constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation […] on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment" ("An Aesthetics of Existence" 51). Through these practices of liberation, subjects have the ability to resist, reject or exercise certain choices over their subjecthood, though it still happens within the confines of what power relations allow for: the subject can act, but only, as Youdell puts it, "within/at the limits of subjection" (517). This allows for an exercising of agency and negotiation in

responding to and recognising interpellation; however, the power relations that flow from institutions delimit the subject's abilities through strategies which aim to separate, where "the crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effort, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities" (Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 201).

Power, in this way, is in constant flux and its terms and resistances are always being negotiated. Nichols ties these issues very directly to issues at stake in the non-fiction film. He states that "to answer an address where we do not fully live or live fully (the place of the self-as-subject, for example) is a profound distortion of the self". As such, examination of how texts address us from a place of power is essential, as is the need to "confront the question of address in exposition by considering it in relation to formal organisation in the documentary" (*Ideology and the Image* 182). I elaborate on some of these formal aspects below.

3.   The Expository Documentary Mode

As indicated in chapter one, the expository documentary mode is one strongly associated with the Griersonian form of documentary-making, which rose to prominence in Britain in the 1930s. However, as Nichols notes, aspects of the expository form "arose at the start of the documentary tradition" (*Introduction to Documentary* 154) and it has remained a popular way of treating documentary subjects, one with a particular relationship to ideas of documentary truth. While it is notably associated with certain stylistic features, it also remains a favoured way of delivering persuasive messages; as such it has commonly been considered suitable for the didactic aims of the workplace safety film. However, I emphasise that while these films look, sound and in many ways perform the same functions as expository-mode documentaries, they are not, in themselves, documentary films. The relationship to truth and realism in the workplace safety film differs from the documentary in

that while documentaries purport to show us, in Grierson's words, "a creative treatment of actuality" (Grierson "The Documentary Producer" 8), the workplace safety film aims to instruct and influence 'real world' behaviour on the basis of its accurate ('truthful') advice. Nevertheless, despite this difference in purpose and approach, the techniques and tools of persuasion of the expository mode provide a useful framework with which to understand a number of Australian workplace safety films, particularly those of the 1960s.

For Nichols, the aesthetic and stylistic characteristics of the expository mode include "indexical images of reality; poetic, affective associations; story-telling qualities; and rhetorical persuasiveness" (*Introduction to Documentary* 167), with a direct address to the audience in order to argue a point or advance a particular perspective. Because the delivery of a perspective, attitude or argument is so central to this form of filmmaking, films made in this fashion tend to employ voice over or narration, usually in the omniscient/voice-of-God style (in other words, the narrator is heard but never seen). This style of voice over "fostered the cultivation of the professionally trained, richly toned male voice" (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 167). It normally uses what Moran (*Projecting Australia* 69) refers to as a 'colourless' accent: clear, educated, authoritative – the vocal style of radio and television presenters. Moran interprets this style as implying that "it is impersonal, objective, acting not on behalf of a particular class or group but rather on behalf of the general interest" (*Projecting Australia* 70). The fact that an educated male voice is seen as the default objective or impartial voice that can represent general perspectives is of course in itself a political decision. However, one of the changes evident in the expository form in Australia (indeed in safety films generally) over the period of time that this thesis covers is that this voice loses its polish, and we often hear a masculine 'Ocker' accent in its place. This shift reflects broader social changes in the move away from an omniscient authority with upper-

class characteristics and the linking of the 'typical Aussie bloke' accent with down-to-earth and direct traits.

I have foregrounded what we hear in the expository mode over what we see, as this is a characteristic of the mode itself. In part this is a product of the technological limitation on sound recording at the time, as for many filmmakers, especially those shooting with low budgets, synchronised sound was a prohibitive cost (FitzSimons et al 15). Films in the expository mode tend to be guided by the spoken word rather than the images – "they illustrate, illuminate, evoke or act in counterpoint to what is said" (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 168). What is said is also assumed to have a relationship to documentary truth: it tends to not only be authoritative, but also presumably objective, well-researched and well-informed. In terms of the Australian workplace safety film, this appears not only as verification that the practices and processes that workers are recommended to follow are safe and sensible, but also that the claims the voice over makes about worker behaviour, about responsibility for accidents and about the causes of hazards are common sense and accurate. Furthermore,

> expository documentary is an ideal mode for conveying information or mobilizing support within a framework that pre-exists the film. In this case, a film will add to our stockpile of knowledge but not challenge or subvert the categories that organize and legitimate such knowledge in the first place. (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 169-70)

For the workplace safety film, the basis of understanding about worker behaviour as the main factor in both causing and preventing accidents is the 'common sense' notion that these films take as pre-existing knowledge. By the 1960s, it appears as a simple discursive truth about workplace safety, one which expository documentary techniques support.

4. *Safety in the Meat Industry* (n.d., c. 1957-1962)

As chapter four of this thesis has illustrated, the things that industrial workplace safety films say and the people, places, things and behaviours they depict show up repeatedly in films across the sample, with few differences in terms of industries addressed. However, what an account of these common features does not tell us is what these films look and sound like beyond this, in other words, how their stylistic, narrative and formal features combine to make an effective (and affective) whole. *Safety in the Meat Industry* provides us with a very straightforward example of the types of industrial workplace safety films made in Australia in the 1960s, including many of the aesthetic and formal characteristics, as well as the kinds of interpellation and discursive statement that typify the genre.

The exact date of release of *Safety in the Meat Industry* is not available, though it can be guessed at as the opening titles specify that it was "Prepared by direction of Hon. Ken J. Morris, Minister for Labour and Industry", a position he held between 1957 and 1962. Other credits list numerous government departments, unions, professional associations, civic bodies and abattoirs that were involved in the planning and making of the film, from the Department of Agriculture and Stock to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Board, indicating the various interests that often went into the production of government-made workplace safety films. It is notable that these opening credits do not mention crew or creative personnel by name, aside from the aforementioned Minister. This reflects how industrial and utilitarian films were rarely seen as auteurist works or even the collaborative work of individuals, but rather born of committees focussed on delivering a functional product.

Safety in the Meat Industry is a film that, in its opening scenes, makes overt appeal to nationalism. From the opening titles the film cuts to a wide shot of cattle in grassland being herded by a farmer on horseback; the camera zooms in on the stock as orchestral strings play

and the languid, refined voice of the omniscient narrator informs the viewer about the importance of the beef industry to Queensland and Australia, its competitive place in the world market, and its "very disturbing record of occupational accidents, reducing its efficiency and productivity". The picturesque scene cuts to stockyards, and the camera pans slowly across them; the same music still plays and the voice over continues without break or change in tone, though the subject matter of the narration is more serious:

> This film is in the interest of safety and not entertainment. The conditions meatworkers are employed in are hazardous and often unpleasant. The scenes show the major accident factors in the industry, how conscientious management supplying good working conditions and safety-conscious meatworkers exercising reasonable precautions can cooperate to reduce accidents. Pain, suffering and loss of money to meatworkers need not happen. Learn the desirable safety precautions in this film and you, the Australian meatworker, will insure your own health, welfare and safety, your family's security, and your state and nation's future.

The statements in this brief passage illustrate, in rapid succession, many of the discursive themes and concepts this thesis highlights as typical of the Australian workplace safety film. Firstly, we have a direct announcement of the film's utilitarian and didactic function; secondly, we see the acknowledgement of the dangers in this industry; thirdly, we see recognition of collaboration between workers and management as a solution, though despite this there is an emphasis on worker behaviour. Also apparent here is the truism that accidents are avoidable or need not happen; that they cause loss of finances and affect family as well as those individually injured; and finally there is a return to the emphasis that the practice of safety is in the national interest as well as the personal. This is tied together through direct interpellation of the audience: "you, the Australian meatworker".

We hear the entirety of the above speech while the camera is still within the bucolic confines of the stockyard: we see cattle resting in the shade of fences, then men herding them up the run in bright sunlight. Even though the narration has been mentioning the importance of industry, the imagery is rural and idyllic, tying the productivity of Queensland and of Australia more broadly, firmly to its natural (albeit cultivated) setting. At the end of this passage of narration, there is a cut to the inside of the meatworks, and we see the first cow herded up the run and in to the knocking box prior to slaughtering. With this cut to the interior of the meatworks, the voice over also moves on to describing the hazards and work techniques necessary to ensure safety in this setting. The structure of *Safety in the Meat Industry* continues in this fashion, following the processing of the meat from slaughter to shipping of the finished product in the closing scenes.

As with the expository documentary form, the images are guided by the words being spoken ("The first essential of safety in the knocking box is that the beast be properly stunned"), as the worker raises and fires the bolt gun, and the animal rolls out of the box. Attention is also drawn to the type of machinery being used, as the narrator specifies how comparatively dangerous the old-fashioned method of using hammers was. Even though we are not shown this former, dangerous method, the implication is that what we are seeing is best practice in a modern abattoir, one that is "safe, more humane, and less arduous". This ties in with the message of nationalism fostered in the introduction: Australian abattoirs are at the forefront of improved and up-to-date technological advancements in the industry.

The film then moves on through the slaughtering process: firstly we see the 'lifting to rail' of the stunned cattle beast, with emphasis on avoiding being kicked and on clean floors to prevent slipping; 'the sticking operation', where the necessity of having a guard on knives is discussed, as well as 'continual vigilance' to avoid foreleg kicks as the animals' throats are cut. The images confirm the dangers here: we see a side view of the stickers making the cut,

and then a front view, in close up, of the blood draining; in both we clearly see the dying animals kicking as a nerve reflex. This latter shot lasts a gory seven seconds or so and is unaccompanied by voice over. Aside from the confirmation of danger (already well established in the lifting to rail sequence and the previous shot of the stickers at work), the shot appears to serve primarily as an aesthetic choice. While for the workers that the film addresses, seeing the sight of gaping throats emitting fountains of blood might not be unusual, for the filmmakers (and for casual viewers unfamiliar with meatworks), it is a striking and visceral image, which is possibly the reason for its inclusion. Despite the earlier statement that the film is in the interests of education and not entertainment, shots such as this show a slippage that reveals what the makers of the film were interested in depicting in this setting.

However, *Safety in The Meat Industry* returns quickly to business as usual, with wide high angle shots showing the abattoir floor and workers completing tasks: picking up and removing severed legs, hosing away fat ("good housekeeping"), and "dressing on the rail" (skinning and removing fat from carcasses while standing elevated on a low scaffold), as well as close ups showing the slip-proof walkways and boots necessary to the job. The narrator here discusses what management must provide as well as what workers must do: the walkways and proper handrails and supports for rail dressing are in management's purview, while behaviour and clothing (pushing instead of pulling carcasses, sensible boots) are presented as the workers' responsibility.

The film then moves on from the killing floor to look closely at taking care in switching rail points (literally, in close up, but also temporally in that the film devotes several minutes to it), so as to prevent carcasses falling and causing crushing injuries. We are also shown and informed of the dangers of accidentally shutting oneself or fellow workers in a freezer, and of the risks in using ammonia. Here the film moves from footage of real workers on the works

floor to acted scenes. We see a man locking the freezer, and his fellow worker, trapped inside, exasperatedly unlocking it with an inside master key (as the narration helpfully explains the necessity of this to prevent deaths from exposure and suffocation). The man then storms off, presumably to confront his careless colleague. The following scene, of ammonia poisoning, with the victim collapsing in clouds of smoke and a dramatic rescue by a colleague in protective gear and face mask, is also acted.

What we are seeing here is what Ramos refers to as "constructed acting", a kind of performance common in documentary film that encompasses reconstructions of past events or, as in this case, demonstrations of the film's points, using methods "often not very far from dramatic forms of acting in fictional films" (98). This technique is particularly common in the expository form due to its suitability for presenting didactic information, standing in contrast to "direct acting", that is, observational footage of documentary subjects conducting themselves as they would normally, "body presence free and loose in the world, but always under the camera's influence" (97). Though for Ramos "direct acting" is characterised by close up and poetic expressiveness, and the scenes on the killing floor are all in wide, high-angle shots, (possibly for reasons of practicality and for the safety of the filmmakers) and do not appear to be prompted by aesthetics beyond capturing the action clearly, they are nevertheless clearly performing this technique.

The scenes about freezer safety and ammonia poisoning illustrate how direct and constructed acting read markedly differently on camera. With direct acting, the footage appears to give us a window into how work in the particular abattoir proceeds, while the constructed acting scenes appear contrived. They *are* literally contrived, in that they are clearly not showing real cases of worker endangerment, and descriptively contrived in that the amateur actors (actual meatworkers, according to the credits) overact considerably, particularly the gesticulating, furious worker locked in the freezer. This distinction between direct and constructed acting

offers a useful way of accounting for the types of on-camera behaviour encountered in the Australian workplace safety films of the 1960s. It is similar to social *mise en scène*, but different in that the use of constructed acting is often presented as a 'teachable moment' rather than an illustration of social behaviour that we recognise as truthful due to its ubiquity in everyday life.

After some further direct acting footage of loading sides of beef onto trucks, accompanied by voice over advice on how to do this safely, the film moves to the processing plant. The section the film seems to really relish is the information for boners on how to avoid knife injuries. We see workers (here mostly filmed from the chest down) inadvertently slicing their hands and stabbing themselves in the leg, blood dripping out of their closed fists or through holes in their clothing. These dramatic and gory shots are supplemented with images of a real injury – a hand with one of the fingers severed at the second joint, which then cuts in to an extreme close up of the wound. This mixing of real injuries with physical effects here serves to reinforce not only the severity of the dangers (the central text of the film), but also to subtextually reinforce the way that these films function as an operation of biopower. If biopower functions as a way of managing individuals that "begins with the body and its potential" (Lazzarato 100), then the emphasis here on the body; its permeability and vulnerability serve as an impetus for the viewers to carefully police and manage their bodies and actions.

Further to these textual and subtextual aspects, *Safety in the Meat Industry* is also operating generically at this point, in that the gore we see in the boning process is reminiscent of an exploitation film, particularly in the use of both staged and real injuries. The relationship between exploitation film and industrial utilitarian film is, as with the earlier shot of animals' throats being cut, an aesthetic choice by the filmmakers that reveals interests in how to depict this workplace beyond the purview of their government-designed specifications. It is unlikely

that such gory scenes were explicitly requested by the Department of Labour and Industry, but this could be a "matter of the aesthetic freedom allowed, or taken, by a filmmaker in tackling a sponsor's brief" (Moran *Projecting Australia* 11). While it is difficult to ascertain with precision, the appearance of this gore could have reflected the tastes of the filmmakers; even if they themselves were not exploitation fans, contemporary readings of industrial and utilitarian film of earlier eras do often associate it with 'low-brow' genre material (see for instance, Sconce 372, Levin 99).

On top of these textual, subtextual and generic facets, the film at this point refers to paratextual information, by including shots of safety posters to really drive home their point. These may have been posters that were familiar to viewers from their own workplaces: recall how the Department of Labour and Industry lists poster hire as one of the safety services they provide to industrial clients (*At your Safety Service*); they are thus part of the safety *dispositif.* The posters stand in contrast to the gore we have just seen – for the most part they are gentle, even cute reminders of easily absorbed safety precautions; brightly-coloured and highly-stylised painted images, for instance a finger with a single drop of blood and the slogan "Don't linger – or you might lose a finger!" or an anthropomorphised kangaroo and joey advising that "There's a safe space for everything". This follows a scene on the use of guarded knife pouches: each poster is used to emphasise the point of a scene about a particular safety issue in the abattoir in this way.

The closing scenes of *Safety in the Meat Industry* affectively mirror those that the film opened with. Over wide shots of the packed meat being loaded from the dock onto ships and dramatic orchestral music, the narrator informs us that

> Safety is a state of mind. Safety in the meat industry must come from within. It calls
> for the free resolution of each individual, employer and employee; all should play

their part. Then, and only then, will the blood of humanity sapping the life of the industry be stemmed. The hazards can be beaten; the gauntlet of safety is in your hands. Don't throw it aside.

This emphasis on individualism, it can be argued, is one of the strategies of disciplinary institutions. According to Foucault, "Discipline "makes" individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (*Discipline and Punish* 170). Despite the nod to the part of the employer, the emphasis we see in these closing lines is framed as a kind of liberal independence, where work on the self (the 'state of mind') leads to sensible individual decision-making. A corollary of this is that collective work and action is undermined or framed as unnecessary. Though in this context 'all playing their part' seems benign, in it we can see the roots of the separation and individualisation that Turner and Gray describe under neo-liberalism; a situation where the exercise of the right to safety is compulsory rather than an imperative, and where "the probability of risk, the prevention of harm and the occurrence of 'accidents' as deterministic properties that are largely separable from their social context" (1259) is apparent. Here, the 'gauntlet of safety' is in the workers' hands, and, the implication is, theirs alone.

5. *The Unsafe Act* (1965)

The Unsafe Act is one of several safety films made for the Department of Labour and Industry in the early 1960s by Fortune films and R.D. Hansen: some titles include *Don't be Cut Up* (1959), *Don't Be Let Down* (1960), *Don't Be Sawed* (1961) and *Don't Lose Your Grip* (1961), as well as several others, including the case study following this one, *Don't Be Scalped* (1960). The Department of Labour and Industry seems to have had two preferred providers for this 'Don't be' series of films, aside from the notable output by Fortune, several

others were made by Reg Perier and Stan Murdoch. Fortune appears to have been a family-operated production company – Joan Hansen is the editor of many of these titles. *The Unsafe Act* is considered here as it provides such a striking example of the discourses at work in Australian workplace safety films of the period. While *Safety in the Meat Industry* is a strong example of the stylistic, nationalist and common sense rhetoric about safety that typifies the form, *The Unsafe Act* offers a particularly strong example of the ways that workers in these films are routinely blamed for accidents, and of the paternalistic attitude that, at this point in time, the films often spoke with. As the next chapter illustrates, this attitude was modified over the following decade.

