

Burrup plant was unsafe: WorkSafe

KATIE HAMPSON

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne has rejected a claim by Perth billionaire Pankaj Oswal that his Burrup Fertilisers plant was not a safety risk to workers.

Fifty workers walked off the job on Monday over safety concerns at the plant, prompting Mr Oswal to say later that day in a media statement that WorkSafe had inspected the site and considered it safe.

But Ms Lyhne said an improvement notice was issued on Monday when inspectors found workers had raised some legitimate concerns over the way the isolation and permit system was managed that meant workers were able to access areas at the plant where they were not meant to be, which was potentially dangerous.

She said the company had been warned about it in the past but had failed to address the problem.

“WorkSafe has previously issued notices on isolation and permit systems at this site, and has also issued notices on a range of other safety issues,” Ms Lyhne said.

“The statement about WorkSafe inspecting the plant at the company’s invitation and declaring it completely safe was incorrect.”

A spokesman for Burrup Fertilisers yesterday maintained the site was safe for workers, but acknowledged the company had received an improvement notice about permits on Monday. He said the company immediately sought to amend the statement and met the conditions of the notice by yesterday’s deadline.

“They were issued an improvement notice by WorkSafe which is the lowest level of caution and which certainly does not indicate any life-threatening issues at the plant,” the spokesman said.