



ASBESTOS DISEASE SUPPORT SOCIETY

2021 Board Report to Members

My name is Phil Blair and I am the Chair of the Asbestos Disease Support Society. Thank you all for attending the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respect to elders, past, present and emerging.

Passing of Members

Before I begin to deliver the 2021 Board Report, I think it is appropriate we acknowledge, remember and pay our respects to all those who have passed away as a result of asbestos and silica related disease and those who are suffering as a result of their exposure.

We must remember that all they did was turn up to work to earn a living to support their families or just went about their daily lives – nothing more, nothing less. We are still seeing the affects today with 50 members of the Society passing in 2021 – which, unfortunately is on par with numbers in 2020. If we could all just take a moment's silence, please.

Board Report

I would like to acknowledge the Board of Directors here with me today.

- Bianca Neve, who is also the Deputy Chair
- Pat Cini
- Peter Close
- Garry Rogers
- Sheila Hunter
- Andrew Ramsay and Trish Ramsay

and Margot Hoyte, who unfortunately cannot be here today.

I would also like to acknowledge Trevor Torrens, the Society's General Manager and ADSS staff - Kerrie Williams – Office Manager, Kay Ravbar – Accounts Officer and Karen Selmon, our Clinical Support Nurse.

The Society

The Society was founded in 1992 by Shirley White OAM to support sufferers of asbestos related disease, their families and carers.

Over this period the Society's mission has grown, to not only provide support to sufferers, but also to promote awareness, lobby all levels of Government for improvements, work with health professionals and register exposure for workers and the general community.

COVID Interruption

This year, we were able to return to some normality following disruption to the Society's activities due to COVID. In 2020, we were only able to hold 2 of our scheduled 24 community morning teas and our annual charity race day and Symposium were cancelled. In 2021, all morning teas have been held with over 700 attendees – and we still have 2 more to go at the Gold Coast and Redcliffe. Pleasingly, the Symposium went ahead and we were able to hold our charity race day which raised just under **\$140,000.00** – tremendous result.

Services

The services provided by the Society continues to play an important role in the life journey of many of our members. It is worth noting these services -

- Support from a Social Worker and Clinical Support
- Medical equipment on loan - for example portable oxygen concentrators.
- Occupational therapy assessment
- Nutrition and dietary consultation and information
- Telephone support from our volunteers
- Community morning teas
- Peer to peer support through our member groups
- Up to date information through the quarterly newsletter
- Legal Assistance through Turner Freeman Lawyers, who are outstanding in their commitment, compassion and outcomes for the Society's members.

Finances

Despite the COVID disruption to our major annual raiser in September 2020 - the charity race day - the Society is in a sound financial position. In the 2020/21 financial year, the Society produced a surplus of **\$323,281.00**. As at 30 June 2021, the Society had a net asset base of approximately **\$2.9 million dollars**.

Trevor will speak regarding the financials in more detail shortly.

In order to financially future proof the Society, the Board determined to invest reserve funds in a medium to long term professionally managed investment portfolio with JB Were. As at 30/06/21, the net gain on this fund was **\$92,734.00**.

Additionally, in terms of financial stewardship, it is important to note that the auditors confirmed an unqualified audit opinion.

It takes a lot of support to provide the services just mentioned. On behalf of the Society I would like to thank the construction industry for their ongoing support. In particular, recognition and thanks must go to the CFMEU and other unions such as the ETU for their efforts to support this important cause.

I would also like to thank our corporate sponsors for their ongoing support and for the many donations from individuals that we regularly receive.

Silicosis

Following the changes to the Society's Constitution at the 2018 AGM, we continue to build our support arrangements for those who have been diagnosed with other "dust" related lung disease - in particular silicosis – an occupational lung disease with symptoms similar to asbestosis. This support is provided under the banner of "Silicosis Support Network".

