

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 25th July 2017

SYSTEM BROKEN! BREACH OF WHSQ LAWS EQUATE TO SLAP ON THE WRIST

After exposing at least 6 workers and countless members of the community to deadly asbestos fibres over a period of four months back in 2012, the Department of Transport and Main Roads was yesterday handed a slap on the wrist fine for their failure to comply with their duty under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011.

CFMEU Divisional Branch Secretary Michael Ravbar said, “Yesterday’s ruling has once again proven that the system is broken and highlights that this Government is failing the community when it comes to health and safety.

“Serious accidents and deaths will continue to occur while the Queensland Government sits on their hands and does nothing to deter employers from breaching workplace health and safety laws.

“The decisions handed down by the courts concerning workplace health and safety breaches seem to always favour the corporation at fault and deliver no real justice for the workers involved.

“In this case, the courts have once again failed the community by continuing with their long-term trend of awarding low, barely noticeable fines to those employers responsible for negligence at the workplace.

“It is incomprehensible that the lives of at least 6 workers and those of countless innocent community members have been compromised and the department liable has been handed a measly penalty of \$175,000 out of a possible \$1.5million.

“That equates to not even \$30,000 per worker! This fine does nothing to deter others to comply with Work Health and Safety laws and instead shows that community and workers safety is not worth a lot.

“The workers and families involved in this case will spend the rest of their lives wondering if they will develop an asbestos related disease. Their lives will never be the same.

“Workplace Health and Safety Laws in Queensland have been ignored for far too long. It is time the Queensland Government got serious about workplace health and safety in this State. The laws need to be toughened, fines increased and courts encouraged to award maximum fines to any employer who puts their workers and the community at risk.

“The CFMEU is highly embarrassed by the lack of action by the Queensland Labor Government and calls on them to address these major issues, which affect the community, immediately.”

Workers safety should never come second. We will always stand up, fight back against unjust laws and rulings, and ensure that the safety of all workers and the community are the highest priority. We intend to raise these concerns at this weekend’s ALP State Conference in Townsville.