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**CIVIL LIABILITY (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1996**

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AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW RELATING TO CIVIL LIABILITY. [25th December, 1996]

BE IT ENACTED BY THE OIREACHTAS AS FOLLOWS:

1.—(1) Section 47 of the Civil Liability Act, 1961 (hereinafter in this Act called “the Principal Act”) is hereby amended by the substitution of the following subsection for subsection (1):

Amendment of section 47 (definitions (Part IV)) of Civil Liability Act, 1961.

“(1) In this Part—

‘dependant’ means, in respect of a deceased person whose death is caused by a wrongful act—

- (a) a spouse, parent, grandparent, step-parent, child, grandchild, step-child, brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister of the deceased,
- (b) a person whose marriage to the deceased has been dissolved by a decree of divorce that was granted under the Family Law (Divorce) Act, 1996 or under the law of a country or jurisdiction other than the State and is recognised in the State, or
- (c) a person who was not married to the deceased but who, until the date of the deceased’s death, had been living with the deceased as husband or wife for a continuous period of not less than three years,

who has suffered injury or mental distress as a result of the death;

‘wrongful act’ includes a crime.”.

(2) *Subsection (1)* shall not have effect in relation to a cause of action that accrued before that subsection comes into operation.

2.—(1) Section 49 of the Principal Act, as amended by section 28 (1) of the Courts Act, 1981, is hereby amended—

Amendment of section 49 (damages) of Principal Act.

- (a) in paragraph (b) of subsection (1), by substituting “£20,000” for “£7,500”,

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(b) by the insertion of the following subsections after subsection (1):

“(1A) Where the Minister for Equality and Law Reform is satisfied that the monetary amount for the time being standing specified—

(a) in paragraph (b) of subsection (1), or

(b) in respect of paragraph (b) of subsection (1), by virtue of an order made under this subsection,

should, having regard to changes in the value of money generally in the State since the monetary amount was so specified, be varied, the Minister may by order specify an amount that the Minister considers is appropriate, and in such case paragraph (b) of subsection (1) shall, in relation to any cause of action that accrues while the order is in effect, have effect as if the amount specified in the order were set out in that paragraph.

(1B) Every order made under subsection (1A) shall be laid before each House of the Oireachtas as soon as practicable after it is made and, if a resolution annulling the order is passed by either House within the next 21 days on which that House has sat after the order is laid before it, the order shall be annulled accordingly, but without prejudice to any cause of action that accrued while the order was in effect.”

and

(c) by the insertion of the following subsection after subsection (4):

“(5) Where a person referred to in paragraph (c) of the definition of ‘dependant’ in section 47 (1) had no enforceable right to financial maintenance by the deceased, the court shall take that fact into account, together with any other relevant matter, in determining the damages to be awarded to the person by virtue of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of this section.”

(2) *Subsection (1)* shall not have effect in relation to a cause of action that accrued before that subsection comes into operation.

No mental distress damages to certain persons.

3.—(1) The Principal Act is hereby amended by the insertion of the following section after section 49:

“49A.—Notwithstanding anything in this Part, damages may not be awarded to a person referred to in paragraph (b) of the definition of ‘dependant’ in section 47 (1) in respect of any mental distress allegedly caused to the person by the death of the deceased.”

(2) *Subsection (1)* shall not have effect in relation to a cause of action that accrued before that subsection comes into operation.

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4.—(1) Section 18 of the Air Navigation and Transport Act, 1936, substituted by the Air Navigation and Transport Act, 1965, and amended by the Courts Act, 1981 and by the Air Navigation and Transport Act, 1988, is hereby amended—

Amendment of  
section 18 of Air  
Navigation and  
Transport Act,  
1936.

(a) in subsection (1), by the substitution of the following paragraph for paragraph (a):

“(a) In this section ‘dependant’, in relation to a passenger in respect of whose death a liability is imposed on a carrier by Article 17 of the Warsaw Convention or the Guadalajara Convention, means—

(i) a spouse, parent, grandparent, step-parent, child, grandchild, step-child, brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister of the deceased,

(ii) a person whose marriage to the deceased has been dissolved by a decree of divorce that was granted under the Family Law (Divorce) Act, 1996 or under the law of a country or jurisdiction other than the State and is recognised in the State, or

(iii) a person who was not married to the deceased but who, until the date of the deceased’s death, had been living with the deceased as husband or wife for a continuous period of not less than three years,

who has suffered injury or mental distress as a result of the death.”,

(b) in paragraph (g) of subsection (2), by substituting “£20,000” for “£7,500”, and

(c) by the insertion of the following subsections after subsection (2):

“(2A) Where the Minister for Equality and Law Reform is satisfied that the monetary amount for the time being standing specified—

(a) in paragraph (g) of subsection (2), or

(b) in respect of paragraph (g) of subsection (2), by virtue of an order made under this subsection,

should, having regard to changes in the value of money generally in the State since the monetary amount was so specified, be varied, the Minister may by order specify an amount that the Minister considers is appropriate, and in such case paragraph (g) of subsection (2) shall, in relation to any cause of action that accrues while the order is in effect, have effect as if the amount specified in the order were set out in that paragraph.

(2B) Every order made under subsection (2A) shall be laid before each House of the Oireachtas as soon as practicable after it is made and, if a resolution annulling the order is passed by either House within the next 21 days

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on which that House has sat after the order is laid before it, the order shall be annulled accordingly, but without prejudice to any cause of action that accrued while the order was in effect.

(2C) Where a person referred to in subparagraph (iii) of the definition of 'dependant' in subsection (1) had no enforceable right to financial maintenance by the deceased, the court shall take that fact into account, together with any other relevant matter, in determining the damages to be awarded to the person by virtue of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (f) of subsection (2).

(2D) Notwithstanding anything in this section, damages may not be awarded to a person referred to in subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) in respect of any mental distress allegedly caused to the person by the death of the deceased."

(2) *Subsection (1)* shall not have effect in relation to a cause of action that accrued before that subsection comes into operation.

Short title.

**5.**—This Act may be cited as the *Civil Liability (Amendment) Act, 1996*.

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ACTS REFERRED TO

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| Air Navigation and Transport Act, 1936 | 1936, No. 40 |
| Air Navigation and Transport Act, 1965 | 1965, No. 6  |
| Air Navigation and Transport Act, 1988 | 1988, No. 15 |
| Civil Liability Act, 1961              | 1961, No. 41 |
| Courts Act, 1981                       | 1981, No. 11 |
| Family Law (Divorce) Act, 1996         | 1996, No. 33 |