The Network operates on the successful and long-standing principles and services provided to those suffering from asbestos related disease. The Network aims to create a community where we all work together to offer support to sufferers of Silicosis including their partners, loved ones and families. This support includes:

- Individual and Group Support
- Information and Resources
- Services and Referrals

The Network has also launched Australia's first and only dedicated website providing information, resources and available support mechanisms for sufferers of silicosis.

Additionally, the Society purchased two Portacount Respirator fit testing machines as part of our silicosis prevention strategy. These machines are on loan to Future Skills, a registered training organisation, which provides on-site worker respirator fit testing at no cost through grant funding obtained from Construction Skills Queensland. To date, over 1,000 workers have been "fit tested" to ensure that their personal protective equipment provides the highest standard of safe guarding as possible.

Strategic Planning

As I mentioned earlier, a mission of the Society is to lobby all levels of Government for improvements on asbestos related issues. There are still a number of "bad laws" that seem to ignore the World Health Organisation's advice that there is no safe level of exposure that can protect a person from developing an asbestos related disease – particularly mesothelioma.

In 2021, after a strong campaign and intense lobbying, we were successful in having the Queensland Government change the guidance on low density asbestos fibre board from non-friable to friable material. The significance of this decision means that the dangerous health and safety risks associated with this asbestos containing material is appropriately managed to a higher and safer standard than that of non-friable or bonded asbestos.

We are also continuing to engage with the Government on the establishment of a Queensland Asbestos Eradication Agency and finalisation of the Government's *Statewide Strategic Plan for the Safe Management of Asbestos*.

Additionally, with the assistance of the union movement, in particular the CFMEU, the Government has committed to the Society to review what is known as the **10m² rule**. This legislation allows DIY homeowners to remove up to 10m² of bonded asbestos or over 10m² if an on-line course has been completed. This is totally unacceptable. The Society's position is that this legislation should be abolished and only asbestos licensed professionals used.

Nationally

At the national level, the Society continues to play its part through membership of the *Non-Government Asbestos Advisory Committee*, which is overseen by the *Federal Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency*.

This committee is undertaking some interesting work, including:

- Developing messaging for National Asbestos Awareness Week
- Identifying asbestos safety training options for workers entering trades where they are likely to encounter asbestos
- Developing asbestos guidance and awareness materials for real estate agents and property managers
- Developing a national picture of where ACMs are located in homes called a residential heatmap **AND**
- Exploring incentives to encourage the safe removal and disposal of ACMs from homes.

Governance

The Society is governed by a Board of nine (9) directors elected by financial members from the membership. A Director's term of appointment is two (2) years with compulsory retirement of half the sitting Directors each year. A retired Director is eligible for re-election.

In accordance with the Society's Constitution, nominations were called for four (4) Director positions in September. At the close of nominations, six (6) applications had been received. As a result, the Society was required to hold a ballot of members to elect the five (4) directors. I am pleased to announce, the following members have been elected to the Board.

- Myself
- Bianca Neve
- Peter Close, and
- Margot Hoyte

All are returning directors.

Congratulations to the elected directors and thank you also to Leo Jenson and Glenda Richards for their nominations.

Membership

As of today's date, we have 728 financial members of the Society which is an increase of about 60 at the same time last year. The old saying that "there is strength in numbers" is very true - count when communicating the Society's message - whether it be to Government or other organisations. A strong support base provides the Society with a strong voice. I would like to thank our renewing members for their ongoing commitment to ADSS and I would ask you to promote the Society's message and encourage people who would like to support the Society by becoming a member.

Corporate Membership

Corporate members of the Society are companies and industry organisations that show support for the Society's mission and values. All corporate members are recognised in the quarterly newsletter and at selected functions and events and we thank them for their support.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would particularly like to thank all the staff, our volunteers and the Board of Directors for all of their hard work. As I stated earlier, the Society is in a good financial position, we have strong governance arrangements, a terrific management team and excellent support services for our members, their families and carers. We look forward to continuing our work over the next 12 months.

This Board report will be posted to the Society's website in the coming days.