



# 'Women in industry are not meant to be weightlifters': Gender and the Australian industrial workplace safety film

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## ABSTRACT

'Utilitarian' films - those not for the purposes of art or entertainment - include instructional films addressing workplace safety. Large quantities of these were made in Australia between WW2 and the advent of video and were viewed by many workers in different industries. Their content, social significance and relationship to a wider dispositif of media and labour is therefore a fertile source of information about how work was performed and how it was discursively conceptualised. We can glean information from these films about the presumed class, proclivities, and attitudes that Australian workers were assumed to have. Their address is also gendered, almost exclusively targeting men. In analysing one unusual workplace safety film targeted at women workers, *Don't Be Scalped* (R.D. Hansen, 1960 Fortune films and the NSW Department of Labour and Industry), aspects of working-class male subjectivity commonly spoken to in workplace safety films are thrown into relief. This article examines how gendered address in industrial safety films constructs and perpetuates gendered inequalities in broader discourses about health, danger and industrial labour. *Don't Be Scalped* illustrates how gender difference is one way this form of utilitarian text polices and normalises attitudes to safety through targeted and specific forms of subjectification.

## KEYWORDS

Utilitarian film; workplace safety; instructional; gender; accidents

## Introduction

A sweet secretary hands her beau his hard hat and gently admonishes him to 'be careful!'. A beaming wife, child on hip, joins her farmer husband in front of their barn while the voiceover patriotically informs the viewer that 'in our vast country areas, rural communities are working to ensure that the fruits of the earth will help make Australia prosper'. A new bride, towering over her diminutive groom, looks concerned as he strains his back attempting to lift her over the threshold. A young mechanic clad only in shorts and bra toils alongside fully clad male workers to illustrate the dangers of not wearing protective equipment on the shop floor. These scenes [from *Explosives: The Two Metre Lifeline* (1974), *Safety in Rural Industries* (1965), *Easy Does It* (1967) and *Safety in Your Hands* (1974), respectively] typify the representations of women in the instructional films made in the mid-twentieth century that inform Australian workers about safety. The

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relegation of women to the roles of supportive wives and girlfriends or light comic relief does more than replicate the sexism prevalent in other kinds of screen media of the era. It also reiterates and shores up the discourses about industrial labour and safety; who is in danger in the workplace, what that danger is, how and why one should respond to it.

As with many other utilitarian films, specifics of how individual workplace safety films came to be made, how and where they were screened, and what audiences thought of them are scant. Though the films are not ephemera as such (they were, in fact, an important and ubiquitous feature of Australian working life, used in inductions or training, their screening punctuating the usual working day), they have nevertheless remained under-researched, as both a body of moving-image material, and as individual titles. According to Thomas Elsaesser, they are part of utilitarian media that is seen as 'unconsequential, un-canonized and overlooked' (2009). Some of the reasons why workplace safety films remain under-studied and outside the canon of 'cinema proper', as a sub-sub-category of non-fiction film, are to do with their being perceived (often rightly) as boring; as dated in their style, social attitudes and the technical and educational information they convey. These unattractive features also belie instructional films' relevance to documentary studies: they sit, as noted by Nichols, somewhere between documentary and non-documentary, along with forms such as the newsreel and raw footage (2010). This relationship illustrates how the instructional utilitarian film assists in circumscribing the limits of documentary, shoring up the documentary's deployment of aesthetics and entertainment as part of the form, features that the utilitarian film tends to minimise or forego in favour of didactic instruction. As such, their popular reception has tended to be as camp curiosities and particularly 'uncool' markers of how things were done in previous decades.

Nevertheless, workplace safety films remain informative cultural artefacts in terms of what they elucidate about dominant social expectations and conventions, as well as about workplace safety itself. The gendered nature of the discourses of health and safety that appear in Australian industrial workplace safety films is thrown into relief when we observe the different forms of representation and address in a film targeted at female factory workers: *Don't Be Scalped* (R. D. Hansen 1960). Initially, however, I address what kind of utilitarian film the workplace safety film is, followed by some of the salient ways that industrial safety has been conceived and considered through a gendered lens.

