



Media Release

David Campbell MP

Minister for Water Utilities
Minister for Small Business
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for the Illawarra

iPOD TECHNOLOGY HAS NEWCASTLE STEELWORKERS WIRED FOR SAFETY

July 27, 2006

Newcastle steelworkers are wired for sound thanks to an innovative local company that has developed an internationally-successful safety training system using iPods.

Minister for Regional Development David Campbell today toured the Smorgon Steel plant in Waratah where steelworkers have been fitted with the Voicemap iPod system to maintain occupational health and safety awareness and promote workplace safety.

"Voicemap of Newcastle has developed an automated learning system that uses iPods to deliver audio orientation tours to help train staff in a variety of settings," Mr Campbell said.

"These range from steel plants like Smorgon Steel to hospitals, railway stations, office environments, and oil and gas plants.

"In Smorgon Steel's case, the company's employees have got their audio training systems wired into the ear protectors of their hard hats, delivering stereo quality instructions on safety practices.

"This revolutionary approach to induction training has taken off internationally, with Voicemap licencing its systems to a variety of industries and corporate giants both in Australia and overseas."

Voicemap, which has been assisted by the NSW Government with marketing and business development support, was invented by Newcastle behavioural scientist Dr Maggie Haertsch who was inspired by art gallery audio self-guided tours.

"The Voicemap system has now been developed for training applications in a range of areas, including the petrochemical, mining and heavy manufacturing industries," Dr Haertsch said.

"We are excited by Smorgon Steel's enthusiasm for using the system, the first clients to apply it to heavy manufacturing."

Mr Campbell said the groundbreaking orientation system was first trialled successfully at John Hunter Hospital in 2004, but is now being used by several hospitals in the UK and has been featured on the BBC.

"Three hospitals in Glasgow use Voicemap - in the operating theatres at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, the labour ward and neonatal unit at the Princess Royal Maternity Hospital and the emergency department at the Western Infirmary - and more will follow in August," Mr Campbell said.

.../2

For further information: **Alison Hill – 0407 570 640**

"It is in use at Liverpool Street Station in London - the busiest rail station in the UK with 141 million people a year.

"In the Hunter Valley, Voicemap is used by John Hunter, Belmont and Maitland hospitals as well as the Hunter Area Pathology Service, and is being developed for safety training in underground coal mines."

Mr Campbell said staff were given iPods programmed with an audio induction and are asked to follow a customised tour describing the layout of their workplaces and identifying any safety issues, before being tested on their knowledge.

"The Voicemap system helps staff better understand their roles, provides uniform training and safety standards, frees managerial staff to concentrate on other priorities, helps lower accident and mistake rates in workplaces, and can be personalised to meet individual training and industry needs," he said.

"This is NSW developed technology making an impact on the world stage."