



NSW Legislative Council Hansard

Extract from NSW Legislative Council Hansard and Papers Wednesday 15 November 2006.

Workers Compensation Amendment (Permanent Impairment Benefits) Bill 2006

I now turn to the *Workers Compensation Amendment (Permanent Impairment Benefits) Bill 2006*. The Bill gives effect to the Government's decision to increase compensation benefits for seriously injured workers.

This increase has been made possible by the Government's workers compensation reform program and the resulting sustained improvement in the overall performance of the WorkCover Scheme and is in advance of the outcomes of the WorkCover Board's work in reviewing the workers compensation benefit regime.

The Bill provides for a ten percent increase in dollar terms, to the lump sums paid to workers for permanent impairment under section 66 of the *Workers Compensation Act 1987*.

The increased benefits will apply to workers who suffer a permanent impairment from an injury sustained on or after 1 January 2007.

By increasing section 66 payments, the Government is also encouraging injured workers to utilise statutory benefits rather than pursuing expensive and uncertain common law claims.

Sound financial management, improved claims handling and hard work have returned the scheme to surplus. As well as benefiting injured workers, the much improved financial position of the scheme will benefit employers through a further five percent reduction in workers compensation premiums, bringing total premium reductions to a total of 20% in just 12 months.

Employers will also benefit from the Government's new *Growing Our Skills Base*: Apprentice Incentive Scheme, which will exempt apprentices' wages from the calculation of an employer's premium.

I commend the Bill to the House.