


Queensland Parliament Hansard Green

DATE: 17/10/2019

FILE: 17102019_000848_LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY_GREEN CHAMBER.DOCX

SUBJECT: (no subject found)

MEMBER: Mrs LAUGA

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (5.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendments in the bill as they relate to workers who suffer from work related chronic or terminal illnesses. The bill makes an important improvement for these injured workers. Under the workers compensation legislation, a claim by a worker must be made within six months after the entitlement to compensation arises—that is, the date the worker is diagnosed with the injury or illness by a doctor. Many workers who sustain some injuries or chronic illnesses may not be immediately incapacitated and are able to continue working. The condition may stabilise or go into remission in response to treatment.

It is common for workers in these circumstances to manage their conditions or illnesses and keep working, as was the case for the late Ian Flamank, a good friend and mentor of mine whom I will talk about shortly. However, it is this stoicism, like Ian had and displayed, that can disadvantage the worker down the track. For example, a worker may develop a melanoma from occupational exposure to the sun, as was the case with Ian. A worker in this situation may attend a doctor and have the melanoma removed, often without the need to have any time off work or incur any medical expenses if the procedure is bulk-billed. The worker then continues on with life and may not even consider the need to make a workers compensation claim. Some years later the worker develops another melanoma, however this time the melanoma is malignant and the worker is diagnosed with a latent onset terminal condition.

Because the melanomas are from the same injury event, the worker was required to have lodged a workers compensation claim within six months of the diagnosis of the original melanoma. As the worker did not make a claim for the original melanoma, the worker is now not eligible to make a claim for the latent onset terminal condition. This is patently unfair to the worker and their family. The current requirement to make a claim within six months of the first diagnosis can be challenging for workers with chronic or insidious illnesses such as melanoma. This bill makes an important amendment by providing insurers additional discretion to accept claims submitted more than six months after the worker's injury is diagnosed if the injured worker has lodged a claim within 20 business days of developing an incapacity for work from their injury.

Mr Ian Flamank was a PE teacher at Mount Archer State School. He started teaching at Mount Archer back in 1983. Sadly, he passed away this year. We paid tribute to Ian at his funeral in June. Mr Flamank was my PE teacher. His wife, Mrs Flamank, has been my mum's teaching partner for almost 30 years. Mr Flamank taught PE at Mount Archer since 1983. He also coached Rugby League teams there from 1988 to 2004. He was also the secretary of the Rockhampton primary school Rugby League for 24 years, organising countless exchanges, fixtures and trials and even a national championship. He coached my brother and a number of young boys who went to Mount Archer State School. He was a really amazing PE teacher. I loved his classes because it was not just about playing sport or being active; there was always an educational element. I think as a PE teacher he really got the link between gross motor skills and cognitive development. He was a wonderful teacher. He was very patient. He commanded respect from his students.

041 Mr Flamank always had a great lesson planned. He loved music and loved to dance. He would often have music playing during our PE lessons. He was just a great mentor and a top bloke. He left behind two daughters, Jessica and Rebecca, and I know that they miss him terribly. He did not get the chance to see them have children or obviously meet his grandchildren. He was taken far too early at only 56 years of age—far too early for a man who did not drink, did not smoke, looked after himself, was physically active, had lots of friends and was, as I said, a top bloke. It was terrible when Mr Flamank was first diagnosed with melanoma, but he is one of those people who were not eligible to continue their claim because the claim was submitted more than six months after the original diagnosis. I was incredibly pleased when the bill was introduced into this place to see that people in Mr Flamank's situation from here on in will be able to make that claim. It is not like he was lazy or did not make the claim in time, because he did not have time. He did not make the claim in time because he did not know at the first diagnosis of melanoma it would end his life, that he would lose his life as a result.

These changes are incredibly important for people like Ian, who worked as a PE teacher out in the sun for many years and at a time before we really understood the impacts of the sun on our skin and the risk of skin cancer and the risk of melanoma. I am incredibly pleased that this bill is before this House and hopefully we will see these provisions changed this evening because these sensible changes to the workers compensation scheme will have an enormous benefit for Queenslanders and their families—like Ian, wife Tanya and daughters Jessica and Rebecca—at little or minimal cost to employers. I commend the bill to the House.