If your work has caused or contributed to you developing cancer, you may be able to claim compensation. To be eligible for compensation, your work must have ‘substantially contributed’ to the cancer diagnosis. It does not have to be the only reason you developed cancer, or even the main reason.

This fact sheet answers some common questions about compensation for work-related cancer.

Is work-related cancer common?
Exposure to various substances in the workplace can cause cancer.

About 5000 people are diagnosed with a work-related cancer each year. That means that 1 in 10 cancers diagnosed in men and 1 in 50 cancers diagnosed in women are work-related.

What workplace exposures could cause cancer?
Exposure to different substances can result in work-related cancers.

- **Sun** – If you have worked in the sun, you may be at a greater risk of developing skin cancer, including melanoma. Skin cancer is a common work-related cancer.

- **Asbestos, diesel exhaust, vinyl chloride, wood and leather dust, heavy metals, solvents, rubber and pesticides** – Exposure to these substances can cause different types of cancers but the most common are lung, nasal, liver, bladder, pancreas, brain or stomach cancers and leukaemia.

- **Ionising radiation** – If you’ve been exposed through the mining or nuclear energy industries, you may be at greater risk of developing several types of cancer.

What compensation is available?
If your cancer is work-related, you may be entitled to receive:
- reimbursement for all your medical expenses
- weekly payments in place of your wages while you cannot work
- a lump sum amount to compensate you for the cancer, and possibly an additional amount for pain and suffering.

If a person dies from a work-related illness or injury, their family is entitled to:
- a lump sum death benefit
- a weekly payment for dependent children (under 16 or still studying full-time)
- reimbursement of funeral expenses.

How do I make a claim?
If you have cancer and you think that it may be work-related, you should look into whether you are entitled to compensation. It’s important to get legal advice from a lawyer who specialises in workers’ compensation matters. You should do this as soon as possible, as time limits may apply.

You may not have to pay legal fees for a workers’ compensation claim. The insurance company may pay your lawyer’s fees at the end of your claim. However, if a court decides that your claim is fraudulent, the insurance company and your lawyer may ask you to pay for their work and any costs.

In ACT, WorkSafe ACT pays the compensation. Employers are required by law to have workers compensation insurance to cover their employees for work-related injury and illness.

The lawyer will help you to make a claim. Usually, the first step is to see a doctor to get a medical certificate. The medical certificate confirms that your cancer is work-related. You then submit the certificate to the ‘relevant’ employer, who notifies their insurer. The ‘relevant’ employer is the last
workplace where you were exposed to cancer-causing substances. The employer's insurer will then contact you to get more information.

If your work-related cancer was caused by your employer's negligence, you may also be entitled to compensation for ‘pain and suffering’. Strict time limits apply to lodging this type of claim, so it’s important to talk to a lawyer as soon as possible.

**Where to get help and information**

- Cancer Council
  13 11 20

- WorkSafe ACT
  02 6207 3000