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## Unions win for James Hardie asbestos victims

Unions have ensured that thousands of Australians suffering from asbestos related diseases will continue to be properly compensated, said the ACTU.

After campaigning by unions and asbestos victim support groups, the NSW government has agreed to lend the Asbestos Injuries Compensation Fund an extra \$104 million to cover a shortfall caused by increasing number of claims for mesothelioma.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said it's a win for unions and asbestos victim support groups who have worked tirelessly to hold James Hardie and the NSW Government to account.

"James Hardie and the NSW government have been toying with people's lives by refusing to top up the compensation fund or stop a move to change compensation payments to instalments instead of a lump sum.

"Asbestos victims and their families have been living with this stress and uncertainty for the past six months.

"The average mesothelioma victim dies within 155 days of diagnosis – they do not die in instalments and should not be paid in instalments.

"The ACTU announced in November last year that we would take this issue to the Supreme Court to ensure asbestos victims continued to receive proper lump sum compensation so they could settle their affairs and die in dignity.

"While it's disappointing that James Hardie chose to ignore its moral responsibility to top up the compensation fund with more money, unions welcome the NSW government's decision to provide a loan to the compensation fund to cover the increase in claims.

Mr Oliver said unions are now calling on James Hardie, the New South Wales and Federal Governments to guarantee the future viability of the compensation fund.

"This loan will manage the current shortfall in the compensation fund but we need a sustainable, long term commitment from both governments to ensure this situation doesn't happen again.

"The reality is compensation claims will continue to increase as more and more people are dying from asbestos related diseases.

"Asbestos victims and their families cannot continue to be put under this unnecessary stress and heartache," said Mr Oliver.

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