

NEWS RELEASE



Premier of New South Wales
Australia

James Hardie legislation to be introduced today

Tuesday 21 November 2006

NSW Premier Morris Iemma today announced the introduction of legislation to the NSW parliament that will secure a lasting funding agreement between James Hardie and the victims of its asbestos products.

"This legislation marks the culmination of 24 months of protracted negotiations and brings to an end a 12-month delay which was totally unnecessary and unjustified," Mr Iemma said.

"It is a testament to the courage and tenacity of the victims, represented by Bernie Banton, the ACTU represented by Greg Combet and the NSW Government and its superb negotiating team that we are now in a position to lay this matter to rest.

"The new legislation will give effect to an amended and restated Final Funding Agreement, one which has received a binding sign-off from the Australian Tax Office.

"The private binding tax rulings issued on 8 November mean this agreement can now proceed.

"Unquestionably the new structure is more complex than the one we agreed to last year, but it does deliver the same outcome and that is good news for the victims of James Hardie asbestos products," Mr Iemma said.

The Premier said the delays in reaching this position followed the refusal of the Commonwealth to intervene on behalf of the asbestos victims earlier this year when the Australian Tax Office rejected the fund's charitable status.

"It has been a frustrating, and unnecessary delay, but the legislation that we are introducing to the Parliament today, having been ratified by the James Hardie board this morning will now bring finality to the agreement," Mr Iemma said.