Another safety film utilising techniques from the expository mode, *The Unsafe Act* differs from *Safety in the Meat Industry* in that the 'colourless' narrative voice is here replaced by a voice over that is notably active, reactive, and expressive regarding what we are being shown in the images. While there are many points in the film where the omniscient narration does appear to steer what is being presented in the images, as is common in the expository mode, there are also numerous points where the image prompts a reaction from the narrator, effectively guiding not what the viewer sees, but how they are expected to respond, evaluate and judge the actions onscreen. The opening scene provides one such example. A factory foreman starts a machine in the morning, only to realise that a worker has been fixing it without notifying anyone or placing signage. The panicked response of the foreman as the worker is crushed inside the machine is matched by the narrator's emphatic statements that guide us through the emotional tenor of the scene: "What's he doing up there? The crazy fool! He's fallen in!" However, the response to the accident is not one of response to a tragedy: immediately following this, we see the worker's (injured, perhaps dead) body in the machine. The narrator responds with a disgusted, exasperated tone: "Ugh. When will they learn?"

This exasperation sets the mood for the remainder of the film. Following from this, we see shots of children being taught safety precautions: toddlers being shooed away from hot irons, boys being shown how to shoot and clean rifles, and children watching for cars as they play in the street. The allusion being made here is that even children can remember safety precautions, so there is no excuse for committing 'unsafe acts' when at work. *The Unsafe Act* covers various industries and areas of work, from bricklaying to window-washing to factory work and construction, so its address is to a generalised industrial or trades labourer, who is male and working class like those depicted in the film. However, the address is also to a worker who knows better than those depicted onscreen, one who shares the narrator's low opinion of the stupidity and carelessness that characterise their filmic counterparts. We are shown builders balancing on bricks dangerously piled into makeshift scaffolds, window-washers working without harnesses, construction workers using grinders without protective gear and welders working without screens. The majority of the hazardous situations we see are of this generic nature: the film is able to posit the safety precautions it recommends as 'common sense' largely because they are the ones that safety films and materials frequently refer to, and are therefore the ones most likely to be already familiar to viewers.

Each scene showing an 'unsafe act' is structured around a particular reason for an accident occurring, usually some kind of defective behaviour. For instance, the scene where a grindstone breaks, hitting another worker passing by and killing him is described by the narrator as a result of "indifference" to safety rules ("man, that's no accident! That's murder! […] How can a man be indifferent to the rules the law stipulates?"). After each of these scenes, we see an accident report, with a hand reaching into frame and rubber-stamping the form with the reason for the accident: "indifference"; "overconfidence"; "carelessness". This is reinforced by the same disembodied hand flicking through black and white photographs

showing amputations, burns, scarring and other wounds, which, the voice over tells us, "occurred because people didn't follow the rules laid down for industrial safety".

The Unsafe Act does, at this point, make some attempts to acknowledge that worker carelessness and cavalier attitudes might not be the only reason for unsafe behaviour or for accidents occurring. We are shown a man walking to work, right towards the stationary camera, and he is addressed directly by the narrator, nodding assent with a thoughtful expression to each of the questions posed to him. The narrator quizzes him: "Are you remembering an argument at breakfast? And resenting it? … Well, get it out of your mind, you've got a job to do. Can you keep a few important thoughts in front of you? Keep on remembering them? Don't forget ANY of them." This exchange appears to recognise that pressures, inputs and emotions other than simple carelessness and indifference may result in accidents, but immediately turns responsibility for managing this back onto the worker's own exercise of vigilance and willpower. The safety film as a 'technology of the self', where personal, introspective work modifies one's own behaviours and attitudes, is strongly evident. However, this is complicated by the depiction of the worker onscreen. While on one hand we could suppose he is intended to be a kind of 'everyman' blue collar labourer, one that the audience could identify with; on the other hand some aspects of his performance place him in the role of the 'stupid' worker – the potential committer of unsafe acts – that the voice over has mentioned several times already in the film. The actor's slack-jawed expression and his lifting of his hat to scratch his head before slowly nodding assent to the questions in particular imply this. Work on yourself and your attitudes towards safety, the film seems to say, while still implying that, you, the smart worker in the audience, know all this already. *The Unsafe Act* is therefore able to criticise workers generally without alienating the workers it interpellates as its audience.

Immediately following this scene, for several minutes the viewer is shown a close up of a book, with the hand of an offscreen figure turning the pages, on each of which is written a different cause of accidents, which the narrator then elaborates on, such as 'laziness', 'showing off', 'carelessness', and so forth. The hectoring tone of the narration is at its strongest here, with the disgust in the voice that was evident in the opening scenes at the forefront: "showing off is *stupid*, and most of the time it's far from safe"; and similar comments. This tone ties the film's presentation of workplace safety to the broader contexts of safety teaching. The narrator sounds fed up with having to impart this information, and does not present the precautions advised as something that will be news to the audience; rather, there is an implication that all parties are very familiar with these rules, and that the issue rests with wilfully negligent workers who haven't listened to pre-existing lessons and warnings from other sources. This implies a wider *dispositif* of safety that the film exists in, and that it assumes familiarity with.

The film closes with a shot of workers leaving a factory, while the narrator offers a few words promoting the film's sponsor: "The Department of Labour and Industry has worked since 1912 to eliminate industrial accidents with safety regulations, training and education. But they need your help!" This exhortation to assist governmental initiatives is similar to the nationalistic discourse at work in *Safety in the Meat Industry*, tying individual worker safety to a vast network of industrial and national progress. We then return to a medium close up of the worker who was directly questioned by the voice over earlier. He nods again thoughtfully as the narrator states: "Don't think that safety isn't your business – it is! You and everyone like you have a responsibility to play it safe". The articulation of individual worker responsibility for safety here is clear and direct. The discursive statement being made is not something that has to be inferred here: it is textual rather than subtextual.

In terms of the cultural work that *The Unsafe Act* performs, what is striking about it is the circular logic that it employs in order to make its points about workplace safety. Since it posits that workplace hazards are caused through the fault of inattentive and careless workers, the only possible response and correction for these accidents is to exercise caution and vigilance at all times, a practical impossibility. However, the inability to continually exercise this vigilance is reframed as evidence of laziness and inattentiveness in itself, and therefore any workers who have accidents are implicated as part of the problem. The discursive framework which blames workers for their own injuries suggests that accidents are a *fait accompli*; that stupid workers will have accidents, and therefore any workers having accidents are stupid.

6. *Don't Be Scalped* (1960)

By way of contrast I turn now to an earlier film, the only film in this thesis to exclusively address female workers. Women do appear as workers in nine of the 30 films sampled, for instance the nurse in office evacuation film *Get Out And Live* (1972), the underdressed mechanics in *Easy Does It* (1967) and the receptionist/love interest in narrative short *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* (1974). But they are not the focus of the films we see them in, and are rarely interpellated as the industrial workers the films address. As *Don't Be Scalped* does address women workers exclusively, it highlights how films directed at male workers discuss safely discursively, by dint of its difference from them. This is not to imply that *Don't Be Scalped* is somehow non-discursive, but to show that gender difference is one way that these films police and normalise attitudes to safety through targeted and specific forms of subjectification.

Don't Be Scalped is structured around following Judy, a machinist in a factory, from her arrival in the morning to when she leaves for the day. While we do not stay with this

character for the entirety of the film (the segments on how to safely lift heavy materials depict other, unnamed women), for the majority of it Judy is the demonstrator of both safe and unsafe habits and behaviours. She does not speak at all in the film; instead we have the authoritative, male, omniscient narrator typical of this form of filmmaking; similar to that found in *Safety in the Meat Industry*. Like eight other films in the sample, *Don't Be Scalped* focuses on safety clothing, with considerable attention also paid to posture and lifting (this is also a common theme, appearing in seven other films). The initial five minutes or so of the nine-minute running time are devoted to a series of comparisons, where we see Judy operating a machine in her street clothing, with the narrator pointing out the dangers apparent in working while wearing long necklaces, full skirts, high heels and loose hair. Each of these is contrasted with recommended safe clothing (overalls or slacks, steel-capped shoes, visors). Here, as typical in the expository mode, the voice over guides, explains and organises the images shown onscreen.

The latter half of *Don't Be Scalped* is primarily concerned with demonstration of proper lifting techniques: here particular formal filmic devices, common to the industrial film, are used to reinforce how to do this. One of these is the demonstration or presentation by an expert. We are introduced to "Mr. Crosby Perry, [who] is in charge of Human Practice Research in the Division of Occupational Health", who uses a marionette to illustrate proper technique when lifting heavy objects, a pointer to show how much weight is being lifted, and how much pressure is being put on the body when counterbalancing the body weight during incorrect lifting (with pressure on the back rather than the legs). The inclusion of Mr. Perry is an example of one of Levin's 'codes and conventions' of the industrial film, the depiction of "experts who rely on the authority of legitimising discourses (of science, medicine, and the law, for example) for their credibility" (89). However, it is not only the discursive content of Mr. Perry's demonstration (calling on medical knowledge of anatomy) that establishes his

credibility, it is also his appearance, his shirt and tie, blazer and sweater giving him a professorial look. Experts in the wider sample considered in this thesis are similarly identifiable as such, either in white-collar attire like Mr. Perry, or in lab coats (if they are doctors or scientists). Authoritative figures in these films, then, are usually not working class like the workers in the films or like the interpellated audience. This begins to change over time, and the films of the 1970s and early 1980s are more likely to include authoritative voices and demonstrations from workers themselves (for instance, the crane-operating narrator in *You Can't Shift the Blame*).

What is striking about *Don't Be Scalped* is that the primary concerns about safety have much less to do with injury than other, similar films of this kind and from this era. Contrast the dangers expressed in *Safety in the Meat Industry* ("safety aprons of this type can prevent more serious injuries arising out of stabs to the groin, abdomen and upper thighs") with the way that safety is discussed in *Don't Be Scalped*: "in the course of her work Judy has to bend and reach for high objects, and do all kinds of things which mean strain on pretty clothes, especially tight ones. That's expensive, because they wear out quickly". While the former details serious injury, the latter is more concerned with damage to clothing than to the body. On a similar note, *Don't Be Scalped* emphasises the economy of wearing long lasting, hard-wearing steel-capped shoes. This focus on both clothing and its price are reinforced by the manner in which Judy is posed and shot. We see her working at the machine, but with her body turned at an angle that displays what she is wearing in a way reminiscent of fashion photography. When the film advises its viewers to wear wraparound coverall dresses instead of skirts, the camera slowly pans up and down Judy's body: again, like a fashion shoot as opposed to the emphasis on danger and injury found in the utilitarian safety films aimed at male viewers. This emphasis on appearance has already been set, right from the very first line

of narration in the film: "Judy is a nice girl; attractive – and she's a first-class machine operator in the factory that employs her".

The effect here is to minimise the ways that women's health and safety in the workplace was (and continues to be) a serious issue. By interpellating the women watching the film as being primarily interested in clothing, appearance, and budgeting (the stress is placed several times on how expensive it is to replace clothing worn out or damaged on the job), the film avoids discussing women's injuries that could be maiming or fatal. It frames the chronic injuries that women were most likely to be exposed to in industrial work (C. Williams "Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 45) as minor aches and pains rather than crippling and serious injuries. The title of *Don't Be Scalped* is more graphic than anything we see in the film itself.

This avoidance of discussing injuries in the workplace that women might suffer can be read in a variety of ways. Firstly, it is possible that the sponsors and filmmakers wished to avoid frightening female employees or offending their sensibilities, or deterring them from pursuing work in this kind of environment (especially as these kinds of films were shown in employee inductions). Secondly, it can be read as unwillingness on the part of the filmmakers and sponsors to depict women in ways that are out of step with a hegemonic image of femininity. Other safety films are quite willing to show male workers undergoing various kinds of physical indignities (falls, graphic injuries, infections) but *Don't Be Scalped* seems reticent to show women in ways that might compromise their poise or gracefulness. As a result, the impression one is left with by this lacuna is that women were *not* as prone to maiming or severe injuries in the workplace, and that by comparison, men's work was more dangerous.

This echoes C. Williams' focus on 'protection', where women's work was restricted for their own safety and working class men, resistant to and not in need of protection in their roles as

'protectors', could remain unsafe at work ("Women and Occupational Health and Safety" 30). The implication in *Don't Be Scalped* is that women are, for the most part, already protected from workplace dangers: by the guards on the machines shown in the film, which viewers are merely cautioned that they should not remove; by extant engineering and design (Judy's work is done on "a good machine, ingeniously designed to do excellent work"); and by employers ("Women in industry are not intended to be weightlifters. Your employer does not expect you to carry loads like this!"). The remaining concerns are ones that involve sensible decision-making regarding clothing and lifting: not wearing high heels and jewellery, and lifting objects with workers of similar size "when it's a two-girl job": minor details, rather than the dramatic, potentially fatal scenes shown in films like *The Unsafe Act.*

The final scenes of *Don't be Scalped* return to Judy at the close of her working day, as, back in her 'street clothes', she smiles at the camera and then turns and walks away down the street. The voice over tells us that "when she leaves at the day's end she is her fresh, natural self; poised; self-reliant; capable; and above all: safe". One aspect of this 'leaving at the day's end' is notable by its absence. Compare this with the worker who faces the camera in *The Unsafe Act*, asked by the narrator if he is remembering an argument at breakfast, presumably with his wife. Similarly, the audience of *Safety in the Meat Industry* are instructed that safety will "ensure […] your family's security" – the workers interpellated in these films are assumed to have wives or family, and nearly a quarter of the films in the content analysis sample mention responsibility for family explicitly. In *Don't Be Scalped,* however, Judy's family is never mentioned, nor is it implied that she has one. If from this absence we consider her to be single, and that the film is speaking to other single women, then this potentially illustrates another gendered difference in the sorts of subjects being interpellated: men are expected to have responsibilities not only to themselves but to dependants, while women in industry are 'self-reliant' (with structures in place already protecting them).

The depiction of injury in *Don't be Scalped* – or rather, the lack thereof, illustrates how the depiction of injury in other safety films of the period is not the only way such a topic can be broached. These discussions are the result of a specific and targeted set of discursive choices, even if they represent these choices as being 'common sense'. The fact that this film illustrates a gendered difference in the way safety films communicate their messages shows the makers and sponsors of these films did not think that safety rhetoric was universal, but that specific interest groups were expected to have quite different interests and investments in different areas of safety. There appear to be no workplace safety films made between the 1960s and 1980s that target other segments of the Australian population specifically. It would be interesting to see how sponsors might have directed messages to older workers, to immigrant or indigenous workers, or to workers who did not otherwise fit clearly with the type of subject these films tend to interpellate. There may have been still other ways of framing and discussing safety.

7.   Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on the ways that the stylistic and formal elements of these three films are intimately interwoven with the ways that they interpellate their viewers into particular subject positions. The workers who viewed these films, and the worker that the films depict or presume the audience to be, may not have been identical, but nevertheless, from the subject positions that they speak to, we can infer what the sponsor's expectations of industrial workers were, and what Australian culture more broadly presumed about safety in these kinds of workplaces.

The most common form that the Australian workplace safety film took in the 1960s was one that shares characteristics with the expository documentary mode. The suitability of this form of filmmaking for delivering instructive messages and for conveying a position or argument –

broadly speaking, that workers can remain safe in the course of their job – means that several stylistic choices are apparent across the three films this chapter has considered. The use of omniscient voice over that illustrates, explains and offers evaluative guidance about what we see onscreen is a particularly powerful formal element. It not only tells viewers what to do, but makes assumptions about their values, their class and familial situations, and their understanding of workplace interactions and responsibilities in relation to safety. These assumptions form part of the interpellation or hailing that the films perform.

The picture that these films draw through interpellation, that is, the type of subjectification being enacted, calls forth a subject with certain specific characteristics. This subject is primarily male and working class, but moreover he is a worker who has a family, is patriotic, and who is aware of safety rules from other sources and employs 'common sense' behaviours and techniques in order to stay safe during the course of his work. While these are the overarching characteristics we see in many safety films, individual titles may emphasise particular characteristics of this subject over others. *Safety in the Meat Industry,* for instance, places more emphasis on the ways that safety assists industry and nation-building, with the assumption that viewers will find this valuable, while *The Unsafe Act* promotes the common sense aspects of safety and emphasises constant vigilance as something subjects will appreciate. By way of contrast, *Don't Be Scalped* addresses a female subject, one whose safety-consciousness involves more consideration of economy, fashion and minor chronic injury than the serious violence or threat of fatality that concern her male counterparts. This highlights that safety is not something seen as universal or static in these films; rather, safety considerations change and mutate according to the perceived interests, knowledges or predilections of the social groups they address.

One aspect relating to safety that is consistent across all three films considered here is that of individualism. Each of the three films emphasises individual decision-making and agreement

to pursue safe practices as a key component of the responsibility for safety that workers should take. On one hand, this is in line with a broad generalisation that could be made about Australian culture: Hofstede's influential cultural comparison studies found Australians on average do value individualism (215, 234). On the other, rather than viewing this as a purely cultural trait, we can view this as a vital element of how safety is regarded discursively. This individualism is part and parcel of safety as a technology of the self; Foucault's understanding of how discipline is not only a tool used by institutions, but a way that people are encouraged to work on and perform discipline on themselves. A technology of the self "implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills, but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes" ('Technologies of the Self' 18). The attitudes workers are expected to acquire in relation to workplace safety involve an isolating, inward-looking self-interrogation, one where responsibility for safety "must come from within", as *Safety in the Meat Industry* frames it.

From this, it is evident that the filmic techniques being utilised are not only aesthetic decisions, standard or genre-based methods of depicting places, people and situations, or the best or 'common sense' ways of communicating safety messages. They are also discursively powerful in ways sometimes intended by the sponsors and filmmakers (for example the presence of patriotic discourses), but very often likely not consciously intended (for instance the emphasis on individual resolve and decision-making). The cultural meaning and significance these films hold not only covers their relevance as overlooked artefacts of Australian filmmaking, but also as texts that construct as well as reflect the understanding of Australian workers and their safety. These understandings carry over to the later films discussed in the following chapter, though changes to the discourse also appear over time.

