Workplace safety honour for union member

The hard work and commitment that occupational safety and health (OSH) representatives are displaying in state schools was recognised recently when Mt Lawley Senior High School teacher and OSH rep Bruce Atkinson was named one of WA's top OSH reps.

The SSTUWA member was co-awarded the Safety and Health Representative of the Year at the state government's 2021 Work Health and Safety Excellent Awards, held at Optus Stadium late last year.

He shared the award with Woodside Energy employee Naomi Elbrow in recognition for their work in improving OSH at their workplaces and demonstrating the benefits of safety and health representatives for all workplaces.

"I'm very honoured and a bit shocked," Bruce said.

"It was for work in general around the school over the last nine years and facilitating the learning of new OSH reps by providing our school as a training ground."

Bruce was nominated for the award by SSTUWA OSH organiser Antony Pearson (pictured below, right, with Bruce).

"Bruce has been a great assistance to the SSTUWA and Unity Training by constantly allowing us to take new OSH reps in training to his school to undertake mock worksite inspections and provides time to talk to the course participants about his experiences as an OSH rep," Antony said.

"His passion and commitment to the role is first rate and...(has) clearly improved the health and safety of staff at his school."

Bruce said he had been the OSH rep at Mt Lawley SHS for the past nine years and was passionate about safety.

He nominated a risk assessment of all hazardous chemicals on the school site as among his proudest achievements as Mt Lawley SHS's OSH rep. He encouraged those thinking about taking on the role at their school to do it.

"It's important that people stand up and take on the OSH (rep role) at schools, to put a face to the department's policies," Bruce said.

"Challenge yourself to be a better, safer you."

Industrial Relations Minister Stephen Dawson said: "These prestigious Awards recognise outstanding occupational safety and health management, solutions and innovations in workplaces across both resources and general industries."

"This year's entrants have come from a diverse range of industries and from businesses of all sizes, and all finalists have set the standard to which everyone else can now strive.

"My sincere congratulations to all the Award winners on your commitment to the safety and health of all Western Australian workers."

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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