



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Tuesday, 16 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

White, Mrs SJ

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.25 am): I rise to mark the passing of a Queensland hero, Mrs Shirley Joan White, who died of leukaemia on 6 June aged 73. Shirley White was the founder and president of the Queensland Asbestos Related Disease Support Society. For almost 20 years, from 1989, Shirley led this important non-profit organisation and became the face of asbestos advocacy in Queensland. She will be always remembered for her incredible support for workers in our state. Her tireless commitment to the society saw it flourish to more than 1,000 members, with branches throughout Queensland.

Shirley was heavily involved in the NSW commission of inquiry into James Hardie, which was conducted by Mr David Jackson QC. She was also a catalyst in ensuring that Queensland now has arguably the best statutory lump-sum benefits in the country for sufferers of asbestos related diseases. She was dedicated in her push for legislative reform and played a key role in negotiating new entitlements for dependent family members of sufferers of asbestos diseases. In November 2008, the Queensland Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act was amended allowing dependants to be entitled to payments of up to \$478,000, plus a lump sum for dependants of \$63,940, and funeral benefits of \$8,525. This is one of Shirley's great legacies.

Another of her great achievements was the establishment of Milton Clarke House, a respite facility where regional patients and their families stay when travelling to Brisbane for treatment. Shirley was well known for her work, including her involvement in a range of charities, particularly in the Norman Park and Murarrie areas. In recognition of her advocacy work, Shirley was awarded a medal of the Order of Australia in 2003. She was also awarded the Civil Justice Award, the Rotary International Community Service Award, the Australian Medical Association Award of Distinction and the Griffith Australia Day Award.

Above all, Shirley was well loved and respected, as was demonstrated at a memorial service that was held for her at Hemmant in Brisbane's east last week, attended by people from around Australia. Our deepest sympathies go out to Shirley's family and loved ones. Her loss is mourned by Queenslanders throughout our state, including many members in this place such as the member for Bulimba, the member for Waterford and the member for Rockhampton. Workers throughout Queensland have lost a great advocate, fighter and friend, but her life's work will live on.

In that regard, this morning I have been advised by my cabinet colleague the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women that, after vigorous lobbying by Shirley, the Department of Communities will provide one-off funding of \$40,000 to the society for a part-time coordinator. I thank the minister and her department for their contribution. It is a fitting tribute to Shirley and her tenacity on behalf of the society and those ill and injured workers whom it represents.