Chapter Six

"Of *use* as well as *decoration*": *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* **(1974),** *It Wasn't Me* **(1978) and** *Noise Destroys* **(1979)**

1. Introduction

In the Australian workplace safety films of the 1970s, a change in aesthetic, ideological and rhetorical strategies is discernible from those employed in the 1950s and 1960s. The earlier prevalence of techniques common to the expository documentary mode, and of films that attempted to sway their audience's opinion or modify worker behaviour through direct orders from an omniscient speaker underwent change over time. These were replaced by a tendency toward an address that acknowledged worker competency and agency and that suggested that solutions to safety issues were complex rather than a matter of simply prohibiting certain activities and exhibiting constant vigilance. This was also reflected in new and different formal strategies: when voice over or narration is used in the workplace safety films of the 1970s, the speaker is often shown onscreen. We also see at this stage that narrative shorts became a more popular mode of conveying messages about workplace safety.

As Albert Moran notes, the Commonwealth Film Unit/ Film Australia led the way in filmmaking for state and departmental film units. For all government filmmaking in the 1970s, there were changes to the established ways of communicating didactic messages. Not only did this mean that the social relationships and subject positions depicted in the films differed, but that "authority and certitudes came under scrutiny and were in many ways found wanting" (*Projecting Australia* 91). This can be attributed to various factors: changes in educational methods; technology which made different, more dynamic forms of filmmaking possible (Moran *Projecting Australia* 100); "a shift in Australian government and society that gave social purpose to stylistic changes that otherwise might have been empty and rhetorical"

(99), such as the Whitlam government's enshrinement of multi-cultural principles in Australian policy and law-making (amongst other factors); and a proliferation of smaller production houses which may have fostered different approaches to utilitarian material (FitzSimons et al. 77). Moran also points to the idea of auterism as one that encouraged stylistic experimentation within state and federal filmmaking bodies (though he is careful to stress that this does not mean that auteurs now produced these films, but that the idea of what film direction consisted of was changing in the zeitgeist) (*Projecting Australia* 103).

However, another factor that led to a differing mode of address in the workplace safety films of the 1970s is the common use of a variety of techniques similar to those employed in the 'docudrama'. I have employed the expository documentary film as a framework through which we can understand the workplace safety films of the early 1960s discussed in the previous chapter, and the docudrama is here employed in a similar fashion. Although the workplace safety films of the 1960s were not expository documentaries, the techniques, forms of address and ways of expressing their didactic messages associated with the expository mode provide us with a lens through which to understand these films. Here, while the 1970s narrative workplace safety films are not docudramas, this form provides us with a means to interpret how they function and with what effect.

This chapter considers three narrative workplace safety films from the 1970s as case studies. The first of these, *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* (1974), is directed by Donald Crombie (director of *Caddie* (1976), *The Irishman* (1978) and *The Killing of Angel Street* (1981) among other films of note in the Australian feature film revival of the 1970s) and produced by the South Australia Film Corporation with sponsorship from the South Australian Mines Department and ICI Australia. *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* shows three intercut vignettes which illustrate a day in the life of three workers who use explosives, in agriculture, opal mining and road construction. The second film considered is *It Wasn't Me* (1978),

directed by Eddie Moses and produced by the Tasmanian Film Corporation for the Department of Labour and Industry. It concerns a non-permanent worksite in the construction industry, structured as a mystery about a fatality befalling one of the workers. Finally, *Noise Destroys* (1979) concerns a factory worker who is suffering from industrial hearing damage, and his quest to get his workplace to address this as a serious safety issue. It is also produced by the Tasmanian Film Corporation for the Department of Labour and Industry and is directed by Phillip Mark-Law. All three films use a variety of rhetorical strategies to address their audience, which not only suggest that the Australian workplace safety films' didactic approach was undergoing change from the expository techniques of the 1960s to a blend of documentary and drama characteristics, but that the films' *dispositifs* were also in flux.

2.   The Docudrama

Derek Paget's justification for his academic attention to the docudrama is a personal statement that could just as easily be applied to the utilitarian film: "I have always believed that the arts can be of *use* as well as *decoration.* Where better to take this stand than with a mode that offers both instruction and entertainment, and that in certain examples can claim equal measure for these things?" (*No Other Way to Tell It* 20). The films that this chapter attends to aim to both instruct and entertain, but beyond this they also have other significant characteristics in common with the docudrama, while clearly not being docudramas themselves.

So, what is a docudrama? As the portmanteau name suggests, it is a form of film (or television, or theatre) that combines elements of both documentary and drama. Usually the term refers to both documentaries that heavily employ the techniques of the fiction film to tell their stories (such as re-enactments and re-creations), or to films that are 'based on a true story'; the biopic, certain historical dramas (usually those about a particular historical event

or person), or films that fictionalise and narrativise current events or social issues ('movies of

the week', for instance). Paget offers a continuum which spans between fictional film

(drama) on one hand and non-fiction (documentary) on the other, with the mockumentary,

biopic, docudrama, docu-musical, reality TV and docu-soap being the between-points on this

scale (*No Other Way to Tell It* 3). The utilitarian, industrial, sponsored and safety film are not

included on this continuum. However, using this scale as an indication of the forms that lie

somewhere between fiction and non-fiction, it is evident that different types of safety film sit

at various points along the range, with some being closer to documentary (such as the early

1960s films discussed in chapter five) and others sitting closer to the docudrama, hovering

somewhere between the two poles.

The main feature of the docudrama which separates it from researched 'inspired-by' fictional

film and televisual material, is its relationship to documents themselves, and their discursive

function as documentary evidence. Paget refers to this as "the Promise of Fact" (*True

Stories?* 3). In this sense, "docudrama's indexical links to real-world occurrences can always

be established in more thorough-going ways [than those of fiction]" (*No Other Way to Tell It*

16). From this, it is evident that the Australian workplace safety films of the 1970s cannot be

considered to *be* docudrama; however, their operations in effect run parallel to those of

docudrama, as it shares several of the same aims, methods of articulating its points, and

aspects of formal presentation. Given this, the docudrama provides a useful template with

which to understand how the workplace safety films of this era work and address their

audience.

The commonalities between the docudrama and the workplace safety film firstly cover the

prior knowledge that viewers must bring to the experience of both forms. In the docudrama,

this involves an expectation of what the content of the 'Promise of Truth' offered by the film

is, an "'out-of-story' awareness – of issues, events, people in the news and in history" (*No

Other Way to Tell It 16). This truth, the audience anticipates, will also "offer instruction or information on some matter" (*True Stories?* 15). These aspects of truthfulness and instruction are also instrumental parts of the *dispositif*, the intertextual and paratextual knowledge that the viewer brings to the workplace safety film. However, the truthfulness that one expects in the safety film is not to be shown a diegesis that adheres to a representation of things that have occurred in reality (as is the case with expectations of the docudrama). The nature of the truth that safety films represent or speak to is instead located in the instruction they offer. When viewing a safety film, there is an expectation that the instruction offered will be accurate and reliable: the safety techniques we witness will be things that can be accurately employed in our own workplaces, and that we will be shown a narrative where the viewer can "perceive a character to be "just like me" in circumstances "that could happen to me"" (Lipkin 457).

In addition, formal and rhetorical techniques of the docudrama are also present in the narrative workplace safety films of the 1970s. Formally, the qualities of voice over, of dramatic convention and extra-textual material characterise both forms. Voice over in the workplace safety films of this era tends to come from within the diegesis, spoken by actors who are either characters in the story (as happens in *It Wasn't Me* and *You Can't Shift the Blame*) or by on-screen narrators who comment on but are not otherwise involved in the central action (as in *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* and *Safe Loads*). For Paget, docudrama voice overs have four main functions:

> To start us off with (or remind us of) the necessary prior knowledge of the non-story world […]; to help the story take temporal and locational leaps within the unfolding narrative; to project us back into the real (non-story) world at the end of the film; and throughout to anchor story-in-history (*No Other Way to Tell It* 105).

All of these functions are also present in the narrative safety film voice overs, to greater and lesser extents. The prior knowledge these films necessitate is of a different nature from that in the docudrama, given that these films are dealing with characters and situations that are 'life-like' rather than based on real lives. However, the ways that voice over orientates viewers temporally and situationally within and in relation to the story-world work in very much the same way in the workplace safety film.

Along with the voice over, various dramatic conventions used in both the docudrama and the narrative safety film draw further parallels between the two forms. Aside from the fictional techniques of dramatic tension and irony, the "moments of disclosure, recognition and catharsis" are "part of docudrama plot construction" (*No Other Way to Tell It* 115). So too, the narrative workplace safety film incorporates these conventions to its own ends; as will be seen, both *It Wasn't Me* and *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* utilise mystery elements and slow disclosure of narrative information in order to maintain audience interest. Furthermore, the use of narrative irony invites the viewer to maintain a critical distance from the characters, evaluating their actions and predicting narrative consequences while keeping emotionally distant from the characters. This aids in the workplace safety film goals of effecting behavioural change through cognitive, critical and rational processes rather than emotive or impressionistic ones; while we are expected to understand the emotional stakes involved in workplace accidents, the 1970s workplace safety films do not rely on emotional affect.

Finally, the importance of extra-textual material to both the docudrama and workplace safety film provide a further formal linkage between the two types. While workplace safety film screenings were sometimes accompanied by lectures, comprehension questions or the provision of other safety material such as pamphlets and posters, the docudrama is often accompanied (on television or in theatres) by interview and discussion programmes, Q&A

sessions or other explanatory material. The function of this extra-textual or paratextual

material is to facilitate "the passage of a docudrama back into the public sphere" (*No Other*

Way to Tell It 117), and for the workplace safety film it works similarly. In both cases, the

additional material provides a way for the audience to assess the validity and truthfulness of

what they have watched, and to think critically about the depiction of events.

In this criticality that the workplace safety film requires of its audience, it again finds

common ground with what docudrama requires of its audience. While Paget notes that many

cultural theorists would refer to this audience attitude as "post-modern reflexivity", he prefers

the term "innate media intelligence" (*No Other Way to Tell It* 12). An innate media

intelligence is something that the 1970s workplace safety films ask viewers to exercise, in

that they must recognise the narrative and dramatic conventions that the films are often

utilising, playing with and subverting in order for them to accept the (serious, 'factual')

didactic messages about safe behaviour and workplace conduct they present. The attitude

towards the onscreen characters and events that viewers are encouraged, directed and

expected to take in a film like *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* exemplifies this.

3. *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* (1974)

1974's *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* is a short narrative film that aims to maintain

audience interest through a mystery about a fatality that befalls one of the featured characters.

This mystery is structured through voice over narration, but the narrator here differs from the

omniscient ones found in the 1960s workplace safety films: we see him onscreen, and his

commentary on the action taking place onscreen is colloquial and friendly, on the side of the

implied audience members. Though he is not named at any point in the narrative and no

acting credits are provided in the film, he is still a recognisable kind of character, similar to

those described by D. Williams as "a masculine rural type without the depth of

characterization often associated with narrative fiction film" (98) – an immediately understandable and familiar stereotype of a mid-twentieth century white Australian man.

Guided aurally by the narration, the viewer is introduced to the three protagonists of the film, all of whom use explosives in the course of their work. Firstly, we meet Jack, a farmer who uses explosives to remove tree stumps on his farm. Secondly, Janni, an elderly German migrant who is an opal miner, and finally Harry, a young 'powder monkey' working for a road construction company. The mystery at the centre of the film is spelled out by the narrator: one of the men will die in the course of their work day "because they're going to be bloody careless". This mystery has an extra-textual function: as well as providing what little narrative drive and suspense there is to be found in the plot, it acts as an incentive to the audience to maintain their attention and interest in the film.

Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline overtly addresses how this form of filmmaking is unusual in that its audience is possibly a reluctant one: the film opens with the narrator turning from the bar, beer in hand to state: "I know what you're thinking – not another bloody training film. But before you go outside and have your smoke, listen…" This acknowledgement that a workplace safety film might only be being watched under duress, as a workplace requirement is striking – film is often so thoroughly conceived of as an entertainment form that the idea that viewers are not watching of their own volition and for their own interest seems highly unusual. Cinema is often described as a force difficult to resist, a "space of mental experimentation [where] one is engaged, captivated, enveloped and consumed" (Bruno 89). The work that this film performs to expressly engage an audience's interest that it seems to feel in danger of losing at any moment, marks a significant difference between this form of utilitarian filmmaking and cinema at large. The way that *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* follows a mystery format, where throughout the film the narrator reminds us that one of the men is going to die, provides a narrative interpellation to continue watching.

Similarly, the audience is addressed as competent. As shown in chapter three, seven of the workplace safety films in the sample included voice over that intimated that the audience members are presumed to be proficient at their jobs and take pride in their work. This is presumably done in an attempt to avoid alienating the viewers by not talking down to them or assuming that they do not know how to execute the tasks necessary in their occupation. In this way, the films are relevant to a wider audience: *instructing* new employees on what they need to do to perform their work safely while also *reminding* veteran or more experienced employees about work practices, processes and purposes they may have forgotten.

The way that *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* addresses a competent audience is through demonstration of unsafe behaviour by the protagonists. As we see Jack carry gelignite and crimp detonators in an unsafe manner, the narrator's voice over describes what he is doing in disparaging terms ("look at this idiot, he's got dirt all over the bloody dets"). In this way, the audience are invited to laugh at and respond to the action onscreen in a similarly disparaging manner; they are expected to recognise that the behaviour is unsafe, and that they themselves would know better. The film never lectures the viewers, rather, it assumes that they possess knowledge that the characters do not, and invites them to feel superior in that knowledge.

Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline presents an image of Australian masculinity that is both normative and aspirational. A feature of each of the three separate storylines is that the men in each one are described in relation to a woman in their lives. Jack wants to remove the stumps on his property before his wife gets home from a hospital visit; Janni is anticipating a visit from his daughter Anna, over from Oberhausen; and Harry has a date with Christine, the receptionist at the company office. These relationships, as in *It Wasn't Me,* are heterosexual (or familial in the case of Janni) and aspirational in the sense that they are expected to draw favourable comment from other men: Janni, the narrator informs us, will have to contend

with men at the pub ribbing him about his pretty daughter, while Christine is "darling of the office and of course the gleam in Dirty Harry's eye".

On one hand, these comments are designed to illustrate that these men are regular Aussie blokes, and that such rewarding familial or sexual relationships are part of correct performance of Australian masculinity. On the other hand, these women also have a narrative and didactic function, in that their presence adds to the suspense of the mystery we are presented with. We anticipate not only the death of one of these men, but also the bereavement of one of these women. This not only narratively emphasises the seriousness of unsafe use of explosives but serves as an educational reminder that a lack of safety impacts those other than the injured worker. Jack's unnamed wife, Anna, and Christine are characters that appear as the narrative shorthand for the expository safety films' statement that accidents "affect workers as well as their families and loved ones".

The tragedy the viewer is promised by the narrator at the beginning of the film is designed to undercut expectations. Owing to the subject matter of the film, the viewer is led to believe that the accident causing the death of one of the men will be explosives-related. However, the final scenes show the men successfully finishing their work for the day, only for Harry, running for his date with Christine, to be hit by a car. *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* does not attempt to play this as a tragedy, which would seem out of step with the irreverent acknowledgement of a potentially reluctant audience at the outset. Instead, the film cuts straight from the accident and bystanders rushing to help, to the narrator at the bar again, who turns once more to the audience and announces "did you like that? That was clever, wasn't it? I bet you all thought old gentleman Jack would cop it. He certainly deserved to. Now, do you deserve to?" The death of the character is acknowledged as a narrative game that this potentially reluctant audience has been invited to play along with, while the narrator's final comments return us to the questions of responsibility that these films raise. Here, the narrator

functions like the one Paget describes as typical of the docudrama: he facilitates our return to "the public sphere" (*No Other Way to Tell It* 117) of the utilitarian film screening, out of the film's diegesis and back into 'the real world'.

Asking the audience whether they 'deserve to' die as a result of their negligence at work is clearly rhetorical, but it expands on some of the interesting issues around responsibility that are raised in the earlier, expository workplace safety films. To state in effect that one deserves to die as a result of ignorance, exhaustion or any number of other workplace pressures that might lead to someone being unsafe seems shocking when framed in those terms, but this is clear evidence of discourse and biopower at work. Firstly, the discourse of safety at this point has set conditions where it is unthinkable to behave unsafely; where any reasons one might have for doing so are foreclosed; and the only ones that remain as sensible explanations are personal defects. Jack is an *idiot* for not understanding how to safely use the explosives, despite how we see him several times attempting to educate himself by reading an instruction manual. In this frame, behaving unsafely appears so illogical that death is identified as a fit punishment for it: this is a 'mode of subjectification' through which, according to Rabinow and Rose,

> Individuals are brought to work on themselves, under certain forms of
>
> authority, in relation to truth discourses, by means of practices on the self,
>
> in the name of their own life or health, that of their family or some other
>
> collectivity, or indeed in the name of life or health of the population as a whole. (197)

This discipline of the self is first shown to be the work of the characters, and is then turned on the audience members themselves, as the central piece of information – the 'take home' that *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* attempts to impart. While this discipline is also at work in

a film like *It Wasn't Me*, the interpellative, narrative and aesthetic/formal methods it does this by differ.

