

Western Australia

**Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act
1941**

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Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1941

An Act to amend and re-state the law relating to the legal capacity of spouses; and to amend the law relating to proceedings against, and contributions between, tort-feasors; and to amend the law as to the effect of death in relation to causes of action, and to amend the law of property known as the Rule against Perpetuities.

[Long title amended by No. 28 of 2003 s. 116(2).]

1. Short title and commencement

This Act may be cited as the *Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1941* and shall come into operation on a day to be fixed by proclamation¹.

2. Doctrine of unity of spouses abolished

The common law doctrine of unity of spouses is abolished.

[Section 2 inserted by No. 28 of 2003 s. 116(3).]

3. Spousal capacity

- (1) A married person has a legal personality that is independent, separate and distinct from the legal personality of the person's spouse.
- (2) A married person has the same legal capacity that the person would have if the person were unmarried.

s. 4

- (3) This section applies to a married person whether the person married before or after the commencement of this section.

[Section 3 inserted by No. 28 of 2003 s. 116(3).]

4. Effect of death on certain causes of action

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this section and the *Limitation Act 2005*, on the death of any person after the commencement of this Act all causes of action subsisting against or vested in him shall survive against, or, as the case may be, for the benefit of, his estate. Provided that this subsection shall not apply to causes of action for defamation or seduction or for inducing one spouse to leave or remain apart from the other or to claims under section 94 of the *Supreme Court Act 1935*², for damages on the ground of adultery.

- (2) Where a cause of action survives as aforesaid for the benefit of the estate of a deceased person, the damages recoverable for the benefit of the estate of that person —

- (a) shall not include any exemplary damages;
- (b) in the case of a breach of promise to marry shall be limited to such damage, if any, to the estate of that person as flows from the breach of promise to marry;
- (c) where the death of that person has been caused by the act or omission which gives rise to the cause of action, shall be calculated without reference to any loss or gain to his estate consequent on his death, except that a sum in respect of funeral expenses may be included;

[(ca) deleted]

- (d) shall not, unless because of subsection (2a) this paragraph does not apply, include any damages for the pain or suffering of that person or for any bodily or mental harm suffered by him or for the curtailment of his expectation of life;
- (e) shall not include any damages for the loss of the capacity of that person to earn, or for the loss of future

probable earnings of that person, during such time after his death as he would have survived but for the Act or omission which gives rise to the cause of action.

(2a) Subsection (2)(d) does not apply where —

- (a) the death of the person occurs after the day on which the *Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions (Asbestos Diseases)) Act 2002* comes into operation ¹;
- (b) the death results from a latent injury that is attributable to the inhalation of asbestos which has been caused by the act or omission giving rise to the cause of action; and
- (c) proceedings in respect to the cause of action had been instituted by that person before his or her death and were pending at the time of death.

[(3) repealed]

- (4) Where damage has been suffered by reason of any Act or omission in respect of which a cause of action would have subsisted against any person if that person had not died before or at the same time as the damage was suffered, there shall be deemed, for the purposes of this Act, to have been subsisting against him before his death such cause of action in respect of that Act or omission as would have subsisted if he had died after the damage was suffered.
- (5) The rights conferred by this Act for the benefit of the estates of deceased persons shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any rights conferred on the dependants of deceased persons by the Imperial Act 9th and 10th Victoria, Chapter 93 (adopted in Western Australia by the Act 12th Victoria No. 21), as amended by the Act No. 37 of 1900 ³, and so much as relates to causes of action against the estates of deceased persons shall apply in relation to causes of action under the said Act as it applies in relation to other causes of action not expressly excepted from the operation of subsection (1).

s. 5

[Section 4 amended by No. 80 of 1982 s. 2; No. 84 of 1983 s. 11; No. 1 of 2002 s. 3; No. 20 of 2005 s. 15(1)-(3).]

5. Discount rate applicable to damages awarded for future loss

- (1) Where an award of damages that relates to personal injury or the death of a person is to include compensation, awarded as a lump sum, in respect of damage for future loss that is referable to —
- (a) loss or impairment of capacity to earn;
 - (b) loss or diminution of future probable earnings; or
 - (c) a liability to incur expenditure in the future,
- the present value of the future loss shall be quantified by adopting —
- (d) a discount rate of the percentage fixed by the Governor by Order; or
 - (e) where no percentage is fixed as referred to in paragraph (d), a discount rate of 6%.
- (2) The Governor may, by Order made on the recommendation of the Attorney General, fix a discount rate as referred to in subsection (1)(d).
- (3) In subsection (1) ***personal injury*** includes any disease and any impairment of a person's physical or mental condition.

[Section 5 inserted by No. 50 of 1986 s. 5(1).]

Notes

- ¹ This is a compilation of the *Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1941* and includes the amendments made by the other written laws referred to in the following table. The table also contains information about any previous reprint.

Compilation table

Short title	Number and year	Assent	Commencement
<i>Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1941</i>	29 of 1941	15 Dec 1941	24 Oct 1942 (see s. 1 and <i>Gazette</i> 23 Oct 1942 p. 995)
<i>Law Reform (Contributory Negligence and Tortfeasors' Contribution) Act 1947 s. 2</i>	23 of 1947	7 Nov 1947	7 Nov 1947
<i>Law Reform (Property, Perpetuities, and Succession) Act 1962 s. 9(4)</i>	83 of 1962	6 Dec 1962	6 Dec 1962
<i>Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment Act 1982</i>	80 of 1982	22 Nov 1982	22 Nov 1982
Reprint of the <i>Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1941</i> approved 25 Sep 1983 (includes amendments listed above)			
<i>Acts Amendment (Asbestos Related Diseases) Act 1983 Pt. V</i>	84 of 1983	22 Dec 1983	19 Jan 1984 (see s. 2)
<i>Acts Amendment (Actions for Damages) Act 1986 Pt. II</i>	50 of 1986	4 Aug 1986	18 Aug 1986 (see s. 2 and <i>Gazette</i> 15 Aug 1986 p. 2925)
<i>Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions (Asbestos Diseases)) Act 2002</i>	1 of 2002	20 Mar 2002	21 Mar 2002 (see s. 2)
Reprint of the <i>Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1941</i> as at 12 Jul 2002 (includes amendments listed above)			
<i>Acts Amendment (Equality of Status) Act 2003 s. 116</i>	28 of 2003	22 May 2003	1 Jul 2003 (see s. 2 and <i>Gazette</i> 30 Jun 2003 p. 2579)

Short title	Number and year	Assent	Commencement
<i>Limitation Legislation Amendment and Repeal Act 2005 Pt. 7</i> ⁴	20 of 2005	15 Nov 2005	15 Nov 2005 (see s. 2)

² The *Supreme Court Act 1935* s. 94 was repealed by the *Matrimonial Causes and Personal Status Code 1948* s. 3.

³ The Imperial Act 9 and 10 Vict c. 93 (1846) was adopted by the *Imperial Acts Adopting Ordinance 1849* (12 Vict. No. 21) and amended by Act No. 37 of 1900. It was repealed in so far as it was part of the law of WA by the *Fatal Accidents Act 1959* s. 2.

⁴ The *Limitation Legislation Amendment and Repeal Act 2005* s. 15(4) reads as follows:

“

15. Section 4 amended and a savings provision

- (4) The *Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1941* section 4, as it was immediately before commencement day, continues to apply to causes of action that accrued before commencement day as if subsections (1), (2) and (3) had not been enacted.

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