### **The Australian industrial safety film as utilitarian film**

As might seem obvious, a workplace safety film is one 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). Of the workplace safety films made in Australia in the mid-twentieth century, most tend to be short, between five and thirty minutes in length, and the majority were shot on 16 mm. Until the 1970s, and sometimes thereafter, most were made without synchronised sound, usually as an economy (FitzSimons, Laughren and Williamson 2011); the sound consists usually of expository voiceover and in some films, occasional music. While the exact number of workplace safety films that were made in Australia in the pre-video era is not known, the films available in

archives would suggest hundreds rather than thousands. The ones made in Australia between the 1950s and early 1980s were commissioned and produced by a variety of civic and public bodies, particularly state government departments, in contrast with the workplace safety films produced in the United States, which were sponsored primarily by commercial interests (Levin 2006). 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. 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.

These are films that are perceived (sometimes rightly) as dull, an example of what Gibson refers to as the ‘dun imitations of British-style informational programmes spoken over an illustrative spool of prosaic, evidentiary pictures’ (2008, 10) which flourished post-World War Two, during a fallow period in Australian narrative feature filmmaking. Many of them indeed are clunky, didactic, and almost aggressively prosaic. However, these films represent and reflect Australian culture at a time 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 appeals to 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. Especially pertinent to this article is the way that workers, as the subjects interpellated by these films (i.e. hailed and ideologically constituted by them (Althusser 1998, 157, 162)), are expected to exhibit certain attitudes and possess certain identity characteristics.

As noted by 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. (1993, 62)

If the generic figure of ‘the worker’ is a man, and a ‘disembodied, rational actor’ (62) then according to the presentation of work and injury in these films, women are presented predominantly as non-workers, caretakers of the private sphere and as the emotional re-actors to the accidents and injuries that befall the central male workers represented onscreen.

### **Gender and industrial safety**

There are statistical reasons for the tendency of workplace safety films of the mid-twentieth Century to assume a male audience, as the makeup of the workforce at the time did consist overwhelmingly of men. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey of 1961, 34% of women were in the workforce – though, as noted by Frances, Kealey and Sangster (1996), official statistical records have tended to under-represent women’s labour, either because it included informal and casual work such as craft-work, small agriculture and outwork for industry and manufacturing, and unrecognised, undervalued labour such as home maintenance and childcare. In the 1950s and 60s, 46%

of employed Australians worked in production industries (agriculture, forestry and fishing, manufacturing, mining, utilities and waste services, and construction), and while gender segregation was a considerable feature across industries, many women worked in these fields, particularly textile manufacturing and food production (Frances, Kealey and Sangster 1996). Therefore, while the majority of industrial employees were male, women workers were a significant enough demographic that their safety in industrial work was a concern.

The concern for female workers' safety manifests in legislation, labour organisation and in the broad conceptualisation of health and safety issues in ways that differ significantly from those of their male counterparts. These gendered ways of discussing worker safety not only demarcated and entrenched gender inequity, they also contributed to gendered differences in the kinds of harms workers were exposed to. As elaborated below, the hard-won legislative protections for women workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Australia were on one hand undoubtedly necessary and in many cases life-saving. They addressed severe depredations women workers faced, largely due to broader social inequities that meant their employment was often already precarious, under-valued and under-paid, and conducted in addition to domestic and child-rearing labour. On the other hand, the way these laws framed women's safety not only shored up extant discourses about their abilities and needs, but also reinforced – by contrast – assumptions about the safety needs of working-class men.

Williams (1997, 35) emphasises 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 (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 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' (1997, 33). The association of safety with vulnerability, and the viewing of safety practices as therefore un-masculine, is a pre-existing discourse that workplace safety films made in Australia 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 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' (1997, 45). In this way, it can be seen that risk-based approaches to Health and Safety, where the hazards most likely to cause fatal or acute injury are the primary or exclusive focus also have a gendered aspect to them (as opposed to hazard-based, which take into account chronic harm).

A further unspoken assumption in much of the literature regarding 'protective' legislation is that gender and class are the primary relevant lenses through which these laws and their impacts may be viewed. This excludes race as a further highly significant factor.

