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Paralympian shares story of workplace injury with Kerfoot

Paralympic rowing champion Ben Houlison made a big impact at commercial electrical services company Kerfoot in Seven Hills recently, when he shared his story of workplace injury with employees.

Ben became a paraplegic in 2004 after being crushed into the roof of a coal mine by a continuous miner. As a member of the [icare Paralympic Speakers Program](#), he visits workplaces around NSW to help support a culture of safety and drive down workplace injuries.

“Once you experience a workplace accident, you never want someone to go through what my family had to. It’s great to be part of the Speakers Program because I can go out and have a positive impact on someone else’s life just by telling my story,” said Mr Houlison.

Kerfoot is extremely passionate about working safely and a big part of their safety culture is regular whole-company toolbox talks. Every five weeks team members come back to head office for a healthy lunch, safety information and updates. This was a great opportunity for Ben to speak to the whole team, from apprentices to the directors.

Daniel Ireland, an electrician from the Kerfoot Services team said: “What an amazing journey Ben was able to share with us! To keep 150+ people engaged throughout his speech was incredible and I personally was really touched by his story as I’m sure many of my colleagues were too.”

“He highlighted that the effects of an incident like his were far greater than just his physical pain – it stretched out into the loved ones of all involved. Ben’s story, in some way or another, connected with all Kerfoot workers and will go a long way toward all of us ensuring we have a safe working environment and to speak up if we think something is unsafe,” Mr Ireland said.

Kerfoot WHSE Manager Daniel Kelly said he would encourage other businesses to invite Ben to share his story with them.

“Ben’s story really brought home the reality of having safety systems in place but not following or valuing them and the horrendous outcomes this can have. Throughout his talk he was selfless as he spoke about the impact to his family and friends, yet he remained positive throughout the whole ordeal,” Mr Kelly said.

“It was a very inspirational address that managed to keep well over a hundred tradies both captivated and in fits of laughter with his great sense of humour.”

Body stressing, which includes muscle strains and back injuries, is the leading cause of injury for workers involved in electrical contracting, services and supply.

icare’s General Manager Prevention Chris Harnett, said icare’s Speakers Program was a great way to spread the message of workplace health and safety.

“With more than 1,200 workers injured in this industry in the past 12 months¹, education, training and tools are crucial in building a safer work environment,” Mr Harnett said.

“Stories like Ben’s bring home the ‘why?’ around injury prevention.

“The Paralympian Speakers Program is just one of the ways we’re working with employers to develop practical improvements and build a culture focused on strong safety behaviours,” he said.

Employers can book an icare Paralympian Speaker for their next safety event by visiting <https://www.icare.nsw.gov.au/icare-speakers-program/>

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