

ACHIEVING A SMALL BUSINESS SAFETY CULTURE



Small businesses have many competing priorities and without someone that is dedicated to staff safety it is easy for the WHS side of the business to be overlooked. The annual AGWA Audit Scheme now includes a safety component which requires members to show evidence of a current Safety Management System (SMS).

AGWA Auditor, Tony Gramlick, audited member SGA Architectural Window Solutions (SGA) and was very impressed with their Safety Management System. Tony specifically noted their 'enthusiasm for safety and SGA's excellent use of the digital platform to provide safety documents which are readily accessible and user friendly for modifications and updates'. "The entire team at SGA should be congratulated on what has been achieved," says Tony.

SGA (formerly known as 'Sawtell Glass and Aluminium') is a locally owned and run business in the Coffs Harbour region, offering Australian made and manufactured products since 1980. SGA currently employs 22 staff across the sales, administration, production operations, manufacturing, commercial fitters and service departments.

We interviewed SGA Business Manager, Tracey Kinnane, for insight into their safety journey and what they have learnt along the way.

BV Why do you think workplace safety is so important?

TK Aside from the legal obligations, safety is extremely important as there are a number of potentially 'high risk' aspects in our daily tasks with regards to manufacturing aluminium window and doors.

BV What drives the high standards of safety at SGA?

TK At SGA, this starts with management by implementing a holistic 'WHS/OHS' program. The basics of any safety program needs to ensure it is comprised of clear instructions and repetitive training, including understanding a task and its potential risks. We have endeavoured to ensure management has an open and inclusive program for all staff.

All staff are made fully aware of their legal obligations, responsibilities and rights from the start of their employment. This combined with management's 'open door' policy allows them to know that they have a safe work environment and it removes the stigma from the word 'safety' - making it a natural process and not a forced obligation.

BV What has been the hardest part of the safety journey at SGA?

TK To start with it was to teach staff to

embrace all aspects of safety. Most people just want to get on with the task and 'safety' can be a second or third thought. Be honest with your staff and upfront about the reason behind implementing a full 'workplace safety program'. It is to ensure that everyone can get the most out of their working day, safely and efficiently, and go home at the end of each day to their family and friends.

BV What advice would you give to other member companies that are just starting their safety journey?

TK For anyone working in a position of responsibility, you must be aware of your duty to others. In this case, it was to ensure we had a 'workplace safety' program that was easy to understand and forthcoming with everyone's obligations, coverage and duties. Put yourself in the workers shoes, ask employees questions regarding their tasks and get feedback regarding equipment used, potential risks and manual handling. Use all the information gathered to develop your safety policy and procedures. Staff involvement is key to any successful 'Safety in the Workplace' systems. At SGA, they are involved in every stage of the process and are encouraged to give feedback as all safety processes directly impact aspects of their working day.