Concern over women's working conditions was often prompted by racialised discourses, particularly fears of 'race suicide', where white women's reproductive capacities would be compromised by dangerous or strenuous work, thereby endangering the population growth goals of 'white Australia' policies. Furthermore, racist discourses regarding Asian and Syrian men as 'sweaters by instinct' and therefore particularly likely to exploit women served as rhetoric that emphasised women's protection at work as a demarcation of the boundary between civilisation and barbarism (Barr and Jeffries 1911). Race was occasionally highlighted in legislation itself, for instance, by the Victorian Shops and Factories Acts of 1896, which specifically limited the working hours of women, children and Chinese workers (who tended to be concentrated in heavily sweated trades). 'Protective' frameworks also had quite different impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, often controlling where they could live (which had impacts on the quality of their housing and food) [Frances, Kealey and Sangster (1996, 86)]. These differences illustrate how the intersections of gender and race in relation to who requires 'protection' and why mean quite different treatment for different demographics. The long tail of these racialised discourses can be read in Australian workplace safety films as both a lacuna (in that race predominantly goes unacknowledged) and as a significant intersection with gender (the women that appear in workplace safety films are exclusively white and therefore subject to their safety being discussed through the unspoken lens of their whiteness).

The industrial safety films made in Australia 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 (2009) 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 Williams – the disavowal of vulnerability is a performance for one's mates. As she writes, 'men fear public humiliation if they do not conform to manhood rules when they are tested by other men, as they are at the workplace' (1997, 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' (1990, 46). This linking of male camaraderie and drinking is notably evident in Australian workplace safety films, many of which depict the pub as an important social leisure space. 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 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' (1993, 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' (66). 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' (1993, 67), an idea which highlights the problem in simplistically associating masculinity with risk-taking.

### ***Don't be Scalped***

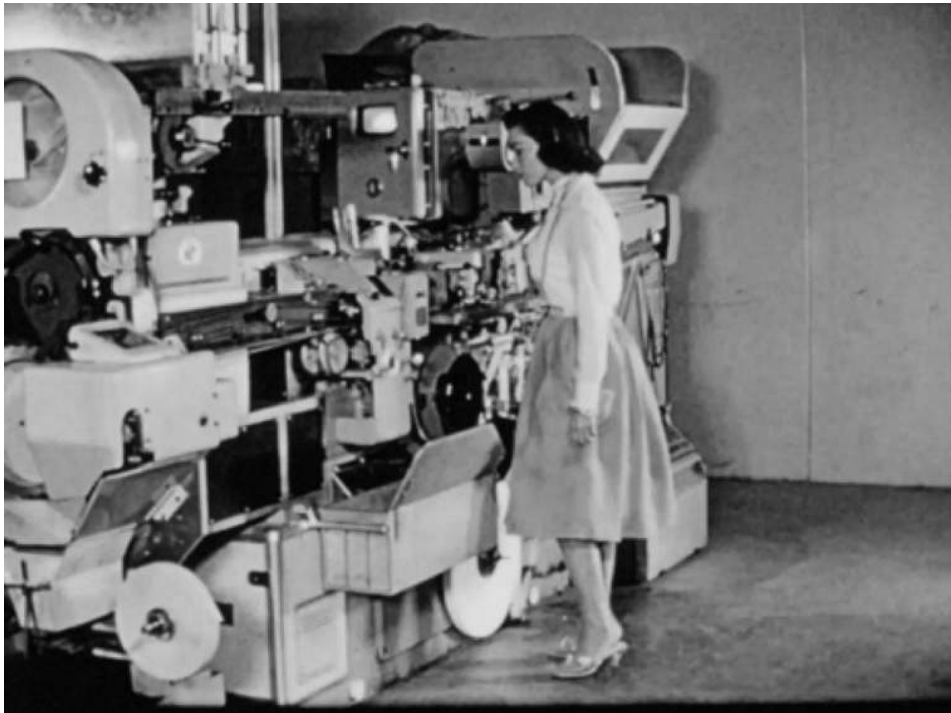
I turn now to the aforementioned *Don't Be Scalped*, a production which highlights how films directed at male workers discuss safety discursively by dint of its difference from them. This is not to imply that *Don't Be Scalped* is somehow non-discursive, but to show that gender difference is one way that these films police and normalise attitudes to safety through targeted and specific forms of subjectification. In other words, delineating what safety is and how to achieve it is always articulated through a set of assumptions and characteristics about the subjects addressed; gender being one of especial relevance. As the examples that open this article illustrate, women were rarely depicted in Australian workplace safety films as workers themselves – or, if they were, they were not performing the work that is the central concern of the films they appear in. The case study this article considers, *Don't be Scalped* is all the more exceptional amongst mid-twentieth century Australian workplace safety films in that it addresses female workers exclusively.

