

TRADE NEWSLETTER

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UBS Highlight

UBS continues to operate as an ISO-accredited builder, maintaining the highest standards for Environmental, Quality, and Safety procedures.



August brought a renewed focus on high-risk tasks, with serious incidents involving welding, scaffold access, and apprentice safety prompting strong regulatory responses.

Mental health has also taken centre stage in the lead-up to R U OK? Day, reminding us that looking out for each other is just as important as the work itself. In this September edition, we share practical lessons and compliance updates to help us all maintain the highest standards on site.

Reach out to tradepartners@uniquebuilding.com.au with any questions or suggestions.



"Building is about getting around the obstacles that are presented to you." – Jeremy Renner

Hot Work Hazards and Scaffold Failures Under Scrutiny

August saw multiple serious safety breaches across Victorian worksites, reinforcing critical risks related to hot works, improper scaffold access, and fire hazards:

- A 17-year-old apprentice in Kyabram suffered severe burns when his clothing caught fire during welding. Investigators found a lack of fire-resistant PPE and inadequate supervision.
- In a separate incident, an apprentice fell 4.2 metres from a makeshift scaffold structure, leading to significant injuries. The scaffold had not been engineered or certified for access use.
- Reports also emerged of dangerous practices involving cutting into used fuel drums, prompting an urgent safety alert due to the risk of explosion or fire.

Queensland did not report any major hot work incidents in August; however, construction sites in both states remain under active scrutiny for fire prevention, scaffold integrity, and high-risk task compliance.

Mandatory Hot Work & Access Controls for UBS Sites

To prevent similar injuries and avoid enforcement actions, UBS requires strict adherence to the following controls:

- All hot works (welding, cutting, grinding) must be covered by a documented SWMS
- Fire-resistant PPE must be worn by all workers involved in or near hot work.
- A fire watch must be present, with extinguishers in place and tested.
- Scaffolds used for access must be designed, erected, and signed off by a competent person—never makeshift or temporary solutions.
- Flammable containers (e.g. drums or tanks) must be certified gas-free before any work begins.

Mental Health on Site: Ask, Listen, Act

Checking in on your mates isn't just a feel-good gesture. It's part of building a safe and respectful site. With R U OK? Day coming up on 11 September, now's the time to remember that mental health is just as important as physical safety.

What's Required?

We all have a role to play in looking out for one another. On UBS sites, that starts with being aware, speaking up, and not brushing off changes in behaviour.

Here's what matters:

Check in if someone seems off. Quiet, withdrawn, short-tempered, or not quite themselves.

Ask R U OK? and mean it. You don't have to fix anything. Just show up.

Listen without judgement. Give them space to talk if they want to.

Encourage support. Whether it's talking to a mate, a supervisor, or someone trained to help.

Need support?

If you or someone you work with is struggling, help is always available:

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

MATES in Construction: 1300 642 111

Why This Matters:

There's nothing soft about looking after your crew. Stress, injury, family issues, financial pressure, any of it can weigh someone down. We've lost too many good people in this industry by assuming they were fine.

A simple check-in could change everything. Don't wait for the perfect moment. Ask the question.

If you're unsure how to approach it, talk to your UBS supervisor or reach out to one of the services listed above.

You don't need to have the answers. You just need to ask.

August Compliance Watch

Victoria – Welding Incident Results in \$30,000 Fine

A Victorian fabrication business was fined \$30,000 in August after a 17-year-old apprentice suffered severe burns when his clothing caught fire during welding at a Kyabram factory. Investigators identified inadequate supervision and the absence of fire-resistant PPE. This reinforces the critical importance of strict controls for all hot work activities on site.

Victoria – Construction Among Industries Targeted for Compliance

WorkSafe Victoria launched a new compliance campaign in August focused on five high-risk industries including construction. The initiative aims to reduce fatalities and serious injuries through increased inspections and proactive enforcement. All UBS partners operating in Victoria should ensure their sites are inspection-ready at all times.

Queensland – Statewide Asbestos Audit Now Underway

From 1 August, WHSQ commenced a statewide audit of asbestos management across buildings constructed before 1990. The audit targets compliance with asbestos registers and management plans. Sites found without up-to-date documentation may face on-the-spot fines or enforcement notices. Any subcontractors working in older buildings must be fully briefed and compliant.

Queensland – Builder Fined \$65,000 for PTA Breach

A Gold Coast-based builder was fined \$65,000 in August for breaching Project Trust Account laws. Funds were transferred to unrelated business accounts and multiple reporting obligations were missed. The QBCC confirmed that enforcement of PTA obligations will continue across all eligible projects valued above \$10 million.

Implications for UBS Trade Partners

Victorian partners should prepare for increased scrutiny across all sites. Fall risks, scaffold setups, and SWMS documentation will be key areas of focus. Trust Account breaches are being penalised without exception. Maintain accurate records, perform reconciliations on time, and separate project funds correctly.



We're pleased to share that the reinstatement works at Casterton Memorial Hospital, following the October 2024 hailstorm, are now complete.

The project included full roof replacement, reinstatement of skylights, solar panels and air conditioning units, as well as extensive internal repairs across multiple wings.

Thanks to the dedication and expertise of everyone involved, from assessors and engineers through to our trades and suppliers, the hospital has been restored to its full standard, ready to continue serving the community.



Thanks for reading this edition of the Trade Newsletter. Send us an email at tradepartners@uniquebuilding.com.au with any questions! 😊