4. *It Wasn't Me* (1978)

Addressing workers in the construction industry, *It Wasn't Me* opens with a direct-to-camera monologue from a drunk derelict, Sydney, who explains he used to be like the men in the story, but through no fault of his own now finds himself in the dissolute state in which we see him. Played by character actor Cul Cullen, Sydney functions as a kind of Greek chorus, commenting on the action and serving as a source of knowledge about incidents relevant to the plot throughout the film. He also functions as a stand-in for the narrators found in the 1960s expository films, or for narrators that appear onscreen but separate from the narrative action like the one in *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline*. Paget describes the difference between these forms of narrational address where voice over or onscreen narration "has been used in the past to convey facts and information […] but today it tends to function as part of the dramatic *mise en scène*" (*No Other Way to Tell It* 104). The character of Sydney is a narrational device through which the audience is guided, not only as to comprehension of events in the story but also about how to evaluate, judge and apply the didactic lessons of the film.

After Sydney's introduction, we are shown that an accident has occurred on this worksite: the unshored walls of a trench have collapsed, with McGee, a builder's labourer, apparently buried in the earth. As efforts are made to dig the body out, several witnesses and key players in the incident debate how the accident occurred, and who is responsible for it. The narrative unfolds through a meeting between these characters: Verrucchio, the victim's co-worker, an Italian immigrant with limited English; Davies, the site safety representative; Mr. Brown, the site foreman; Mr. Rhys-Jones, the business owner; and the safety inspector who steers the

line of questioning and attempts to uncover how the accident occurred. As each character gives his account of the incident and the lead-up to it, we are shown the events in flashback.

Through these characters recounting events in a non-chronological fashion, the audience is drip-fed information about the situation at the work site, its lack of safety provisions and the combative and conflicting relationships between workers and management. Firstly, Davies explains that Verruchio was operating the digger at the time of the accident despite a lack of experience, and suggests that the immigrant has been hired and underpaid as part of on-going exploitative practice. Mr. Brown, the foreman, then accuses Verruchio of incompetence and idiocy, stating that he has caused accidents on the site already. We see (in flashback) Verruchio directing a truck McGee is backing: distracted by a woman walking by, McGee backs the truck into a shed, almost running Verruchio over in the process. Brown also recounts an incident where Verruchio falls from an unfinished roof; in the flashback it is apparent that the worksite is littered with hazards and unstable equipment. Davies states that he alerted management to the safety violations on the site on several occasions.

Mr Rhys-Jones' account of hearing about the accident reveals that he employs Mr. Brown to supervise two sites at once as a cost-cutting measure. As the men argue and deny the responsibility for insuring safety on the site, the rescue team announces that they have been unable to find McGee's body in the trench. All the characters rush outside to look, leaving Sydney to reveal that McGee was absent from the site when the trench walls collapsed: the flashback shows him leaving Verruchio in charge while he keeps a date with his girlfriend. The film ends with Sydney speaking to the audience about the rest of the characters, their assets and virtues, as the camera cuts between them: "What's the use in having money [Rhys-Jones], authority [Brown], honour [Verruchio], even love [McGee] if you're going to endanger your life or the lives of others? It's not worth it. It's not responsible."

Similar to *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline,* the structure of *It Wasn't Me* is that of a mystery – did McGee die, and if so, how did it happen? However, the general tone throughout the 18-minute runtime is one of light comedy. The humorous mood is set from the opening moments, as Sydney instructs the viewer on mixing drinks ("four parts metho to one small part ginger ale") as woozy saxophone music plays, and this tone continues throughout the film. The comedic elements most prominent are the use of slapstick, particularly the pratfalls involving Verruchio. Also notable is the irreverent treatment of the characters in authority, particularly Brown the foreman and Rhys-Jones the company owner.

As noted in the content analysis, criticism of authority appears more frequently in films of the 1970s, and this is in keeping with the challenges to authoritative voice in government filmmaking of the period discussed by Moran (1991) and FitzSimons et al. (2011). This irreverence towards authority figures is exemplified by *It Wasn't Me*. The audience of the film is invited to laugh at the bosses depicted in the film, through the device of each character giving his account of events in dialogue, which is then contradicted by what we are shown in the flashback. For instance, when Rhys-Jones is invited by the safety inspector to give his account of hearing about the accident, he states that he had "just started a very important business meeting", but what we are shown in the flashback is that he is dining with a pretty girl. Similarly, Brown states that he is going to visit the other site, but we are shown him drinking at the pub.

The effect of these instances where we are shown images which lampoon and deflate what the bosses are telling us is that the audience is encouraged to think of these men as pompous, self-centred, and most importantly, as liars. Identification and empathy with them is foreclosed. This is building on an attitude that the film text assumes the audience has *prior* to viewing: that the audience is made up of workers who are already predisposed to dislike those in charge and to disrespect authority, given the casual and humorous manner in which

these irreverent elements are introduced. This is in keeping with the 'Ocker' stereotype, where working class Australian men were expected to treat and were depicted as treating authority (particularly bourgeois authority) with suspicion or joking hostility (O'Regan "Australian Film in the 1970s"). Part of this foreclosure of identification with authority figures means that viewers' identification and empathy are therefore directed elsewhere. The appeals to identification that are made are done through deployment of images of masculinity and mateship.

McGee and Verruchio are the two characters that audiences are most clearly invited to identify with or are at least anticipated as recognising as men similar to themselves. The relationship between the two is one of mutual support that stands in opposition to the way their bosses treat them. While Brown is dismissive, scathing and overtly racist about Verruchio's difficulty in understanding instructions ("Bloody thick, those migrants"), McGee patiently explains and demonstrates so that Verruchio can understand and complete tasks such as guiding the track back and moving lumber. In return, Verruchio 'covers for' McGee in the incident that leads to the central misunderstanding of the plot. These acts of mateship in the film are depicted as being friendly and virtuous: Sydney, as the observant character replacing the omniscient narration found in other safety films, describes Verruchio as 'honourable'. The mutual care these men demonstrate is held up as something to respect and emulate even if their actions are unsafe.

The ideals of mateship and class that this film depicts positively are accompanied by particular depictions of masculinity that are also presented as positive, as a given, and as an easily recognisable subject position. McGee in particular is a 'typical Aussie bloke' stereotype: a stubbies and gumboot clad manual labourer who spends much of his onscreen time ogling women (as shown in slow motion point-of-view shots). The reveal of the mystery shows him speeding away with a woman in a sports car. This combination of characteristics

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that are recognisable and behaviour that is aspirational suggests that McGee is intended to be read as a point of identification for the audience. Verruchio, though he shares an occupation with McGee, is distanced through several othering techniques. While we are expected to recognise Brown as a bigot when he criticises Verruchio, we are also invited to laugh at Verruchio's lack of understanding, especially when he responds to the inspector's questioning with a consistent "Bonza, everything bonza", and at his pratfalls which are delivered with broad and theatrical gesturing.

The relationship here between a character like Verruchio and Nino in Powell and Pressburger's *They're a Weird Mob* (1966) is apparent; similarly likable characters, working in similar industries (Nino is a bricklayer), similarly being guided by Anglo-Australians as to how the Australian workplace operates, and both targets of racism. However, while Nino is the protagonist of *They're a Weird Mob,* Verruchio is one of an ensemble, and not a character whose perspective is privileged. He is a character that we are expected to like and to sympathise with to an extent, but the viewers are not asked or assumed to put themselves in a similar subject position as him, as they are with McGee. In this sense, the picture that the film builds of its audience through interpellation in various ways is one of a white, working class, red-blooded Australian man. A significant way that this interpellation differs from that in the more expository forms of workplace safety film is through the expectation of critical and interpretive thinking.

As shown in the previous chapter, workplace safety films in the expository mode deliver their message through direct and didactic instruction from an omniscient narrator, who describes the hazards shown onscreen and orders the viewer to follow specific instructions as to how to avoid them. In terms of subjectivity, the expository mode proscribed the possible subject position(s) that the worker/viewer of the film could hold. With a film like *It Wasn't Me*, while some forms of subjectivity are still foreclosed, the ones that are available are more flexible

and allow for more negotiation in terms of expression of self in relation to one's workplace. There is also acknowledgement, in the character of Verruchio, that subject positions other than that of the white, working class Australian man may be present in the Australian workplace of the 1970s, although these subject positions are ones that require qualification and are far from normalised.

5. *Noise Destroys* (1979)

Opening with a dramatic scene, cutting back and forward between a truck backing out of an alleyway and a man walking dangerously in its path, nearly causing the driver to run him over, we are introduced to Len (Max Cullen, brother of *It Wasn't Me*'s Cul Cullen), a factory worker who is unsuccessfully trying to hide his hearing damage from both his workplace and his family. Several short scenes establish his problem: after the near collision, he is unable to hear the punchline of the joke his colleague Mike tells at the bar and must ask him to repeat it; once home he is unable to hear requests from his wife; he cannot contribute to the dinnertime conversation his wife and teenage children are having; and disrupts his children's study by having the television on too loud. He is quick to anger with them and feels isolated.

The following day, we see Len attend an appointment with the on-site doctor at the factory he works at. He is informed that his hearing is fine, but when he is still doubtful, the doctor suggests he get a second opinion. The independent doctor he consults confirms Len's fear that his hearing is substantially damaged: irreversible, but the hearing-loss can be slowed, and that it is the result of long-term exposure to high noise levels from the machines in the factory. The doctor suggests that he visits a workplace that has managed to make significant changes to their operations to cut down on noise pollution, for advice.

Len first attempts to make changes at his own factory. He discusses the issue with Mike and the site union representative; the union rep dismisses his concerns ("Why worry? We're on

good money") and argues that Len will need to provide proof that the factory is responsible for his hearing damage. In a montage, we see Len conducting library research on noise pollution, talking to co-workers, photocopying information and displaying it in the work lunchroom. It is enough to convince Mike, but the men are stonewalled by the boss, who thinks Len is making unnecessary trouble. Len decides to talk to the other factory that the doctor recommended.

The personnel officer at the other factory takes Len on a tour, telling him about the design improvements on machinery (modification, insulation, soundproofing the surrounding environment and emphasis on protective gear) and the 'Hearing Conservation Programme' they run, which management takes pride in. The first steps towards improvement occurred when the union invited an audiologist to speak to the workers, and he suggests that Len does the same. He also offers him a job, but Len declines, his mind already on what action he can take in his own workplace. He is encouraged by Mike, who privately confesses that his hearing is damaged too, and urges Len to keep at it, for the sake of the younger employees and apprentices.

The floor supervisor tells Len that the young workers don't wear the hearing protection provided, since it is uncomfortable and they are teased by colleagues for it. He advises Len that management will be hostile to a visit from an audiologist, but agrees that it could be successful if euphemistically passed off as an 'educational lecture'. The lecture and slide show is well attended and convinces both the union and the apprentices to put pressure on the bosses to pay attention to the issue. Management reluctantly agrees to allow the audiologist to talk to all of the employees at the factory in the lunch hour, and to survey the factory to identify problem areas for noise. Although no further promises are forthcoming, Len, Mike and their colleagues remain optimistic now that they have taken the first steps towards significant changes being made.

Noise Destroys differs from the other two films this chapter considers in that it is entirely narratively driven – there is no narrator or narrator stand-in such as Sydney. The film is also notable for its relative sophistication in its formal elements, as well as for being one of only three films included in the sample this thesis considers that focusses on chronic injury, and the only one to do so exclusively. It also makes an interesting case study because of its inconclusive nature and its acknowledgement of the difficulties in making changes to processes at an institutional level, rather than modifications to individual behaviour.

When Len challenges the bosses to change the way that the factory operates, it is a sophisticated and multi-level campaign that he runs. He does this almost singlehandedly: although Mike offers moral support, he is ashamed of his own hearing damage and too timid to make much of a disruption. When Len asks the factory's morose and uncommunicative union representative at the lecture whether it has "convinced the union to get off their arse", the uninterested and monotone assent he receives indicates that this support too may be only nominal. In this sense, the film could be considered in terms of the popular depictions of disability as inspirational heroism, where difficulties that real people with disabilities might encounter are "collapsed into rhetorics of national representative heroism and/or achievement-against-the-odds" (Paget *True Stories?* 10).

Len's campaign itself involves not only safety education via slide shows and lectures from professionals, but also suggests co-operation of management in closing the factory for sound-proofing, and support of the workers in the form of agreeing to change their behaviour and attitudes in the workplace so that the wearing of hearing protection is the norm. The film makes clear that changes to processes as well as education are necessary. As Len himself argues when the boss suggests that safety information is already available: "you can't just stick a bloody poster on a wall". In effect, the changes that Len implements offer a workable picture of building towards an effective workplace safety culture.

However, the cultural work that the film is doing otherwise is also worthy of note, in particular the way that the film both interrogates and perpetuates various elements of the discourses of Australian masculinity that also speak through the other case studies in this chapter. As with the instances of drinking that we see in the two other films, some of the most revealing scenes where this discourse of masculinity is articulated take place in "that traditional male domain - the pub" (Watson 46). As a setting, this is an example in the film of social *mise en scène*. According to Martin,

> social *mise en scène* does not mean '*mise en scène* that expresses a viewpoint about society' […] rather, it engineers a specific shift in critical/ analytical perspective, and aims to focus us, once again on the material form of its own workings. […] We attend to the newly grasped raw material of social codes, their constant exposure and deformation in the work of how a film articulates itself. In particular, it allows us to zero in on something specific: known rituals that are recreated, marked, inscribed in the flow of the film, usually in order to be transformed. (*Mise en scène and Film Style* 134)

The pub in *Noise Destroys* appears as a recognisable cultural sphere where the rituals particular to it are used to illustrate the disruption to the normal flow of social interactions, as exemplified by the way that Len's hearing damage affects group dynamics.

Australian viewers know and understand this site as one where we might expect a specific type of social subject (male, white, working class, heterosexual) to meet and enact particular social rituals (drinking, socialising, telling jokes, fighting). As such, in *Noise Destroys* the pub functions as a neutral place (not the job site or the home) where the workers in the film behave in a revealing manner. For this reason, the two scenes in the pub bookend the problem that Len has, and both do this through the device of telling and listening to jokes.

The initial pub scene is one that helps establish Len's issue. The scene opens with Mike telling the punchline of a joke, after which he and the other men present laugh uproariously. Len, hand to his ear, asks Mike to repeat it as he has not heard, which Mike reacts to in an exasperated manner. What is important here in terms of the discourse of masculinity at work is not only the social ritual that is being enacted, but the joke content: the punchline is clearly homophobic. In this way, the discourse of a form of hegemonic masculinity that reaffirms the norms of heterosexual working class culture is articulated, and difference clearly expressed as something to be isolated and laughed at. This is important in establishing Len's reluctance to act outside the norm by challenging the workplace and in doing so openly admitting to a disability that he clearly finds embarrassing (as Mike puts it later in the film "if you're deaf, then you're [seen as] a freak").

However, the film is quick to emphasise by its conclusion that while the codes of masculinity may have been relaxed enough to allow Len the vulnerability of admitting his disability, this does not mean that the bounds of acceptable subjectivity in this setting have been changed completely. The final scene of the film shows Len and his co-workers, again drinking at the pub. Len now wears a hearing aid and holds the floor while telling a joke – this one with a racist punchline, complete with mocking imitation of an East Asian accent. This is an indication, perhaps, that Australia's multi-cultural policy had not become part of 'common sense' ideology, or perhaps that the new-found awareness of and exposure to other cultures was fraught, potentially viewed hostilely, and threw these cultural differences into relief. What these two joking scenes in the pub indicate is that while the tough, stoic, and able-bodied subjectivity of the industrial worker may be flexible enough to allow for expressions of vulnerability in terms of admitting injury or disability, this does not mean freedom for *any* kind of differing subjectivity. It is important also that these expressions of hostility to others are couched in jokes: we are encouraged, by comparison, to abhor Mr. Brown's racism in *It*

Wasn't Me but invited at the same time to laugh at Verruchio's limited English. Joking, deployed in this manner, polices subjectivity while still reassuring that no real harm is intended.

Noise Destroys does interpellate its viewers in a way that would appear to encourage them to take action challenging employers on safety matters, as indicated by Len's quest to obtain soundproofing and to educate colleagues about hearing protection. However, it makes it clear that this is a difficult and negotiated process, one that involves a certain degree of obfuscation and deception. Len has to convince the bosses that he is not inciting against them when arranging for the expert to speak about hearing safety and injury prevention; he has to euphemistically pass off the meeting as an 'educational lecture'. In this sense, the film is less directly didactic than the preceding two that this chapter considers, showing instead the difficulties that addressing chronic injury might entail, and making it clear that changes to process – hazard-based rather than risk-based approaches – are effective in the long run but are hard to implement.

6. A Questioning *Dispositif* and a Technology of the Self

The workplace safety films made in Australia in the 1970s tend to suggest quite a different kind of *dispositif* from that relating to the 1960s films. What can be inferred from films such as *It Wasn't Me, Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* and *Noise Destroys* is that watching them encourages a particular interaction with the film text. While this interaction did not *necessarily* take place *in situ*, as clearly negotiated or oppositional readings and responses are possible, if the suggestions and implications the films are making are taken at face value then a picture of the *dispositifs* of these films can be drawn.

The workplace safety films of the 1960s, such as those discussed in the previous chapter, use a form of address that is directly didactic. Consider, for instance, the omniscient narrator

interrogating the worker character in *The Unsafe Act* (1965): this functions as a set of

questions that the film is potentially asking its audience: "Can you keep a few important

thoughts in front of you? Keep on remembering them? Don't forget ANY of them?" These

are closed questions that do not invite response other than rote recitation of the instructions

the film has imparted. As discussed in the previous chapter, this subjectification of the

audience forecloses certain possibilities for the type of viewer being interpellated. The films

of the 1970s, however, differ in that the questions they pose invite the audience to give a

thought-through response rather than to simply remember and implement rules.