*Don't Be Scalped* was made in 1960 and directed by R. D. Hansen and produced by Fortune films for the Department of Labour and Industry, a government agency which sponsored the making of numerous safety films targeted at different segments of the Australian workforce, though the majority concern production industries. The film is one of several safety films Hansen directed for the department, many as part of the loosely affiliated but similarly titled 'Don't be' series: other films 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). Other titles in the series include *Don't Be a Fall Guy* and *Don't be Incorrectly Dressed* (both 1962) and *Don't be Strained* (1963), all directed by Stan Murdoch. Fortune appears to have been a family operated production company – Joan Hansen is the editor of many of these titles.

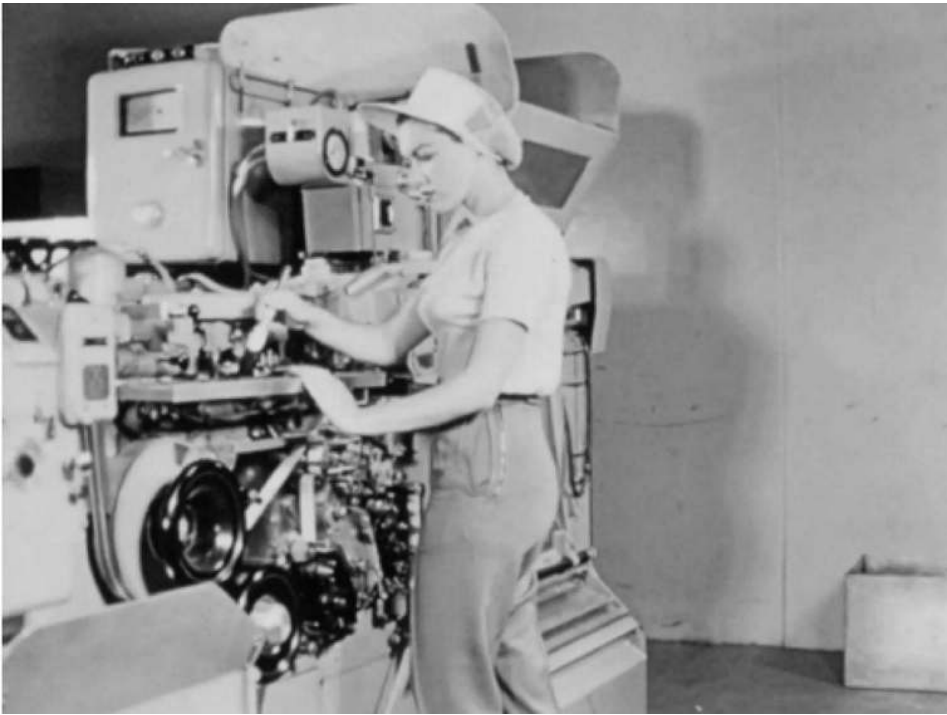
*Don't be Scalped* follows Judy, a machinist in a factory, from her arrival in the morning to when she leaves for the day. What the factory produces remains unspecified, though from the work we see onscreen (machines that cut, shape, press and sort; manual handling of containers) it appears to be the manufacture of small metal tools or objects – at one point we see a tray filled with what appears to be soleplates for electric irons. While we do not stay with this character for the entirety of the film (segments are included on how to safely lift heavy materials which depict other, unnamed women), for the majority of the film's nine-minute runtime 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. This is the safety film's clear stylistic link to the expository documentary form, where information and instruction are delivered via theoretically objective and dispassionate aural guidance. *Don't Be Scalped* focuses on safety clothing, with considerable attention also paid to posture and lifting. The initial five minutes or so of the film 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 (Figure 1). Each of these is contrasted with recommended safe clothing

(overalls or slacks, steel-capped shoes, caps with visors) (Figure 2). 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 the 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' (2006, 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 who appear in other Australian workplace safety films of the 1960s are similarly identifiable as such, either in white-collar attire like Mr. Perry, or in lab coats [if they are doctors or scientists, such as the doctor who provides the narration of *Line Up Your Safety* (n.d.)]. Authoritative



**Figure 1.** *Don't be Scalped* (R. D. Hansen 1960): Judy works in 'street clothes'.



**Figure 2.** *Don't be Scalped* (R. D. Hansen 1960): Judy works in a cap and slacks – ‘which are ideal for safety’, according to the voiceover.

