

NEWS

Pensioner's fall costs TAC thousands

BY ROSEMARY BOLGER

LORRAINE Johnson had an extra spring in her step at her tap dancing class after receiving a six-figure payout from the Transport Accident Commission following a serious fall on a tram.

In January 2007, the Richmond resident had just boarded a Bridge Road tram and was validating her

ticket when the driver braked suddenly. The force caused her to lose her grip and fall backwards, breaking her neck and back. Ms Johnson, now aged 78, spent two weeks in hospital and underwent back surgery later that year. "The hospital said I could have been killed," the grandmother of six said. "I was lucky."

She was attending twice-weekly physiotherapy sessions paid by the

TAC up until April 2009. The TAC decided the sessions were not leading to improvement, but Ms Johnson said they at least maintained her range of movement, although it was limited. She could not afford to pay for two \$60 sessions out of her pension and decided to seek legal advice.

It was then she realised she was eligible for a payout for her pain and suffering as well as her medical bills.

The case was settled this month. Her lawyers at Maurice and Blackburn hope Ms Johnson's case will make other elderly people who fall on public transport aware they could be eligible for payment from the TAC.

Senior associate Dimi Ioannou said many people injured on public transport did not know their legal rights. "They think road trauma is the only thing the TAC deals with," she said.



PETER WENNING