

**LAW REFORM (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS (ASBESTOS DISEASES)) BILL 2001**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 18 December.

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN** (South Metropolitan) [5.52 pm]: Opposition supports not only the policy of this Bill but also its expeditious passage. To that end, I acknowledge and thank the Leader of the House for responding to requests I made during a recent adjournment debate. He has found an opportunity in a very crowded Business Program to give this Bill priority. I am sure that the anonymous constituent to whom I referred in my contribution and a number of other people in the community are very grateful that the Government has seen fit to bring on this Bill for debate.

The diseases associated with exposure to asbestos, including asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer, are particularly insidious. They may be acquired by a victim and remain latent for a long period - even up to 50 years. Unfortunately, once a diagnosis is made following observation of the symptoms, the terminal nature of the disease becomes readily apparent and the time available to the victims, particularly those suffering mesothelioma, can be very limited. In court proceedings undertaken for relief from an acquired disease of this type, 12 months is a short timeframe. For the sake of a patient or that patient's family and friends, that time should not be spent in the trauma of last minute negotiation and litigation to settle legal matters. That time should be spent in ways that respect the dignity that is owed to any person who finds himself or herself in that particularly difficult circumstance. This Bill will remedy that by allowing claims to be pursued without penalty beyond the death of the sufferer and to the benefit of the estate of those involved. Many reasons have been given in this and other places to support this Bill. With that in mind, I indicate that the Liberal Party strongly supports the Bill and its rapid passage.

**HON ROBIN CHAPPLE** (Mining and Pastoral) [5.54 pm]: The Greens (WA) support this legislation. Very few people know that I worked at the Western Gorge minesite in 1975. A number of the people I worked with have suffered as a result of working at that location. The Greens support the passage of this legislation and we indicated that to the Minister for Health and Larry Graham when it was introduced.

This legislation will resolve one of the many problems. The clean-up of Wittenoom has been deleted from the midyear review. Given the speed at which the houses at Wittenoom are being purchased, it will take another 18 years to remove the people from the community. That concerns me. The Greens wholeheartedly support this legislation and commend it.

**HON MURRAY CRIDDLE** (Agricultural) [5.55 pm]: The National Party supports this Bill. It allows for compensation for victims of asbestos-related diseases after they have died. This is a move in the right direction. The Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1941 does not allow that to happen. Many medical articles have appeared about former mining and waterfront construction workers dying of asbestosis during long, drawn-out legal proceedings. This Bill overcomes that and I support it wholeheartedly.

**HON JOHN FISCHER** (Mining and Pastoral) [5.56 pm]: As the law stands, the victims of asbestos-related diseases, such as lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma, are usually engaged in a race against time for compensation through litigation. This Bill will offer a safety net for victims and their dependents. One Nation wholeheartedly supports the Bill.

**HON N.D. GRIFFITHS** (East Metropolitan - Minister for Racing and Gaming) [5.57 pm]: I thank members for their support.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time, proceeded through remaining stages without debate and passed.

*Sitting suspended from 5.58 to 7.30 pm*