This way of addressing the audience is part of the *dispositif* as theorised by Martin, who

defines the *dispositif* as "the arrangement of diverse elements in such a way as to trigger,

guide and organise a set of actions", the diverse elements being, for instance, the "structures

or parameters of a film" (*Mise en scène and Film Style* 179). One prominent change evident

in the structure and formal parameters of the safety films addressed in this chapter in contrast

with the 1960s films discussed in chapter five is that while both straddle the divide between

fiction and non-fiction, the later films employ more of a combination of dramatic and

documentary techniques, while the earlier ones are more 'documentary-like'. This formal

difference contributes to the ways in which an audience (or distributor, or a supervisor

selecting titles to show in a training session) might initially approach the film and what they

might expect to get from it. According to Martin, the filmic *dispositif* "usually announces its

structure or system at the outset – in the opening scene, even in the work's title" (*Mise en

scène and Film Style* 180), and the difference in approach between the ways viewers orient

themselves to a docufiction work as opposed to a more clearly non-fiction one is therefore

relevant prior even to the film commencing. For instance, there may be a difference in the

expectation to be informed as opposed to the expectation to be entertained; the expectation

that a viewer might be required to retain facts imparted by the film as opposed to exercising

narrative comprehension; or in the expectation of the truth or falsity of the information that the film delivers.

The way that *It Wasn't Me* directs the viewer in terms of hazards and accident avoidance is in an implied manner. For instance, Davies, the site safety representative, mentions that the worksite was littered with rubbish and unsafely-set-up equipment, and we are then *shown* Verruchio at work on the site and left to observe and identify the 'housekeeping' hazards visible in the frame. Similarly, the denouement of the film leaves room for criticality and for viewers to draw their own conclusions about how characters should have behaved. *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* differs here in that the narrator aurally guides us through what we are being shown: when we see Janni place a heavy metal drum on a piece of fuse, he elaborates: "see he's completely buggered that bit of fuse now – the burn rate's going to be unpredictable". The viewer is not left to see the issue themselves, as with the untidy site in *It Wasn't Me*, but the explanation of unsafe behaviour is observational: we are not given the strict do this/ don't do this orders that appear in films such as *The Unsafe Act.* A different educational model from the instructive mode employed by the expository safety films appears to be at work, one that leaves room for open-ended questions and answers to be provided by the viewers: in other words, the *dispositif* the film is part of has undergone change.

The *dispositif* involves not only audience expectations that exist prior to viewing the films, but also the contexts in which they were screened. For Elsaesser, the "regard for the conditions of reception (envisaging 'agents' with different roles and functions)" ("Between Knowing and Believing" 49) in study of the *dispositif* is particularly salient. In this context, the notion of different 'agents' is relevant in that not only the viewers, but also the makers, distributors and sponsors of the films and the management of the workplaces had stakes in how the films were received. While little may have materially changed in terms of who watched these films (workers, likely in groups rather than as individual viewers); where

(most likely on worksites, possibly at TAFES); and when (as part of scheduled training sessions, though possibly as part of inductions or even in lunch hours), the differences in how these films convey their meaning suggest that makers of safety films were modifying their message in anticipation of a different kind of response from the workers they see as their target audience. In addition, there is also an implication that not only were the workers responding differently, but that the constitution of the workforce itself had changed (perhaps being less homogenous and more culturally or ethnically diverse). As noted, *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline* anticipates a reluctant audience, but what both this film and *It Wasn't Me* have in common is that they anticipate that viewer response will revolve around responsibility for safety rather than simply accident prevention and how to avoid hazards. *Noise Destroys* does this too, although as discussed it does so in a markedly different manner.

The endings of the former two films, with the narrator (or narrator stand-in, in the case of Sydney) speaking to camera about the story we have just seen, do not focus on safety processes. The films assume that the viewer knows what to do and what not to do to avoid accidents on the construction site, farm, mine or demolition site, and emphasise instead the message that what is at stake here is personal responsibility. The films suggest that viewers should evaluate critically who they think to be at fault, and how they themselves would respond in the same situation. This inward reflection is indicative of a change in the discourse over time, from an emphasis on obeying a set of bodily disciplines to a more overt articulation of performing safety as a Technology of the Self (Foucault 1988). As a technology of the self, that bodily discipline is implemented in order that one may "relate to oneself epistemologically (know oneself), despotically (master yourself), or in other ways (care for yourself)" (Rose 29). Rose emphasises that these disciplinary practices always take place "under the authority of some system of truth" (29), as defined by a particular authoritative individual, institution or discursive system.

This is not to suggest that the workplace safety films that share characteristics with the expository mode do not also function as an elaboration of techniques for a technology of the self. On the contrary, they strongly suggest it in the many rules for safe behaviour and constant vigilance that they order the audience to adhere to. The difference between these films and the narrative films of the 1970s is that the 'way of being' suggested by the films has changed. If a technology of the self involves, as Foucault elaborates, "certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes" ("Technologies of the Self" 18), then it is the attitudinal component that has been transformed. And this transformation is not arbitrary, as it is clearly imbricated with the *dispositif,* in that how viewers were approaching the screenings of these films, were being interpellated by the films, and were regarding their relationships with management in the workplace, were also transforming. This transformation was due to various factors: from cultural changes to the make-up of the workforce, to a more constructivist pedagogical mode coming into fashion in the 1970s (Zryd 323), to a rise to prominence in filmmaking styles that acknowledged a variety of authoritative voices.

Like both *It Wasn't Me* and *Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline*, the approach *Noise Destroys* takes to work on the self is strongly individualistic, where we see an iconoclastic worker wrestle with the issue or responsibility of improving safety conditions by first looking inwards at themselves and deciding to take on this task. The work of safety, in this discursive framework, is solitary: not only work on the body (as established in the expository mode films); but also work on the mind. It is in this way that the *dispositif* – the combination of elements "with a view to an effect" (Albera and Tortajada 29) – is linked to the work of the technology of the self with a view to serving a particular power configuration. As Albera and Tortajada remind us, "Automatically associating the issue of power with the notion of the *dispositif* becomes a problem […] from the moment when research on *dispositifs* ceases to

aim to outline the way power operates" ("The Dispositive Does Not Exist!"29). As a technology of the self, the work of safety practices is done in order to service the inalienable truth (according to the discursive field) of safety as personal responsibility.

7.   Conclusion

The three films analysed in this chapter illustrate the changing *dispositif* evident in the narrative workplace safety films of the 1970s, but they are by no means the only films from this decade that share this approach. Of the films in the sample, ones such as the crane operation safety film *You Can't Shift the Blame* and the trucking safety film *Safe Loads* similarly illustrate how the discourse at work was changing from a certain, absolute and authoritative one to one that acknowledges the negotiated nature of safety and how best to ensure it. In *Safe Loads,* for instance, the narrator (shown onscreen rather than omniscient) frequently wonders aloud how to talk about safety to workers who are experienced and may have been driving cargo trucks for decades. In terms of the *dispositif*, what we are seeing here is a difference in how the audience might potentially have been behaving at screenings, how they were responding to the film material, and potentially how those responsible for the screenings were using the films (for discussion, or as paratexts that informed other safety and training material). Most importantly, in terms of their status as useful or utilitarian cinema, we can infer that these films might have affected how workers approached their work with respect to hazard prevention, safety processes, embodied responses to the environment and mental and physical work on the self. This returns us to Martin's articulation of the filmic *dispositif* as a set of rules that inform action; it "generates outcomes, results and surprises" (*Mise en scène and Film Style* 179) in the real lives and experiences of the audience. This is a particularly salient element of the union-made films discussed in the following chapter: films that were made with the express purpose of being tools of social change.

Chapter Seven

"We are responsible for our own collective safety": *Think Twice* **(1958) and** *The Myth of the Careless Worker* **(1983)**

1. Introduction

The previous two case study chapters outlined the ways that industrial safety is discursively understood and presented, and the ways that different aesthetic and formal choices have affected this understanding and presentation by looking at workplace safety films in the expository mode from the 1960s, and then at the narrative/ docudrama-style workplace safety films of the 1970s. As demonstrated, while the stylistic decisions at work in these films have impacted on the types of subjection these films enable and foreclose, they have changed over time, allowing for a more independent subject, less bound by the paternalistic relationship to authority that characterised the films of the 1960s. Nevertheless, the 'common sense' ways of viewing safety, which hold workers responsible for their accidents, is maintained.

This chapter looks at two films that seek to provide alternatives to the dominant discourses concerning workplace safety. Both are made by unions or union affiliated organisations, and both recommend strengthening collective arrangements in the workplace in order to combat workplace injury rates. The first of these, *Think Twice* (1958) was made by the Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit, directed by Jock Levy, Keith Gow and Norma Disher, and commissioned by the Boilermakers' Society of Australia. *Think Twice* illustrates the power of the discourses of safety at work. While it makes gestures towards collective agreements, its understanding of how industrial safety works is still to an extent dictated by the hegemonic ways of understanding workplace relationships that we have seen demonstrated in the other case studies. A radical alternative is offered by a later work, the 1983 film *The Myth of the Careless Worker.* Directed by Kim Dalton and produced by Open Channel for the Victorian

Trades Hall Council, this film is a forceful polemic criticising the blame and shame levied at workers who are injured in the course of their work (either through suffering accidents or through 'normal' work processes). *The Myth of the Careless Worker* scrutinises many of the discourses this thesis highlights and questions, using documentary strategies that differ noticeably from the ones used by other films in the sample. Offering these counterexamples to the ways that workplace safety is usually discussed in industrial films makes it possible to not only trace how the discourse functions, but also to think of alternatives, and to see other ways of understanding safety and workplace relationships.

2. *Think Twice* (1958)

Of the thirty or so films that this research considers, very few of them have been the target of academic or critical inquiry. Safety films, as this thesis' introduction discusses, are ephemera, a form of 'useful' cinema that has been overlooked in film studies and elsewhere. This is in part because such films are considered a cultural and textual dead end: too commercial in that most of the films were sponsored works, and therefore of little aesthetic interest or artistic value. As film studies has tended historically to legitimise its position through its proximity to art or to its cultural significance as mass entertainment, there has been little place for the didacticism of the sponsored film.

Think Twice is an exception, having received some attention in terms of its status as a union-made film, and therefore of interest in the area of labour history. Given that labour historians, also often active in labour movements, are meticulous recorders of the work produced in and by such movements, some writing does exist that covers the work of the Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit (WWFFU), including *Think Twice*. Lisa Milner's monograph *Fighting Films* (2003) and Martha Ansara and Milner's article "The Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit: the forgotten frontier of the fifties" (1999) are two such examples, and the work of

the unit is also discussed by Moran (1991) McQueen (2009) and FitzSimons *et al* (2011). John Hughes' documentary film, *Film-Work* (1981) concerns the history of the Unit, and discusses the historical context and importance of scenes from four of their films. Milner's *Fighting Films* goes into particular detail, covering the history and context of the WWFFU, discussing each film made by the unit in turn, and as part of this, devoting a page and a half to discussion of *Think Twice.*

However, Milner's book, as well as the other literature that mentions the unit, tends to focus on historical explication of how the films came to be made, the processes through which they were distributed, and their contribution to the labour movement in the late 1950s. What the films actually say on an individual basis, how they say it and what they look like is something that such analyses tend to consider in less detail. I consider *Think Twice* here not only in terms of its role as a piece of labour history, but also as a film within the *dispositifs* of industrial film of the period, and of workplace safety. However, prior to this, discussion of the history and the distribution practices that make *Think Twice* an exceptional film in the context of workplace safety are worth considering.

The Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit, described briefly in chapter two of this thesis, operated as a subsidiary part of the Waterside Workers' Union in Sydney between 1953 and 1958. The three members of the unit, Keith Gow, Jock Levy and Norma Disher, were all members of the Communist Party of Australia, with a background in film and other forms of artistic production: all were members of Sydney's New Theatre, an influential leftist organisation which enjoyed a close partnership with the WWFFU (Milner 28). During the period the WWFFU operated, the unit produced fourteen pictures, of which *Think Twice* was one of the last. The film was shot in 1957 on Cockatoo Island in Sydney harbour, which operated as a dockyard from 1870 until 1991. This location brought the WWFFU some mainstream press coverage: it was considered notable that unit member Disher was filming

there as the island was considered "a prohibited area for women" (Milner 108). While filming, the Unit interacted closely with the workers that played parts in its films – this meant that their creative process "worked against commercial filmmaking conventions [and] helped the workers understand why and how their filmwork was occurring" (Milner 52).

The WWFFU stands as a remarkable enterprise not only for the kind of films that it produced, but for the ways that its surrounding *dispositifs* of screening and distribution worked. The methods the unit used to get their films in front of an audience were "low-cost, highly innovative and very direct" (Ansara and Milner 36): films were screened at union meetings (all branches of the Waterside Workers Federation received prints (Milner 60)), at stop-work meetings, in clubs, community halls, at technical colleges and hospitals and on worksites during lunch hours. In 1955, the Unit was able to purchase a Volkswagen Kombi van "for a production vehicle, which doubled as a screening platform using back projection" (Milner 65). This meant that the films could be screened in far-flung rural areas. The films also enjoyed life at film society screenings and film festivals around the country. *Think Twice* played at the Sydney Film Festival in 1958 and the Melbourne Film Festival in 1959, where it won an Australian Film Award for best 'teaching' film (Milner 109). Prints were purchased by the Department of Labour and Industry, by the Division of Occupational Safety, by private companies and by other unions. The reach and influence of *Think Twice* and other WWFFU films was therefore considerable, and illustrates how filmmakers and sponsors could utilise alternative methods of circulating and showing films that were non-cinematic and non-commercial.

Think Twice is a film in the expository documentary mode, twenty-one minutes long, with an authoritative omniscient voiceover. Though not identified in the credits, the voiceover is provided by Leonard Teale (Milner 108), whose narration also appears in six other WWFFU films: the critically-acclaimed *The Hungry Miles* (1955); construction safety film *Bones of*

Building (1956), commissioned by the Building Workers Industrial Union; the animated short *Aboriginal Culture* (1956); *Hewers of Coal* (1957), commissioned by the Miners' Federation; *Four's a Crowd* (1957), a comedic short lampooning stereotypes about wharfies; and *Not Only the Need* (1958), about the housing shortages affecting Australian workers: the variety of subjects here indicates the broad range of issues addressed by the WWFFU.

Teale, recognisable to many Australians from his role on TV's *Homicide* (1965-73), has a distinctive voice, one which is in keeping with the style of authoritative commentary found in other expository-mode safety films, but which differs in several respects. Most notable of these is that his accent is neither a British received pronunciation one, nor a stereotypically 'Ocker' accent as sometimes found in the narrative films of the 1970s. Rather, Teale speaks with an accent that could be described as working class Australian, but without the associated qualities of "vulgarity [and] anti-intellectualism" that O'Regan ("The Ocker Films" 77) identifies with the Ocker type. Teale's accent indicates that the film is attempting to speak to workers in a voice similar to their own, but in a realistic fashion rather than a working class stereotype.

Think Twice is sophisticated in its technical and aesthetic aspects in relation to other Australian safety films of the time of the late 1950s and early 1960s, very few of which include shots or scenes that feel designed to evoke ambience for its own sake, or to take an interest in documentary poetics. *Think Twice,* on the other hand, begins with text onscreen – a quote from the Boilermakers' Society General Secretary, A. R. Buckley, followed with an atmospheric montage of a welder at work, arcs of sparks showering towards the camera. The screen is almost entirely in darkness, aside from a red overhead light which appears first, followed a few seconds later by the blue illumination from the welder's torch. The titles are superimposed over this and very similar shots are repeated throughout the film when different hazards are introduced through titles, dividing the film into sections: 'Heat', 'Rays', 'Burns'

and so on. As well as a strong sense of affective imagery, the amateur actors throughout *Think Twice* deliver convincingly naturalistic performances (most were boilermakers and welders working on Cockatoo Island, though Jock Levy appears in a small role as an injured worker). The long and short of this is that the film is comparatively masterfully directed; such proficiency is unusual in the genre or sub-category of industrial film.

While *Think Twice* was commissioned by the Boilermakers' Society of Australia and therefore much of the information is relevant to boilermakers, several of the hazards that are addressed are relevant to other industry workers, for instance those in shipbuilding or other construction. The title card, quoting General Secretary A.R. Buckley, is the first thing we see in the film. It tells us that the film "is designed to awaken our membership and metal workers generally to industrial hazards". This illustrates that while the film was for union members, it also was intended for non-union workers (and possibly functioned as a recruiting tool). The mention of "metal workers generally" also implies that the anticipated audience is not just being thought of as union and non-union boilermakers, but also those in similar trades who might work with similar tools and hazards.

Prior to taking us through the sections that discuss different hazards found in the boilermaking trade, however, *Think Twice* sets the scene by establishing what is important about boilermaking and its contribution to industry. Shots of docks and ships being built, wide shots of men on scaffolding, of the Sydney Harbour bridge, and close up tilts of tall buildings and radio towers are used to illustrate the points made by the voice over. This tells us that "many kinds of steel fabrication essential to transport and industry come within the scope of the boilermaking trade". The music accompanying this uses light, breezy classical strings; combined with the expansive urban shots and camera angles used to evoke a sense of grandeur and scale, the effect is reminiscent of the kind of 'pride in industry' used in documentaries in the Griersonian mode.

This pride in industry is often accompanied in this documentary form by emphasis on teleological progress and technological advancement, and that is also the case here. The viewer is next shown various shots of men welding and cutting with oxyacetylene torches, as the voiceover imparts that these have "largely replaced bolting and riveting, and in some cases forgings and mouldings. They are faster and more efficient". The impression made is one of an industry that is not only productive but that is at the forefront of improvements in hardware; the machines in this case are not responsible for accidents, but it is possible that workers may be ignorant of their use because of new changes and developments. For Milner, the WWFFU films express the opinion that "progress must pay heed to the provision of social equality" (120), of which safety is a component. This is where the voiceover introduces safety concerns, and emphasises the serious risks involved with use of this machinery.

