



Anglo offers to fund workers' treatment

Anglo American offers to pay for the medical treatment of claimants proven to have silicosis.

ALLAN SECCOMBE

Published: 2011/04/28 06:45:58 AM

ANGLO American, whose South African subsidiary is being sued by sick workers, has offered to pay for the medical treatment of claimants proven to have silicosis, although it does not concede any liability.

The case is likely to come before the South Gauteng High Court next year. Led by lawyer Richard Meeran, teams of lawyers are representing 18 workers who contracted silicosis — a lung disease caused by breathing silica dust caused during mining.

The claim is that these workers contracted the illness — which leaves sufferers susceptible to tuberculosis and emphysema — at the President Steyn Gold Mine when it was owned by **Anglo American** SA. The planned court action, which was started in 2004, threatens to expose the South African mining industry to claims worth billions of rands if the claimants are successful.

Anglo CEO Cynthia Carroll said at the company's annual general meeting last week that the group had decided to assist the remaining claimants — four have died since the legal action started in 2004.

"I am pleased to report that Anglo American will make proposals to the claimants' attorneys to provide appropriate medical treatment for the claimants in so far as they do suffer from silicosis or silicotuberculosis. The cost of this treatment will be borne entirely by Anglo American," Ms Carroll said.

The claimants will need to be tested by Anglo-approved doctors to verify their illness and that they qualify for the treatment. No cash will be paid to the claimants.

"This proposal will be made on humanitarian grounds, without any admission of liability. If accepted, it will mean the claimants will very soon benefit from proper medical treatment, which will continue for as long as it takes their claims to be finally resolved by the courts," Ms Carroll said.

Anglo stressed that it was not admitting liability. "Anglo American believes that the claims against it are ill-founded, and this will be demonstrated in the course of the proceedings," said Anglo chairman John Parker. Anglo had offered to take the matter to arbitration after the issue was raised in 2004 but lawyers representing the workers had insisted on a court process.

In 2004, Alpheus Blom and seven other former miners launched legal action against Anglo's wholly owned subsidiary Anglo American SA. More sick workers have been added to the case, resulting in delays.

"In an effort to expedite the claims, Anglo American had already taken the unusual step some time ago of agreeing with Mr Blom and the other initial claimants upon a way to streamline the progress of their claims ahead of any trial date, while also attempting to find an alternative method of resolving the disputes outside of the formal court process," Sir John said.



Allweld Mobile Sandblasting

"Specializing in Surface Preparation & Protective Coatings"

www.AllweldSandblasting.com

Since 1984

(604) 299-0932
1 (888) 599-0932

seccombea@bdfm.co.za