

HEALTH AND SAFETY RESEARCH

FUNDING FOR WORKERS WITH OCCUPATIONAL DUST LUNG DISEASE RESEARCH

The Palaszczuk Government has a strong record of protecting the health and safety of workers and we are leading the way nationally in responding to and supporting workers suffering from occupational dust lung disease, including pneumoconiosis (coal workers pneumoconiosis and silicosis).

When CWP was re-identified in workers in 2015, the Palaszczuk Labor Government established an independent review of the respiratory component of the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme (Monash Review) and a CWP Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry. In 2017, legislative amendments were passed improving compensation and support for workers suffering from pneumoconiosis.

Since 2018 the Palaszczuk Government has led the nation in addressing and responding to the emergence of silicosis in the engineered stone industry, including issuing urgent safety warnings, banning dry cutting, ensuring a robust and ongoing enforcement and compliance campaign and establishing the nation's first Dust Disease Register and Code of Practice on the management of silica exposure.

Currently, there is very limited information, data and robust research available. We can change this is by supporting medical researchers to pursue treatment research that focuses on understanding the pathway of these types of disease from the risks of exposure, the type of dust causing the most harm, and investigating treatment options.

OUR COMMITMENT AND PLAN FOR QUEENSLAND

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will commit up to \$5 million over four years for medical research into treatment to improve the health and wellbeing of workers suffering from occupational dust lung disease.

This funding will also support:

- **understanding the pathogenesis of silicosis (including accelerated silicosis) and CWP**
- **identifying factors to determine disease severity and risk of disease progression (linked to ability to return to work)**
- **determining the efficacy and sensitivity of methods for early diagnosis and prevention of disease including anti-fibrotic medications, pulmonary rehabilitation, whole lung lavage and other developing treatments**
- **more than 300 workers suffering from occupational dust lung disease to remain in the workforce in alternative industries.**





PALASZCZUK GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

The Palaszczuk Government's actions to protect workers have included enforcement and compliance campaigns, stronger reporting and monitoring requirements, enhanced health surveillance and lowered workplace exposure standards. We have also:

- restored the rights of injured workers to seek common law damages
- improved compensation and support for workers suffering from pneumoconiosis, including access to additional statutory lump payments and the ability to re-open claims
- broadened medical imaging available under the workers' compensation system
- extended the entitlement to the latent onset terminal entitlements, such as occupational lung disease.

The Palaszczuk Government has also:

- passed legislative amendments that include mandatory respiratory health surveillance for mineral mine and quarry workers - when they enter the workforce, when they leave, and regularly while they are working
- set up a register of qualified and experienced doctors, spirometry practices, X-ray imaging clinics and B-readers approved by Resources Safety and Health Queensland
- issued urgent safety warnings and banned dry cutting of engineered stone
- conducted health screening on 1053 workers in the engineered stone industry, funded by WorkCover.

NEWMAN-FRECKLINGTON LEGACY

The LNP has a seriously poor record on Workplace Health and Safety regulation and workers' compensation, focusing more on business engagement than compliance and changing the WHS Act to reduce the rights of workers and unions. In terms of health, they had one clear plan for health – to cut health services, sack frontline health staff and to privatise key parts of our health system.

On 14 October 2013, the former LNP Government stripped away the rights and entitlements of Queensland's injured workers by introducing an unfair common law threshold.

This threshold prevented workers with a degree of permanent impairment of 5% or less seeking damages from a negligent employer.

About 9,000 workers who were injured between 15 October 2013 to 30 January 2015 were denied access to common law damages.

If today's workers with simple CWP had been diagnosed under an LNP government, approximately 35% would have been denied the ability to access to common law damages and would not have been fairly compensated for their injury.

At the federal level, the Palaszczuk Government has been calling on the Morrison Government to have a national response since September 2018.

It took almost a year after the emergence of silicosis in the engineered stone industry, the Morrison Government announced the establishment of the National Dust Disease Taskforce in July 2019.



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