The first risk the film looks at closely is "Heat", the title zooming in over a close up of the blue sparks from the welder's torch and then the red glow of molten metal, appearing in the centre of a darkened screen, similar in style to the shot of the initial titles of the film. A cut shows the red cross of the first aid station, and inside a doctor attends a man holding his injured arm. Teale's voiceover informs us of the high proportion of burns suffered by boilermakers. As we cut to a close up of the doctor pressing a dressing to the man's inner forearm, the flesh singed purple, he emphasises that *"serious* third degree burns, like this one, causing stress and loss of earning capacity are *not* uncommon". Here the narration is slow; Teale pauses often and emphasises particular words in a way that conveys an extreme seriousness in tone. The shot cuts from the wound being treated to a close up of the patient's sweating face; he bites his lip in pain. We are shown other, less severe UV ray burns, then another gory one, this time to a hand. Teale tells us that "molten metal can – and sometimes does – burn a man to the bone". As he does so, the doctor's hand comes into shot and prods

roughly at the burned knuckles and broken skin. The impact is visceral; one's impulse is to flinch away from these shots.

Being shown such gory images of what appear to be real injuries functions slightly differently here than in other films that use gore to make their points about safety. Firstly, it is relatively unusual for the gore to be non-simulated. Secondly, the use of gore here does not feel similar to that used in exploitation cinema, as it does in *Safety in the Meat Industry* and *Don't be Sawed* (1961). One does not feel like these shots have been included in *Think Twice* to entertain or amuse the audience, or merely to be gross or prurient. Rather, the impact, coupled with Teale's grim tone, seems to intend to shock the viewer with the realism of the image.

Teale ends this scene in the first aid station by stating that "nearly all of these accidents could have been avoided by careful observation of safe practice – by thinking twice". Again, the ubiquity of placing emphasis on worker carefulness is evidenced, through the use of the cliché that accidents are avoidable if behaviour is modified. However, the film is quick to reinforce that this isn't the only factor at play. The breezy string music returns as we see a man sorting through a pile of protective gear in a storeroom, passing items to a worker. The voiceover states

> for the protection of welders and those working near them, the Metal Trades Award provides for the issue of leather aprons and sleeves; leggings; gauntlet gloves; helmets and hand shields; anti-flash goggles; rubber footwear for working in damp places; and screens to protect those working nearby.

As this bounty is listed, the worker smiles, laden with gear. A cut to a dressing room shows a group of men putting on leather coveralls and gaiters, as the narration takes us back to the

division of responsibility in play: "Employers are required by law to provide them. It's up to you, the man on the job, to use them at all times".

The film follows the dominant discursive line that the issue is simply getting workers to use the protective gear provided no matter what, even as the film grants reasons that they might elect not to. In the following scene, welders work outside on the deck of a ship under construction. Evidentiary images show workers ignoring their protective equipment or folding it up to use as a knee rest as the voiceover tells us "using your apron to avoid housemaid's knee leaves you unprotected". Similarly, we see a welder remove his leather coverall and gauntlets as the voiceover acknowledges "yes, welding is a hot job, and the gear gets uncomfortable, especially during the hot weather. But this sort of thing is just asking for trouble!" The trouble is evident too – the worker starts up his torch and immediately is showered with sparks which hit his face and fall into his shirt. Despite placing the responsibility here on workers using the equipment for its designed purpose, the film does directly recognise that there are reasons of comfort and avoidance of chronic injury that might lead workers to risk the acute injury that comes from incorrect usage. "Why risk serious injury?" the voiceover asks wonderingly as the worker slaps at his shirt to put out the sparks. However, as we have seen, the film has answered its own question: to avoid the far more commonplace discomforts that have not been alleviated through design or modifications to work processes.

A new section, "Rays" is then signalled through another title and close up of blue sparks. The viewer is informed of dangers to eyesight from infra-red and ultra violet light created in welding. A cut back to the first aid station this time shows the doctor treating a worker with an eye injury. An extreme close up shows his bloodshot, dilated and watering eye as the doctor examines it. The shot is held a considerable time, as Teale slowly and seriously explains how victims may lose work, risk cataracts or even blindness with injuries such as

this. As the shot changes to an exterior of a welder placing glass lenses into his helmet, the tone of the narration changes too, this time brisk and cheerful: "the protective measures are well known. It is up to you to put them into practice".

Following demonstrations of several ways that eye injuries do happen (to bystanders, by throwing rather than passing a torch (!), by incorrect use of hand shields), Teale ponders "Are they really accidents? No. All could've been avoided". This rhetorical device appears several times in the safety films this thesis studies, where the definition of 'accident' is called into question (see chapter four, section 6.2). Usually, in relation to workplace safety, 'accident' is understood to mean an unfortunate occurrence or mishap; however, the stress on the avoidability of accidents or the insistence that they need not happen refers to the secondary definition of an accident, that is, an occurrence without apparent or deliberate cause. By conflating these two understandings of the meaning of 'accident', these films can discursively reposition the events in question from tragedies or mistakes to situations that have human causes and therefore can be circumvented or rectified through behavioural changes.

At this stage, the film also employs several of Levin's codes and conventions of industrial films, not only the authoritative commentary and "authentic-appearing settings and activities, represented through naturalistic sound and lighting", but also the "legitimising discourses" of science and medicine (89). We see footage of scientific tests, where ball bearings are dropped onto the lenses of protective goggles to check and verify their strength. The voiceover pauses, as if to observe this process, before reminding viewers that "the rest is up to you. Ask for the kind [of eye protection] you need, put them on, and leave them on". Again, this statement assumes various things about workplaces – that employers will obey rules requiring them to provide the right kind of equipment, and that no other mitigating factors exist that might interfere with the workers' use of this equipment.

The next section, "Fumes", also calls on scientific authority to authenticate the film's advice. X-rays illustrate healthy lungs and compare them to those affected by toxic fumes. The audience is then introduced to "Dr. Alan Bell, director of industrial hygiene at the New South Wales Department of Labour and Industry, seen here handling the lungs of a man who died from pulmonary oedema, caused by inhaling nitrous fumes". Dr. Bell slices into and squeezes the lungs, causing liquid to gush out as Teale informs us that the man "drowned in his own secretions". Again, this imagery is presented frankly and scientifically, and the seriousness of tone in the narration implies, like the images of burns have previously, that they are intended to be viewed as shocking without being entertaining. Milner confirms that they are real human lungs, obtained from the NSW Health Department (108). The realism at work here has a function typical for the industrial film, in that it helps "construct for the audiences specific attitudes toward products, objects and technical processes, as well as toward larger and more diffuse social and economic institutions" (Levin 89). In this case, we also see that government departments, even in non-government made films, are called on as authorities.

Another technique *Think Twice* uses in discussing fumes is re-enactment. Though commonly used in expository documentary more broadly, re-enactments in the industrial film are usually used to persuade rather than to illustrate, and this is the case here. After a long discussion of how to correctly ventilate an area when welding in confined spaces (using a flexible vacuum so that the fumes are extracted right at the point of the arc), and the importance of brushing away debris rather than using compressed air, Teale reinforces the need for constant vigilance, as "a worker was killed in recent years, in circumstances similar to this". A scene with no narration follows, highly dramatic in tone, of a welder setting up his workspace, screwing the electrode into his torch, and starting it up. Tension is built not only through the slow pace, but with the use of a single, ominous string note, growing slowly louder as the scene progresses. When the worker turns on the torch the use of compressed oxygen in the

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area causes an explosion. This dramatic technique, where we see an unnamed worker killed or maimed in an accident that the narrator assures us is true, is used in other workplace safety films, for instance *Don't be a Fall Guy* (1962) and *Bet Your Life* (1980). The effect is that we are given an impression of realism, though no specific details are provided – the authority of the narrator is assumed to be sufficient evidence that we are seeing the recreation of a real event.

From this dramatic scene, the voiceover turns philosophical. Over a montage of signs cautioning safety, the narrator muses

> What does safety mean in general practice? It means more than just learning the rules and reading the signs. More than just observing them. It means more than just thinking about safety now and then. It means thinking about safety *always*: becoming safety-conscious.

This repetition of the need for constant vigilance is linked here to consciousness of safety not only for oneself but for colleagues: "you're not thinking about your mate's safety when you forget about your screen!" This concern for others is not of the general sort that other safety films frequently caution, but specific to welders – the film also reminds viewers to check behind walls or bulkheads before cutting through them, as we are shown a worker cutting through a plate with an oxyacetylene torch, unaware of the men on 'smoko' behind it, who have to duck out of the way of the sparks. Following these brief scenes, the film offers a series of rapid pieces of general cautionary advice, as workers demonstrate the right and wrong ways to execute said advice. Some of the points seem like useful reminders, for instance making sure to regularly check electrical wiring for damage, while others seem so extraordinarily common sense that it is surprising that workers would have to be told about them, such as not using an oxyacetylene torch in place of a hammer.

The causes of accidents and the responsibility for them are spelled out by the voiceover, over a sequence showing an injured worker (played by Jock Levy) being placed on a stretcher and loaded into an ambulance. Teale's narration interpellates the individual audience member directly:

> This could be you. The old saying that 'accidents will happen' is no longer accepted as an excuse for someone being injured. Accidents don't happen – they are caused. Caused by failure to plan, failure to supervise, failure to inspect, failure to observe the rules. It's the responsibility of all of us to help remove the causes and prevent needless suffering.

The acknowledgement that supervisors and inspectors are also responsible for safety is notable, though in effect here the film is turning the responsibility for safety back onto the workers themselves just as much as in a film like *The Unsafe Act*. It could also be interpreted that the 'responsibility of all of us to prevent the causes' of accidents is an indication that the film is recommending collective action and changes to process. However, without elaboration of what this entails, the viewer is left with the same rhetorical interpellation as other safety films: that behaviour modification and ever more stringent adherence to rules are the only course available.

Think Twice also focuses on education and training, in a charming sequence where we see older boilermakers training apprentices on safe practices in the trade. The group of boys put on their helmets together and smile towards the camera. The shot feels observational and unstaged, the apprentices seemingly shy and curious in the camera's presence. This is an example of social *mise en scène*: the crowding circle of bodies that fills the frame, and the playful, hesitant reaction and interaction with and for the camera are something we can understand from the real-world experience of seeing teenagers who are unused to being

filmed confronted with such technology. The way the young men behave is both possible to comprehend and has affective impact because of the empathic response it elicits: knowing the awkward feeling of being filmed while also craving the attention of the camera is the social situation that the figures onscreen and the *mise en scène* enact.

The young men putting on their helmets and protective equipment takes the subject back to a discussion of safety gear, this time with the film's most overt mention of the collective rather than individual emphasis that might be made on safety protocols. As other welders don leather jumpers, the voice over acknowledges "Safety clothing may not be perfect yet as far as comfort is concerned in a hot climate. The responsibility for its improvement lies with conscientious management, your trade union, and you yourself, the man on the job". However, how this design change might be effected is not something that the film addresses. Nevertheless, the recognition that equipment may not suit the working environment is an important one that the film makes, as it shifts the discussion of the causes of accidents from behaviour and towards effecting systemic change; change that, as the voiceover suggests, must be collaborative, with contributions from all sections of the workplace hierarchy. As part of the films' unusual *dispositif*, where WWFFU screenings took place in non-traditional spaces and places, material and events accompanying the film might include "a talk, a stop-work meeting, performance, concert or other event" (Milner 60). It is possible that in settings such as these there was room for discussion of how these wider process and design changes might be implemented.

The film closes with a return to the discourses of technological change and forward progression that appeared in the introductory scenes. As the camera zooms out from a medium close up of a group of welders working on the deck of a ship under construction to a wide aerial shot of the whole ship, the voiceover states confidently:

Boiler making's a good trade with a big future in this age of steel. You can make it a

safe one too, by remembering the rules and always thinking twice. The safe way is the

right way, and the best way, in the end.

The tying of working class vocations to the teleological progress of industry is a common

discursive thread in the Australian workplace safety film. This is achieved by interpellating

individual workers and presenting them with a personal role in taking responsibility for

safety. It is perhaps surprising to find it even in a film by the WWFFU, so often held up as an

example of a film unit that offered an alternative to mainstream or establishment

documentary practices and viewpoints (Moran, *Projecting Australia* 68). It is also perhaps

why the film caught the interest of commercial utilitarian producers: in a 1979 interview with

John Hughes, Jock Levy states that "Following on the *Think Twice* film we were approached

by one of the largest safety firms to make a film for them on a commercial basis" (Hughes

and Levy 372). This offer led to the WWFFU filmmakers establishing Link Films, as a

production organisation separate from the Waterside Workers' Federation.

This is not to suggest, however, that *Think Twice* replicates the discursive flavour of the state

government-made safety films entirely. The film acknowledges early on that many safety

issues are not the exclusive province of only one trade, and this is done with a particular kind

of emphasis on mateship. Compare this with the generalised address in *The Unsafe Act*

(1965), where that film depicts common hazards in different trades, but the emphasis is on

depictions of workers injuring each other or careful workers helping careless ones (for

instance, a window-washer without a harness is saved from a fall by his properly-harnessed

and quick-thinking mate). In *Think Twice*, on the other hand, there is a sense that working

together is collaborative and egalitarian – one is reminded of Moran's description of images

of work in the 1940s Commonwealth Film Unit documentaries as "glorious" (*Projecting

Australia* 37). The workers shown in *Think Twice* demonstrate a form of mateship that is

caring and equal in their pursuit of safe practice: take, for instance, the scene showing

workers in a locker room, one carefully buckling his colleague's protective gaiters for him.

Such a gesture of tenderness seems, to a modern viewer, quite out of step with hegemonic

notions of working class masculine sociability, and all the more striking given the matter-of-

fact, unheralded way the action appears onscreen.

Writing available on the WWFFU films and *Think Twice* has tended to focus on its politically

radical aspects. Milner, for instance, praises the unit as having "empowered a new subject for

films, one of worker power – a rare regime of opposition in Australian screen culture" (123),

while Hughes and Levy state that the WWFFU was "a unique five-year experiment in radical

filmmaking" (365). This is clearly true in many respects: much of the work done by the unit

is directly political and involves interrogation of issues affecting workers that very few other

Australian filmmakers focussed on. *Think Twice* is unusual for the time in its mention of a

unionised workforce, and the surrounding *dispositif* of the alternative distribution and

screening arrangements made viewing this film politicised too: viewing alongside fellow

workers, in and around the places where the labour and leisure of working people took place.

Nevertheless, without underappreciating the political bent of *Think Twice,* it is worth noting

that many of the structural ways of discussing safety, and many of the statements the film

makes about responsibility are not so very far from the rhetorical methods that are used by

other safety films at the time. By turning to a film released after the time period that this

thesis has primarily focussed on, *The Myth of the Careless Worker*, we see what an

alternative to the discourses of responsibility and worker blame might look like.

3. *The Myth of the Careless Worker* (1983)

The Myth of the Careless Worker is a film that offers a radically different approach to

workplace safety from any other film discussed in this thesis – radical in the sense that the

difference is extreme, but also radical in the sense of its politics. This is a film that states point-blank that accidents are not caused by careless workers, and that instead it is almost always unsafe conditions or unsafe practices that workers are put into by their employers and managers that are the real cause of accidents in the workplace. By paying attention not only to the unequal power dynamics inherent between workers and management, but also to the psychological effects of injury on workers hurt on the job, *The Myth of the Careless Worker* places a vehement emphasis on the benefits of worker solidarity, and offers a strong rebuttal to the individualistic, isolating discourses that exist in most of the safety films examined here.

Made in 1983, *The Myth of the Careless Worker* was commissioned by the Victorian Trades Hall Council in Melbourne, a body that represents sixty affiliated trade unions as well as eight regional Victorian trades councils. It is affiliated with the Australian Council of Trade Unions, and has existed since 1856. The film was produced for Open Channel, a non-profit organisation devoted to independent film and community television production and skills-training established in the 1970s. The film's director, Kim Dalton, became a prominent figure in the Australian screen industry, having served as chief executive of the Australian Film Commission from 1999 to 2006, and Director of Television for the ABC between 2006 and 2012. Prior to this, he worked primarily as a producer of film and television drama and documentary.

The Myth of the Careless Worker opens with scenes of an ambulance careening through Melbourne en route to a worker who has been injured on the job. The sirens wail, and the images show the industrial areas of the inner Northern suburbs as the moving vehicle passes. The voiceover – a woman's voice, serious in tone and with a broad Australian accent, informs us how "even after a hundred years of union agitation, in Australia there are still half a million people injured at work each year. And that's only the obvious injuries. It doesn't include long term injuries like deafness, repetitive strain injuries and cancer". The scene then

cuts to a mid-shot piece to camera from a man in a suit; titles inform us he is Dr. Bernard O'Brien, plastic and reconstructive surgeon. The doctor discusses how common hand injuries are in his line of work, and the extent of the problem of workplace accidents in both Australia and internationally, and the magnitude of the economic costs. A similar statement to camera is then made by insurance lawyer Bruce Lilley, who provides dollar amounts for workers' compensation payouts, and the unseen costs to families and other dependants when a worker is hurt. This is in keeping with the use of medical and 'expert' voices in many industrial safety films to provide weight to the arguments being made. But here these voices provide information that is a small piece of the evidence the film corrals to build its overall argument, rather than their presence being legitimising in and of itself.

We are then shown a factory, as the voiceover discusses the images onscreen: a demonstration to a group of workers of proper lifting technique (using a marionette similar to the one seen in *Don't Be Scalped* (1960)): workers at stations with machine guards; workers wearing safety glasses; clothing and protective suits for chemical work; and the safety posters on the walls that "caution constant vigilance". So far, this is all very familiar, and very similar to the subject matter and issues covered in other safety films, with the omniscient voiceover guiding us and explaining the images. Despite the attention paid to chronic harm, and the mention made of union agitation, the viewer feels lulled by the dull familiarity of these safety film elements that are so typical of the form.