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* (1980)]. Whether upper or working class, however, the experts in all these films have their gender and race in common – white men remain, across class boundaries, the voices and visages of authority.

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 gory dangers expressed in *Safety in the Meat Industry* c.1957-1960 (‘safety aprons [...] can prevent more serious injuries arising out of stabs to the groin, abdomen and upper thighs’ – accompanied by shots of blood luridly spurting out of simulated wounds) 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 film 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 way that 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, the emphasis appears to be on fashion as opposed to danger and injury, as 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. This focus on budgeting inadvertently highlights a further gendered difference in labour; household economy was a very real concern for early 1960s women, in that they were often responsible for domestic organisation, purchasing and day-to-day running of the home, even if they were not primary breadwinners. Nonetheless, the film frames the chronic injuries that women were most likely to be exposed to in industrial work (Williams 1997) 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. This could also potentially be read as a way of advertising the work to women; that being a machinist is a job that allows one to be glamorous, even in protective equipment. Compare Judy's elegance, for instance, with the narrator's acknowledgement to male workers in *Don't be Incorrectly Dressed* (1962) that

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.

The impression one is left with by *Don't be Scalped's* avoidance of explicit discussion of injury 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 Williams' focus on 'protection', where women's work was restricted for their own safety (or, as noted by Frances, Kealey and Sangster (1996), for their reproductive health) and working class men, resistant to and not in need of protection in their roles as 'protectors', could remain unsafe at work (Williams 1997). 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 sometimes luridly gory, fatal scenes shown in other Australian workplace safety films of the era.

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 voiceover 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 statement from *Don't Be Incorrectly Dressed* quoted above, where workers are reminded of 'going home to their families at the end of the day'. 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 responsibility for family is explicitly mentioned in numerous other safety films of the era. 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). Indeed, this reflects demographic differences. In 1961, the median age for first brides was 21 years (ABS 2021), and the same year only 17% of married Australian women were officially recorded as being in paid work (Frances, Kealey and Sangster 1996, 58). In many workplaces an unofficial 'marriage bar' existed, meaning that women were discriminated against on the basis of their marital status, as 'conventional wisdom held that women were destined for marriage and motherhood, and thus only a short stint in the labour force' (Frances, Kealey and Sangster 1996, 77).

This expectation that Judy is single and 'self-reliant', without dependents, of course, elides the stark inequities that existed for women like her: according to Strachan, in the 1960s 'most women were paid 75% of the male rate' (2010, 120). *Don't Be Scalped*, then, appearing as it did against the background of protective legislation and with its stress on household economy, reiterates the assumption that 'women's physical weakness required extra protection, [while] it was concurrently assumed that their actual monetary needs were far less than men's, given women's transitory link to the labour force' (Frances, Kealey and Sangster 1996, 85). Unsurprising that women's concerns would be with replacing clothing if they earned so little! Similarly, the marriage bar goes some way to explaining the film's interest in appearance beyond more direct sexism, in that it points to the structural reason that young women like Judy were expected to be in work only until they attracted a husband.

## Conclusion

The significance of a film like *Don't Be Scalped* lies in its characterisation of Judy, and the assumed audience of women like her, as being workers whose interests and

vulnerabilities differ markedly from those of the male workers that populate other Australian workplace safety films of the same period. The interests here (clothing, economy, avoidance of chronic injuries such as foot and back pain) as opposed to the interests of men in other safety films (prosperity, the family, male camaraderie, avoidance of acute or fatal injuries) demarcate gendered differences not only in work and how it is carried out, but also in safety and the means through which it is achieved.

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. Furthermore, the 'common sense' discourses at work in industrial safety films highlight the ways that documentaries more broadly always relate to the socio-political contexts in which they were made; in other words, that non-fictional films speak to their ideological conditions of production.

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 narrow range of white, masculine subject positions these films offer as models. There would doubtless have been still other ways of framing and discussing safety, all of which would provide contemporary viewers with further information and impressions about who industrial workers were and what their working lives were like – or at least who ideal workers were in the eyes of the filmmaker and the governmental and commercial entities that commissioned such pictures.

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### **Notes on contributor**

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