

CANCER FOUNDATION OF WA, MORNING TEA

60. Dr WOOLLARD to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the minister's hosting a morning tea for the Cancer Foundation of WA and the encouragement implicit in that. Has the Government sought legal advice on the implications for employers, following the decision of the New South Wales Supreme Court which awarded \$460 000 in damages to an employee for cancer caused by passive smoking in the workplace? Will the Government take action to ensure that its employees, including those at Parliament House, are protected from passive smoking?

Mr KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for her first question in this House. I have already met with the Health Department in relation to the legal advice. A review process will be in place by 1 January next year, by law. In the meantime, we are awaiting advice on the full outcome of that ruling.

The Labor Party generally is committed to caring for the health of workers in the workplace. It does not take the matter lightly. While answering this question, I put on notice those employers who have a responsibility to their workers. The key point arising from this ruling is that they themselves may be further liable in the future.

The brilliant work of people such as Robert Vojakovic with asbestos diseases in this State and the liability that now abounds in every workplace in this State from the use of asbestos, mean that all employers, particularly those in the hospitality industry, should take clear notice of the decision. It may very well be that in due course there will be no necessity for the Government to intercede. Those responsible for their workers may very well heed the message that is clearly given, and was given from those tragic days in Wittenoom, that they must look after their workers.

The Government has examined the decision. I am awaiting a full report on the ruling, but I assure the member that the Labor Party is committed to every worker in every workplace in this State.