But then, five minutes into the film's twenty-three minute runtime, we are addressed differently. The ambulance seen in the opening scenes is shown arriving at a factory to collect an injured worker. The worker is Carolyn Howard, the film's narrator (though she is not named, either at this stage or throughout the film), clad in work boots and grey boilersuit. Once lying on the stretcher inside the ambulance, she addresses the camera directly, her tone resigned and self-accusatory:

> … here I am. Despite all the money and all the trouble spent on my health and safety, I've had an accident. No matter what they do, there's always someone who's going to make a mistake. In this case, me. A victim of my own carelessness. I just have to console myself with the thought that if I had done what I'd been told, I wouldn't be here.

At this point, she raises herself on one elbow, and leans towards the camera. The gesture – and her tone – are conspiratorial and intimate. She continues:

> This theory, that accidents are caused by careless workers, is one that you'll hear over and over again. It's very insidious. It's an excuse, a cop out. And it's more of a threat than any of the physical threats we have to work with.

This acknowledgement of the very discourse that I argue is so pervasive in the workplace safety film is unique to the form, and all the more striking for it.

The Myth of the Careless Worker then moves into elaborating its thesis statement and backing up its assertions. Firstly, we are shown in flashback the circumstances that led the narrator/worker to her injury. Wearing the same boilersuit and heavy-duty hearing protection, she is approached by her foreman, and lifts one earpiece to hear his instructions. This is all performed without dialogue, the only soundtrack being the persistent industrial noise of the factory. The worker is shown walking through a narrow storage area, and we cut to the POV of a forklift driver, sounding his horn. The forklift hits the worker as she rounds the corner, and the frame freezes and we again hear her narration: "somehow I just stepped out in front of him – he never even saw me coming. I have to admit, it's all my own fault. Or is it?" This rhetorical device, where we are told essentially the dominant discursive 'common sense' way of regarding accidents and safety, only to have it interrogated and debated, appears numerous times in *The Myth of the Careless Worker*. In many ways it functions similarly to the

common safety film device of depicting unsafe behaviour and then counteracting it by showing the same scenario where the behaviour is safe. However, in this film the discourse is highlighted, and worker behaviour is questioned not for its 'correctness' but for whether it should even be a central factor in determining cause of injury.

The scene of the worker being hit by the forklift is then repeated, from when she is approached by the foreman, only this time, the voiceover narration guides us through, pointing out how she has followed process carefully – she has kept on her hearing protection in the noisy factory, so can't hear the forklift approach, and the narrow, overcrowded storage area means that the forklift driver – also following proper procedure by sounding his horn – can't see her until too late. A montage of the hazards of the storage area follows, as the narrator tells us "I wasn't careless. It's the state of the warehouse. […] the accident's not my fault, it's the management's". We cut back to the ambulance, and as the paramedics move the stretcher out of the vehicle she elaborates:

> So I've been blamed for something that's not really my fault. In the world of industrial Health and Safety, this little twist, this shifting of responsibility, is known as the Careless Worker Theory, and you'll hear this idea whenever someone in industry is put at needless risk. And that happens all over the place.

While the 'Careless Worker Theory' is certainly a narrative that is evident in Health and Safety literature, it is not necessarily named as such. Carson, for instance, discusses worker carelessness as a factor in the conventionalisation of factory crime (1979), while Holmes and Gifford (2008) identify perceived carelessness as a reason that bosses label certain workers "bad employees" in their assessment of risk. Gray, too, identifies how "the accident prone or careless worker" is a type targeted under "traditional blame the victim ideologies" (330). The careless worker is clearly an established representative type, idea or symbol. A few articles

do refer specifically to the 'Careless Worker Theory', usually in the context of rebutting it, for instance Barnetson and Foster (2013) and Mathews (1986).

With the worker's claim that the practice of blaming workers for their accidents "happens all over the place", the film moves on to show other contexts where this victim-blaming occurs. We are shown a scene of a gardener spraying with Dieldrin insecticide. The voiceover narration again offers a guide to the images in an expository manner – when the narrator mentions something, the camera cuts to a close up of it or moves to follow the action. We are shown and told that safety equipment (plastic coverall, mask, goggles) has been provided to the gardener and she has been instructed in its use, but that she still elects not to wear them: "Safety officers say that this situation defeats all their efforts, that it's impossible to get some workers to do as they are told." As with the narrator's own accident, we are then shown the circumstances that have led to this apparently unsafe, seemingly irresponsible behaviour. In this case, the gardener has not donned the safety gear because it is an Australian summer's day: too hot for a plastic suit and respirator. The narrator suggests that non-dangerous, non-toxic alternatives to Dieldrin could be found instead which would void the need and expense of the safety equipment entirely.

The film moves on to an exterior scene of a man attempting to lift, move and pour chemicals from a tin drum, again in a visual style similar to many other scenes about lifting injuries that appear in other safety films. Here, however, the narration emphasises the need for proper provision of manual handling equipment and to packaging so that workers are not required to lift large or heavy items, rather than the emphasis being on lifting technique. After this brief scene, there is a cut to a scene of women at a grocery checkout; the use of close ups and fast cutting reinforce the sense of busyness and urgency in the work. The voiceover discusses how chronic injuries like repetitive strain are not the result of worker carelessness, rather, they come about through the proper and correct execution of one's work duties: it is the work

itself that is the hazard. These scenes showing the narrator's injury, the gardener's chemical exposure, the man lifting, and the retail workers all illustrate how changes to work processes rather than to worker behaviour could be a key to accident reduction.

We return to the injured narrator, this time in a hospital bed being tended by a nurse. She again addresses the camera:

> The idea that accidents and diseases are the worker's fault doesn't just stop at laying the blame or providing an explanation for the cause of these accidents and diseases. We can ask for compensation, but after all, if it's our fault we should accept the consequences. If we did it, we have to take responsibility for what happens to us.

With this sarcastic speech, the film moves on to a new stylistic form that we have not yet seen it employ, and one that earlier safety films did not tend to use: several brief pieces to camera, shot in a studio, from workers who have been injured in the course of their work. This formal device is one that Moran discusses as becoming more prevalent in Australian documentary from the mid- 1960s onwards. The use of interviews, he argues, challenged the supposed objectivity of the omniscient voiceover. Images of interviewees speaking directly to camera about their own lives and feelings showed how "the subject has been given his or her own voice, the opportunity to speak for his or her experience" (*Projecting Australia* 94).

The interviewees are four workers, two men and two women. They are named onscreen in subtitles though we are given no information as to their occupations or details of the nature of their injuries. One of the women has a thick Italian accent, the other three have Australian ones, and all speak about the medical and social perceptions of their injuries: being treated as hypochondriacs, asked doubting questions about their medical histories by doctors, and the shame of going to social services for assistance – as one man puts it, "it's degrading". Once again the narrator (this time in a wheelchair, being steered through a park by a nurse)

provides a summary and interpretation of the evidentiary footage we have just seen: "This is the saddest part of our story […] on one hand, there are economic problems, and on the other hand, there's a loss of self-confidence […] and the careless worker theory contributes to this by getting workers to blame themselves".

The form and function of this self-blame could be understood as an aspect of Foucault's technologies of the self. According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, in analysing discourse we must ask "under what circumstances and by whom are aspects of human being rendered problematic, according to what moral domains or judgement are these concerns allowed to circulate?" (101). If a technology of the self involves the exercise of mental and physical self-discipline in order to fit in with the normative structures of the workplace, then here we are seeing what work on the self is necessitated by the failure of those disciplines; a failure evidenced by the injuries these workers suffer, and for which they are purportedly responsible. The technology of the self and the subjectification it enacts are here brought into a moral realm: the failure to properly perform these technologies is viewed and felt as a personal and moral failing.

Rather than simply offering a grim outlook for workers, however, *The Myth of the Careless Worker* at this point illustrates how injured workers can assist each other. We are shown a scene of a support group for people who have been disabled (permanently or long term) in the course of their work. The workers share stories about their chronic pain and frustration. As they speak, the narrator's voice comes up over them, noting how groups like this combat the isolation that comes from being off work with injuries or disabilities. The camera cuts between the speaking and listening faces, giving an impression of intimacy and camaraderie within the group.

Notable in *The Myth of the Careless Worker* generally, but particularly in this scene, is the gender of the participants, and the gendered nature of the issues under discussion. This film so far has depicted several women in roles in industry, retail and other work (for instance the gardener). This is especially evident in the support group, where not only are the majority of the people present women, but the issues they discuss are ones that predominantly affect women. For instance, one support group member discusses the difficulty of continuing to do housework while off work with chronic pain; another discusses receiving disapprobation from her husband for what he perceives as laziness due to the invisible nature of her disease. While the film does not comment directly on these issues, the fact that they are represented in the text draws attention to the hidden, gendered costs of injury and chronic pain. The tendency of industrial safety films to assume that workers are men means that *The Myth of the Careless Worker* sheds light on how injury affects working women differently owing to the social expectations placed on them, for instance that housework, "the job that's never paid and never done" (Tomasetti) is thought of as women's work.

Solidarity and camaraderie amongst injured workers is something the film also attends to, though this is not something that is explicated or stressed by the narrator. In the support group scene, we see members sharing how useful they find it: "I really look forward to coming here on a Tuesday"; and another agrees: "I also feel I can come here and laugh the first time in two years, you know when Spiro makes some joke" – here she indicates the man next to her, and everyone laughs. This kind of observational, spontaneous scene is rare in workplace safety films. Again, the narrator, this time walking slowly down a corridor on crutches, interprets the scene for us, and then links it to the next point the film introduces:

> It's a very important part of rehabilitation for workers to understand that it's not their
> fault. It's an essential part of prevention for workers to identify the real causes of

industrial hazards. Once we know who to blame, we can start to do something about it.

She states that it is contentious as to who should be in charge of occupational health and safety, and the film then goes on to demonstrate this contention through two interviews, presented in the style of a television talk show. The interviewees are Ken Stone, secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, and a representative from the Victorian Employers Federation named only as Mr. Spicer. We see Mr. Stone interviewed first for roughly five minutes, followed by a separate interview with Mr. Spicer. The interviewees are seated in a studio, facing an interviewer who reads his questions from a clipboard.

Both men are asked about their opinions on the relationship between trade unions and management, and the respective responsibilities and rights of each. Both respond to this question with a call for effective collaboration between all parties, though the way they phrase their understandings of the nature of this collaboration is quite different. Stone expresses the necessity for managers, workers and trade unions to work together for the protection of worker life and wellbeing; that this cannot remain primarily management's prerogative: "it is our lives, our health, our workforce". He also phrases this need to work together as a demand that workers and unions be able to refuse unsafe work and to prevent its continuance. By contrast, Spicer phrases his belief that "the whole safety process be a co-operative effort" in terms of responsibility and rights: "[unions] should assist employees in an enterprise, to know their rights and to ensure that their rights and obligations are met". The focus on one hand on worker obligation, and on the other on worker sovereignty over their own safety at work, demonstrates the different attitudes towards the balance of power that business owners and worker representatives have.

Both representatives are asked questions that relate to the film's thesis. Stone is questioned directly about what he thinks of the tendency to blame accidents on worker carelessness, while Spicer is asked his opinion on how "some trade unionists would argue that all responsibility for industrial accidents ultimately lies with management". Stone responds by stating that he "doesn't believe that there is such a thing as a careless worker. There can be a worker who hasn't been taught […] the procedures that require safe working on the particular operation he's engaged on". He suggests that the primary reason for the practice of blaming careless workers is to avoid litigation; that it is more "a device to back off from a legal situation than a fact of life". Spicer, for his part, reacts with concern to the idea that accidents and their prevention are management's responsibility. While he agrees that workers should be able to insist on the safety of their workplaces, he qualifies that this insistence should be "reasonable" and "within normal cost factors". The interview closes on his statement that "some people in the trade union movement say that it should be 'safety at all costs', regardless of what should be spent on it. It's safety first, full stop. Now, I don't believe in our type of society that that is the case […] There are some risks in going to work, and everything has to be balanced". The use of these terms – 'reasonable'; 'normal'; 'balanced' are similar to the appeals to 'common sense' made by the safety films of the 1960s.

Like the questions about the relationship between trade unions and management, this line of questioning seems designed to highlight the differing political viewpoints that cause conflict around this issue. Though *The Myth of the Careless Worker* is not a Film Australia production, this reflects Moran's analysis of its 1980s output, where the prior validity of different points of view and the "dynamic equilibrium" (*Projecting Australia* 110) between them is replaced by more decisive conclusions. For Moran, Film Australia films in the 1980s are "remarkable for the fact that all points of view are finally not seen as equal. One is preferred over others as the truth" (*Projecting Australia* 115). The polemical nature of *The*

Myth of the Careless Worker means that this kind of arguing a particular position is to be expected, however an interesting element of the film's rhetorical strategy is that the opposing position (here represented by Spicer) is not one that is directly undermined. Rather, from the arguments that the film has presented thus far, viewers are invited to listen to the points made by both men and draw their own conclusions. However, given the forcefulness of the arguments made against the 'careless worker' argument, and the emotiveness with which the damage it causes has been illustrated, the film text seems confident that viewers will find Stone's viewpoint more persuasive than Spicer's.

The conclusion of *The Myth of the Careless Worker* returns to the shots of the ambulance speeding through Melbourne, and to the voice of the narrator:

> In one way it's true that workers are responsible for their own safety. We're not to blame for accidents. Our carelessness is not the problem. But we are responsible for protecting our own collective safety, by insisting on who really causes accidents.

Halfway through this speech the image cuts to the narrator reading her voiceover in the studio. Her back is to us and she speaks into the microphone before turning to the off-screen director. He confirms that the take was fine and invites her to come and listen to it. She declines, excusing herself for another appointment, and almost trips over a cable as she stands to leave. "This place is a real mess, it's a studio, not a storeroom!" she jokes, to which the director responds "Just take care, you'll be alright". She responds with sarcastic thanks, before tripping again. The film ends on a freezeframe of her face as she falls. This slightly self-referential ending further reinforces that many industries can be and are affected by safety hazards caused by poor organisation, including the film industry itself.

The Myth of the Careless Worker differs substantially from other workplace safety films made in Australia in terms of not only the approach to the cause of accidents, but also in its

mode of address. While all of the films this thesis looks at would have had workers as their primary audience, this film is the only one that speaks to a working subject who is not addressed as someone to be instructed, lectured or cajoled into compliance. *The Myth of the Careless Worker* instead addresses its audience as collaborators or comrades in the struggle against exploitative management. The use of formal elements such as interviews to camera and observational footage of the support group allow the workers featured in the film to state their own perspectives and relate their own feelings and experiences. This is in contrast with the expository mode safety films made in earlier decades, where the perspective is always governed and steered by a film's omniscient narrator. The overall effect of this alliance between the film and the viewer, and of hearing workers discussing their experiences of injury in their own words, is that the film is rhetorically persuasive: it flatters the viewers by offering understanding of their position and absolving them of the fault for it. This lays the groundwork for direct action by locating the responsibility to employ preventative measures in the hands of those in power.

In total, *The Myth of the Careless Worker* provides a useful counterpoint to the discourses that appear so consistently in other workplace safety films. Through calling for workers to collectively refuse the blame for accidents that is levelled at them, the film asks its viewers to rethink and reject the doxa that centres the focus of accident cause and prevention on worker behaviour and psychology. This is no easy task; as discussed in chapter two, that discourse would have been active for nearly a century at the time of the film's release. But this is in part what makes the film so worthy of attention: its radical rejection of the normative attitudes to safety in the workplace illustrates that many workers must have held the opinion that this way of thinking was unfair and from their perspective, untrue.

4.   Conclusion

In analysing two union-made films, it is evident that counter-discourses to those which assign responsibility for accidents to the worker do exist. From *Think Twice*, it is clear from as early as the 1950s that safety was a concern unions were keen to address, as evidenced by the Boilermakers' Society commissioning such a film from the WWFFU. However, this film also provides ample proof of how the prevailing discourses around industrial workplace safety were not only widespread, but of how completely they governed what it was possible to think and say about safety practices. While ostensibly worker-minded in terms of its production context, *Think Twice* repeats many of the elements of the discourse emphasising vigilance, worker responsibility and individual self-management that typify the discourse of workplace safety. However, because of the unusual distribution and screening contexts that are part of this films' *dispositif*, the film does not merely replicate how state or federal government-made safety films operated.

A strong challenge to the discourses that usually govern thinking on workplace safety is offered by *The Myth of the Careless Worker.* By articulating those discourses and then sarcastically rejecting them in favour of the idea that it is mismanagement, exploitation and unhealthy workplace processes that cause industrial accidents, the film is able to interpellate its audience as sympathetic collaborators against employers who would seek to benefit from the exploitation and blame inherent in applying the 'careless worker theory'. The film is 'worker-minded' in its attention to the voices of injured workers and its attempts to rethink the frameworks that would ascribe blame to people who have accidents in the Australian industrial workplace.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion: "a tool that makes, persuades, instructs, demonstrates and *does* something"

In mapping the ways that Australian workplace safety films (1955-1980) were produced, how they articulated messages and were viewed, this thesis has also taken an interest in how they enact a subjectification of their viewership. From these films, so ubiquitous as part of the *dispositif* of safety that decades of Australian workers would have been required or requested to witness and absorb, industrial workers were given a set of behaviours to follow and emulate as safe practice. They were also shown behaviours that they were anticipated to possess and exhibit as a matter of course, as an innate part of being a worker. And not all these behaviours were viewed as desirable or positive: the anticipation is evident in these films that workers will behave dangerously, carelessly, lazily or stupidly *unless* they follow the recommendations for self-policing that these films present as the only possible course of action. In their subjectification of the Australian worker, these films give valuable insight into cultural understandings of jobs, of safety and what it means to be a worker in this country.

It is partly in the expression of only one course of action to prevent accidents that these films are discursive objects. They are part of a set of "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 49). As this research has argued, uncovering the systematic nature of these practices has involved looking carefully at the discourses that influenced what it is that these films are actually saying and how and why they say it. One especially prominent and notable discursive statement that the majority of the films make is that individual workers are responsible for accident prevention. This envisioning of a complex site (the workplace) where the agents within that site with the least power (the individual workers) bear the responsibility for safety, effectively forecloses the possibility of imaging or imagining any other course of action to ensure worker safety.

