



David Mehan MP

STATE MEMBER FOR THE ENTRANCE

REF: 428/22/ak

5 October 2022

Ms Maree Stokes
144 Australia Ave
UMINA BEACH NSW 2257

Via email: mst77072@bigpond.net.au

Dear Ms Stokes, *Maree,*

In the last Parliamentary sitting week I made a contribution in the Second Reading Debate on the Workers' Compensation (Dust Diseases) Amendment Bill.

For your convenience, I attach a copy of the excerpt, for your information and distribution with your networks, given your involvement and position with ADFA.

The full debate and contributions can be found via the attached link:
<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-127191/link/113>

Yours sincerely,

David Mehan
Member for The Entrance

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (19:43): I make a contribution to debate on the Workers' Compensation (Dust Diseases) Amendment Bill 2022. The object of the bill is to amend the Workers' Compensation (Dust Diseases) Act 1942 and the Workers Compensation Act 1987 with regard to rates of compensation payable to workers suffering from dust disease. The bill validates certain past payments of compensation made to injured workers by deeming amendments to have been in force on and from the commencement of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 or relevant amendments to that Act. As part of that, it corrects a mis-payment that had been perpetrated by icare in payments made to workers impacted by dust disease, which is welcomed. Labor supports the bill. I support what my shadow Minister, the member for Canterbury, has said on the subject. There is a whole bunch more we could and should be doing. This bill is a step in the right direction but there is more to be done.

Alongside this amendment bill, changes are also being made to the regulations to expand the number of schedule 1 diseases listed, particularly those related to silica, which is a significant cause of dust disease in the modern world through manufactured stone and tunnelling. As we expand our understanding of the connection between dust and disease, it is heartening to see that the new diseases identified as being caused by dust are captured by the provisions of the bill. I use this opportunity to acknowledge the victims of dust diseases and their families. I also acknowledge trade union representatives, who are the driving force for action to make worksites safer and reduce the impact of dust disease but who also support workers with regulation when those workers contract a dust disease due to their work.

I acknowledge the work that those groups do through their trade unions to impact on the Australian Labor Party, to which most unions are affiliated. It is that party that saw the dust diseases Act first created in 1942. Particularly, I recognise the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia [ADFA], a group that works tirelessly to support and advocate on behalf of those impacted by the deadliest dust diseases caused by asbestos, mesothelioma and asbestosis. I pay tribute to the ADFA executive. Its current president is Barry Robson, the former senior vice-president of the Waterside Workers' Federation. The vice-president, Maree Stokes, is a resident of the Central Coast and a dear friend whose husband, a bus driver on the Central Coast, contracted mesothelioma and died. The family then contracted the disease as well because family wash clothes. Her husband's sister also contracted mesothelioma and died of the disease.

Maree leads a dedicated group on the Central Coast that advocates and continues to support one another as victims of mesothelioma. The group always attends the Workers' Memorial Day held on 28 April each year on the Central Coast. I acknowledge the other members of the ADFA executive: Kate Robson, my old comrade from the National Union of Workers; Karen Martin, the ADFA secretary; and Etta Kinnaird, committee member. They do fantastic work. Without them, we would not be here making these regulatory changes that will not only make workplaces safer but also take care of the people who contract dust disease at work. This bill is a step in the right direction but more needs to be done. In the meantime, I commend the bill to the House.