



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Wednesday, 7 October 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Personal Injury Compensation Legislation

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.25 am): Today I will be introducing into the House the Civil Liability and Other Legislation Amendment Bill which will increase the maximum amounts available for personal injury compensation in Queensland. Suffering a personal injury can have a significant effect on every aspect of someone's life. The increase in the amount of general damages is a recognition of the pain and suffering an individual can experience as a result of a devastating personal injury. We know that money can never truly compensate for injuries of this type, but the Bligh government is ensuring compensation levels are fair and reflect current costs of living.

The legislation will increase the maximum caps for the first time in six years on general damages available under the Civil Liability Act 2003 for personal injuries. These amendments will afford injured persons the monetary compensation they need to help them get on with their lives. The amendments will also abolish the statutory limitation period for dust related disease claims including asbestosis, mesothelioma and silicosis. The removal of the statutory limitation period for dust related diseases will deliver significant benefits to sufferers by improving their access to justice and reducing the costs and stress associated with pursuing a claim.

While the dangers of asbestos are now well known, the harmful effects on an individual's family and society continues. Few precautions and protections were available to workers exposed to asbestos in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. This amendment will have a retrospective effect to ensure it captures current cases of dust related disease originating from exposure during the 1950s, sixties and seventies. The new caps on general damages will apply to injuries arising from 1 July 2010. The amendments also ensure that the caps will be annually indexed to average weekly earnings. Under the new legislation, the maximum damages available will increase from \$250,000 to \$294,500.

2 October 2009 witnessed the centenary of the election to this parliament of TJ Ryan, the first Labor Premier to lead a majority Labor government in Queensland. For a century Queensland Labor governments have sought to deliver fairness, equity and social, political and industrial justice for Queenslanders. We have big dreams and big plans for our state. The Bligh government stands firmly in that tradition, and the Civil Liability and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is yet another example of Queensland Labor's historic mission to deliver a fairer, more just and more compassionate society.