As chapter two indicated, the processes through which these films came to exist as a body of work involved a set of industrial mechanics, that is, a film industry where utilitarian filmmaking of this kind was made primarily with the support of federal and state government agencies as well as by other social and civic bodies. The especially utilitarian (read: formulaic; aesthetically unadventurous) characteristics of the films in the sample is in part a result of the overarching styles that were prevalent in and preferred by government bodies, with the 'house style' of the Commonwealth Film Unit (later Film Australia) setting the precedent. The use of techniques typical of the expository documentary mode characterised many of the Australian workplace safety films of the 1950s and 1960s, while the narrative techniques associated with the docudrama became more popular in the 1970s, and a variety of more observational, personal documentary techniques can be seen from the late 1970s and early 1980s. These changing formal qualities guided the selection and ordering of the case study chapters.

So, too, with the indication that this form of filmmaking did not emerge from nowhere but was the result of a set of industrial, governmental and artistic factors, it is also evident that the ways that these films articulate and confront their subject matter are a result of a complex and extensive history. The second chapter also traced the discourses in these films to the late-nineteenth century industrial struggles over workplace safety that occurred in various industries in Australia, where legislation about inspecting facilities for hazards or insufficient provisions for worker safety was passed but poorly implemented. This lack of implementation meant that business owners were rarely charged with committing safety crimes, owing to their political lobbying power; and instead inspectors placed the blame for accidents on workers and their purported carelessness. This early instance of this discourse at work was later shored up through various legitimising disciplines such as occupational psychology, human resources and ergonomics, which understood human behaviour and use

of machinery as being the sole and central focus of accident prevention. The insidiousness of this discourse, and its unwillingness to contemplate work processes or managerial responsibility as possible factors in workplace danger, runs through the films this thesis has analysed, and finds its logical conclusion in the decades after the timespan in which the films were released. Under neoliberal governments in the 1980s and 1990s, workers came to be viewed as responsible for their own safety, and further, this responsibility was framed as a right which they have no choice but to exercise, or suffer sanctions for their failure to do so (Gray 328).

This is the background that informs the discourse analysis conducted of the films studied in this thesis. As indicated in chapter three, this discourse analysis was organised in relation to two methods, firstly, content analysis, which allows for the identification of commonalities and discursive statements across a large number of texts, and secondly, close textual analysis, which allows for an understanding of how discursive forms and verbal statements play out and reinforce each other. In conducting a content analysis of a sample of thirty Australian workplace safety films, chapter four considers them as a body of work, one with variations and fluctuations but that nevertheless exhibit identifiable and consistent characteristics. By focussing on discursive statements made in the films (either in voiceover or by onscreen characters), this analysis draws a picture of the "set of possible positions for a subject" (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 108). This subject is both referred to by these statements and is called into being by them: the films, in that they are didactic works, are always trying to persuade their viewers of something (in this case, to police and modify their behaviour), but they are also delimiting who and what constitutes that viewership, by interpellating a subject with masculine, working class, work-proud, heterosexual, collegial and patriotic traits.

The case study chapters expanded on the content analysis findings, with further attention paid to the operations of film form. In chapter five, the discussion of three films selected from the sample highlights the late 1950s – early 1960s use of techniques associated with the expository documentary mode. For instance, use of omniscient, authoritative voiceover; illustrative images that appear to be called up or guided by the narration, non-synchronised sound and a communication style associated with supposed 'objectivity' is something we see in each of the films. While *Safety in the Meat Industry* showcases a particularly patriotic, nation-minded attitude in its voiceover and imagery, in *The Unsafe Act* the notable features are a contemptuousness for unsafe practices and those who follow them. This disdain is something that the film interpellates competent workers as sharing, inviting them to regard the unsafe worker behaviour onscreen with similar contempt. While *Don't Be Scalped* shares many of the discursive attitudes to work with other late 1950s – early 1960s safety films, it has been highlighted here for the way that it demonstrates gendered differences in this mode of address. Female workers' concerns are framed in terms of economics, feminine beauty and (minor) chronic injury, rather than fatality or acute injury as in the films that assume a male audience.

Chapter six analysed a second set of case studies, all ones that follow the conventions of narrative film to a certain extent. While the first case studies were observed through the framework of expository documentary (though they are not documentaries themselves, they utilise the same or similar techniques), this chapter looks at these narrative shorts through the lens of the docudrama. While they are not docudramas, their relationship to truth and didacticism can be understood through the docudrama's similarly negotiated relationship to the artistic treatment of truth. While both *Explosives: the two Metre Lifeline* and *It Wasn't Me* present their stories with the aid of an on-screen narrator, *Noise Destroys* conveys its tale of chronic injury and workplace challenges through a closed diegesis. As with the 1950s and

1960s workplace safety films, the issue of voice, and how the narrator's accent, delivery and relationship to the audience are expressed is one with particular discursive effects, particularly in terms of how alliance or affiliation with the assumed male, working-class spectator is developed.

Alternative discourses and forms of subjectification were explored in the final case study chapter. This chapter considered two safety films made by unions or union-affiliated organisations, *Think Twice* and *The Myth of the Careless Worker*. While the former offers some challenges to the doxa of the time by advocating for union representation, many of the ways that it conveys its messages about safety replicate those found in the government-made workplace safety films of the same period. This raises issues around whether, given that all workers must take some action to ensure their own safety, it is possible for a film to address safety issues without reiterating the discourses which place the primary responsibility for safety on the worker. *The Myth of the Careless Worker* illustrates how this could be achieved, through its politicised highlighting of the material impacts that the 'careless worker' discourse has on the workforce. By paying attention to the power discrepancies between workers and their bosses, the film shows how this discourse becomes an issue when it intersects with the biopolitical controls that circulate in workplaces, forcing workers to accept the fault, responsibility, shame and economic and physical hardships associated with industrial accidents.

What the content analysis of the sample and the eight case studies showed is that, as a genre or form of utilitarian film, the workplace safety film in Australia depicts and interpellates working subjects whose narrowly defined characteristics mean that they are seen both as strongly individualistic, but also pliable; positioned to take the blame for accidents (owing to a combination of sometimes contradictory traits such as carelessness, incompetence, workplace pride, camaraderie and so forth) and to not challenge that position. What this

suggests is that these films, in conveying these messages to a mainstream industrial working audience, are a site of powerful cultural contradictions that nevertheless coalesce into a normative image of what an industrial worker should be: a subject that to all intents and purposes seems like the stereotype of the hard working, conscientious blue-collar Australian, but not one who would challenge the status quo of the industrial workplace.

In addition to its focus on the discursive field which governs the workplace safety film, this thesis also attended to the *dispositif* in which these films are situated: the screening and distribution methods that differ significantly from those which produce and govern mainstream or art cinema. While for government-sponsored safety films this usually took place in the workplace itself, often accompanied by paratextual material such as lectures, pamphlet distribution and poster-hire, the *dispositif* of union-made safety films included screenings at meetings (both political and civic), in lunch-hours and other settings outside or adjacent to the worksite. These differences appear to have entailed or influenced differences in the ways that the films were received or how workers were expected to receive them: while some safety films address a viewer that they assume is watching the film as a work requirement (perhaps unwillingly), others within the sample seem to imply an engaged and interested audience. This again is an aspect of these films where their unusual 'voice' or relationship to the viewer is a central consideration, especially as so few other forms of moving image address their audience in this fashion.

What this research performed is an initial foray into how workplace safety films, as an ephemeral and under-studied film form, might be usefully addressed and interrogated. This provides not only an addition to the growing field of utilitarian film studies, but also suggests paths for further research. The contribution that this thesis makes is to offer insight into a hitherto unrecognised film form and also to suggest methodological avenues that have been little used so far in the investigation of utilitarian film. As a nascent area of academic interest,

utilitarian film studies have tended to focus primarily on historical and genealogical approaches, mapping the details of how these films were made and used. And this is vital work, especially in countries like Australia where the dominant understandings of the film industry have been to prioritise the narrative feature film. Looking to who made utilitarian film, who it was made for and how it circulated is a necessary and valuable addition to the understandings not only of the specifics of utilitarian film, but also to a wider understanding of history of the Australian film industry as a whole. However, what a discourse analysis of a number of workplace safety films such as this one allows for is consideration of what function these films have beyond their immediate reception as film texts. It shows how they fit into a broader system of images, texts, working relationships and forms of subjectification that contributed to working Australians' image and understanding of their identities on a broader scale. As such, this research offers a path into thinking about utilitarian films as influential cultural artefacts that help define and shape aspects of the social life of a country.

Further from this, a discourse analysis of workplace safety films provides a blueprint for how similar work might proceed. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, in the initial planning stages I intended this research to cover civic and road safety films in addition to workplace safety. While this idea was jettisoned early on and the scope narrowed, study of other films that address personal and public safety could be conducted using similar methods, with content analysis also providing a framework through which to address large numbers of similar texts. In other directions, further attention to the *dispositif* of workplace safety, with consideration of material other than film could also shed further light on how and why workplace safety has been framed the way it is. Similar analysis could also be applied to films of different eras, or to different national contexts, especially in countries like New Zealand and Canada, which followed a similar Griersonian model of government-endorsed and-funded filmmaking in the mid-twentieth century.

Leaving aside the methodological frameworks, there are ways that this research might usefully be extended or added to that have been omitted from this thesis simply for reasons of expediency, due to word limit and achievable scope. Oral histories investigating the making of these films and the specifics of what the producers and sponsors were requesting and aiming for could shed pertinent light on aspects of the *dispositif* that were not possible to investigate. Similarly, research into how and where these films were screened and what audiences' responses to them were could assist in quantifying the extent to which the discourses in them were conveyed. Furthermore, the sample itself might be expanded on, either through further research in archives other than the ones used (the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia), or through detailed case studies of other films in the sample than the ones I selected for close analysis. All of these approaches would help build a more comprehensive picture of what role workplace safety films have played in Australia, as both a form of filmmaking and an integral part of the history of work and safety in this country.

A final element of this thesis that has hovered over and through the entire research and writing process is what these films, as discursive objects, leave as a legacy. As someone who has spent time watching films about, thinking about, and researching work as part of my own work for the past few years, a question I keep returning to is what the continued purpose of this work is. By this I refer to the filmwork of the creators of safety films, as well as the industrial work of their audiences and the collective fights of their predecessors for the rights to a safe, dignified and amply-provisioned workplace, as well as my own academic labour. My understanding is that the workplace safety film, as a utilitarian film form, brings together these diverse areas of work and continues to shape and make sense of what we know didactic, instructional films to perform. As mentioned at the start of chapter two, everyone I gave an unofficial 'thesis pitch' to knew what I meant by safety films, and had ideas of what they

were like. However, in carefully analysing and articulating what it is that the films say, and what forms of language and cinematic expression they call on to make their points, it is possible to gauge where those expectations were met and where the film texts themselves differ from popular conceptions of them.

Moreover, Australian workplace safety films form one part of the *dispositif* that allows for a dominant cultural understanding of workers and safety. It is in this capacity that articulating the discursive work they perform remains vital today, forty to sixty years after the films were made. Without knowing how work and safety was conceived of at different points, and where dominant understandings of how they function come from (their genealogy, in other words), we cannot hope to make informed changes that might benefit workers and improve their safety and quality of working life. The Australian workplace safety films (1955-1980) that this thesis takes as its object of study are, as Acland and Wasson state, part of a legacy of mid-century filmic works that are "a tool that makes, persuades, instructs, demonstrates and *does* something" (6). Of the various things that they do, from standing as evidence that non-cinematic film production flourished in Australia in this period, to normalising the responsibility of workers in preventing and avoiding workplace accidents, one of the most salient things is how they ask us to reflect on, to consider and reconsider what we know and assume about industrial work and safety.

Appendix: Films Used in Content Analysis

Title	Year	Director	Producer/ Sponsor	Runtime	Format	Subject Matter/ Industry Addressed	Archive
Bet Your Life	1980	Don Anderson	Barry Peirce, Tasmanian Film Corporation, Department of Labour and Industry	13.00	16mm, colour	Construction/Building sites	ACMI
Don't be a Fall Guy	1962	Stan Murdoch	Reg Perier, NSW Department of Labour and Industry	15.33	16mm, colour	Construction/ Building sites – avoiding injuries from falling, particularly from heights	ACMI
Don't Be Cut Up	1959	R.D. Hansen	Fortune Films, NSW Department of Labour and Industry	14.58	16mm, b&w	Factories/ Manufacturing – manufacture of metal products and safe use of machinery such as saws and guillotines	ACMI
Don't be Incorrectly Dressed	1962	Stan Murdoch	Reg Perier, NSW Department of Labour and Industry	8.53	16mm, colour	General industrial work – use of safe clothing and personal protective equipment	ACMI
Don't be Let Down	1960	R.D. Hansen	Fortune Films, NSW Department of Labour and Industry	12.10	16mm, colour	Construction/ Building sites – safe use of wooden ladders	ACMI
Don't Lose Your Grip	1961	R.D. Hansen	Fortune Films, NSW Department of Labour and Industry	11.21	16mm, colour	Construction/ Building sites – safety around scaffolding, lifts and cranes	ACMI
Don't be Sawed	1961	R.D. Hansen	Fortune Films, the NSW Department	13.37	16mm, colour	Construction – safe use of circular saws	ACMI

			of Labour and Industry				
Don't be Scalped	1960	R.D. Hansen	Fortune Films, the NSW Department of Labour and Industry	9.02	16mm, colour	Factories/Manufacturing – women's safe lifting and use of machinery	ACMI
Don't be Shocked	1959	R.D. Hansen	Fortune Films, the NSW Department of Labour and Industry	11.07	16mm, b&w	Factories/Manufacturing – safe use of electrical equipment	ACMI
Don't be Strained	1963	Stan Murdoch	Reg Perier, the NSW Department of Labour and Industry	12.30	16mm, colour	General industrial work - avoiding back strain and lifting injuries	ACMI
Easy Does It	1967	Don Anderson	Tasfilm Productions	9.43	16mm colour	Factories/Manufacturing/Domestic – avoiding back strain and lifting injuries	ACMI
Explosives: the Two Metre Lifeline	1974	Donald Crombie	Milton Ingerson, South Australian Film Corporation, South Australian Mines Department, ICI Australia Ltd.	15.20	16mm, colour	Agriculture/ Mining/ Construction – safe use of explosives	ACMI
Farm Machinery Safety	1970	Reg Barrett	Allan Keen, NSW Department of Labour and Industry	21.57	16mm, colour	Agriculture/Rural industries – safety with machinery, primarily tractors	NFSA
Get Out and Live	1972	Unknown	Cameracraft Film Productions, Main Roads Department, QLD	13.00	16mm, colour	Officework/Clerical – safe evacuation procedures and emergency response	ACMI

It Wasn't Me	1978	Eddie Moses	John Honey, the Tasmanian Film Corporation	18.10	16mm, colour	Construction, building site accidents	ACMI
Line Up Your Safety	unknown	Unknown	Cineservice Production, Engineering division, Postmaster General's Department Film Unit	10.30	16mm, colour	Electrical industry – safety for linemen working on electricity/power cables	NFSA
A Matter of Survival: Toxic Solvents	1963	J. Sherman	Stanley Trevor Evans, CSIRO	8.22	16mm, colour	Laboratory work – safe handling of benzene	ACMI
Noise Destroys	1979	Phillip Mark-Law	John Honey, Tasmanian Film Corporation, Department of Labour and Industry	17.45	16mm, colour	Factories/Manufacturing – hearing damage from industrial noise	ACMI
One in Seven	unknown	Unknown	Engineering Division, Australian General Post Office Film Unit	11.00	16mm, colour	Safety in the telephone exchange	NFSA
Private Eye	1970	Peter McKinley	Tasfilm Productions, Department of Labour and Industry	7.45	16mm, colour	General industrial work – avoiding eye injuries	ACMI
Safe Loads	1977	Max Pepper	Pepper Audiovisual,	12.33	16mm, colour	Transport – safe loading of trucks	ACMI

			South Australia Film Corporation				
Safety in Rural Industries	1965	Unknown	Kinetone Productions, QLD Department of Labour and Industry	25.43	16mm, colour	Agriculture/ Rural industries	ACMI
Safety in the Meat Industry	c.1957-62	Unknown	CameraKraft Ltd, Department of Labour and Industry	18.09	16mm, colour	Abattoir safety	NFSA
Safety in the Slaughterhouse	1979	John Bowen	Peter Johnson, Camfilm Productions, Film Australia	14.29	16mm, colour	Abattoir safety – targeted at meat inspectors employed by the Department of Primary Industries	ACMI
Safety in Your Hands	1974	John Fitzgerald	South Australian Film Corporation	12.17	16mm colour	General industrial work – avoiding hand injuries	ACMI
Think Twice	1958	Jock Levy, Keith Gow and Norma Disher	Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit, Boilermakers' Society of Australia	21.27	16mm, colour	Construction/ Waterside workers – safety for boilermakers and other steelworkers	ACMI
Timber Sense	1961	Unknown	Department of Film Production Tasmania, Department of Labour and Industry	8.40	16mm, b&w	Timber industry – logging and wood processing safety	ACMI
The Unsafe Act	1965	R.D. Hansen	Fortune Films, NSW Department	9.47	16mm, colour	General industrial and trades work	ACMI

			of Labour and Industry				
Waterfront Safety	1966	Unknown	Western Australian Government Film Unit	10.58	16mm, colour	Waterside and dock workers	ACMI
You Can't Shift the Blame	1980	Jack Zalkalns	Barry Peirce, Tasmanian Film Corporation, Department of Labour and Industry	14.38	16mm, colour	Construction/ Building sites – safe operation of mobile cranes	ACMI

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