

Spring 2022
NEWSLETTER

adss

Asbestos Disease
Support Society

Asbestos Disease Support Society
Silicosis Support Network

16 Campbell Street, Bowen Hills, QLD 4006

PO Box 280, Spring Hill, QLD 4004

1800 776 412 | inquiries@adss.org.au

inquiries@silicosissupport.org.au

Silicosis
Support Network



'30 Years of Support'

DO YOU KNOW
BEING AN
**ADSS & SSN
MEMBER**

There is free assistance through the provision of:

Information on asbestos & silica related diseases

Support from our social worker

Clinical support from the registered nurse

Medical aids on loan

Community morning tea groups and support groups

Nutritional advice

Occupational therapy assessment

Quarterly Newsletter

**Legal consultation with our preferred lawyers experienced
in asbestos and silica compensation.**

**Call the Society if you would like to
discuss any of these services**

1800 776 412



In This Issue

In Loving Memory	4
General Managers Report – <i>Trevor Torrens</i>	5
Our Legal Advisor – <i>Thady Blundell</i>	8
Society Social Worker – <i>Rhonda Wheatley</i>	9
Society Clinical Nurse – <i>Karen Selmon</i>	12
On the National Front	13
Did You Know	16
The Society at Work	17

REMINDER

Our Symposium and AGM is being held on Wednesday 19 October 2022 from 9.15am at Brisbane City Hall.

- Dr Ian Brown (Thoracic Physician)
- Prof Ken O'Byrne (Oncologist)

These speakers have extensive knowledge of asbestos disease and will be able to provide invaluable information about asbestos disease

CALL NOW TO BOOK YOUR SEAT

Email:
inquiries@adss.org.au

Phone: 1800 776 412

In Loving Memory

John Whitney

Charles Jeremy Ward

Robert Audley Wakerley

John Charles Gittins

Susan Katharine Pattison

John Henry Malcolm

Alan Menelaws

Janita Bird

Colin Peter Gill



**I missed you today
I will miss you tomorrow
Tears in my eyes
And a heart full of sorrow
I hold on to the memories
Of the great times we had
I grieve for what I lost
But am grateful for what I had**

General Managers Report

TREVOR TORRENS



Welcome to the 2022 Spring edition of the Society's newsletter.

We have completed our Community Morning Tea program for 2022, rounding off at Ipswich on 6 September. The numbers of attendees this year has been outstanding and a big thank you to all who have come along – if you haven't attended one of our morning teas (held in the local community) can I encourage you to consider. Invitations are forwarded approximately 4 weeks prior to the event. The morning tea program that we undertake is definitely a yearly highlight. Going throughout Queensland and into Darwin to meet the Society's members is hardly what I or the ADSS team call work! Connecting with and providing support to our members is the number one priority for the Society and the overwhelming positive feedback has been greatly appreciated. These morning teas are undertaken in partnership with the Society's law firm who is well known to our members – Turner Freeman Lawyers.

Providing 30 Years of Providing Support

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Asbestos Disease Support Society's assistance and service to those who have been affected by asbestos related disease. Established in 1992 and known as the Queensland Asbestos Related Disease Support Society or QARDSS, the organisation has grown from humble beginnings of 35 members to approximately 800 in 2022, with many other affiliated organisations. QARDSS was established by Shirley White who, for her services, was awarded an OAM in 2003. Shirley saw the devastating effects of asbestos disease through her husband Reg. Shirley was the first President and remained in that position until her passing in 2009. Without the inspiration and commitment of Shirley and the founding committee members and volunteers, the Society would not be in existence today providing the much needed support to those and their loved ones who have been affected by asbestos related disease.

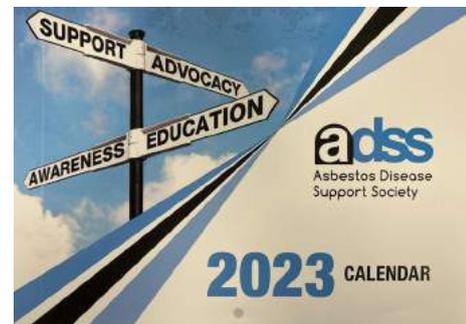
In 1992, QARDSS was primarily focussed on providing support to sufferers of asbestos related diseases and their families through a network of dedicated and hardworking volunteers. Today, the Asbestos Disease Support Society or ADSS is a professionally managed organisation with a Board of Directors and an expanded mission. ADSS's undertakings now go beyond support and include activities to increase awareness of the dangers of exposure to asbestos fibres, advocating for improvements in relation to asbestos issues and working with the health community to aid in a better understanding of asbestos related disease. Members also now have access to a broader range of services including a social worker, nurse, occupational therapist, medical aids loan scheme and welfare assistance - to name a few.

In 2018, ADSS expanded support services to those affected by other dust related diseases such as silicosis. This service operates under the banner of the Silicosis Support Network.

There is still much work to be done and on behalf of the ADSS Board of Directors and staff, I would like to thank everyone who has supported ADSS over the years.

ADSS 2023 Calendar

Included with this Newsletter is a 2023 ADSS member calendar. The idea for the calendar originated from Kerrie Williams, ADSS's long serving (and dedicated!) office and operations manager. Great idea Kerrie and I am sure well appreciated by our members!



Statewide Strategic Plan for the Safe Management of Asbestos in Queensland 2022-2025

The Statewide Strategic Plan for the Safe Management of Asbestos in Queensland 2022-2025 (the Strategic Plan) has now been endorsed by the Government. The Strategic Plan provides a whole-of-government approach towards improving awareness and management of asbestos-related risks and ensuring regulatory agencies are effective in their response to asbestos matters and incidents.

If you would like to view the Strategic Plan, it can be found at: www.asbestos.qld.gov.au

The Strategic Plan is a three year plan and includes 23 initiatives across four priority areas. The four priority areas are:

- Improving asbestos awareness to influence behavioural change;
- Identification and effective management of legacy in situ asbestos containing materials, imported asbestos and naturally occurring asbestos;
- Safe removal, transport and disposal of asbestos waste; and
- Effective and coordinated regulation.

General Managers Report

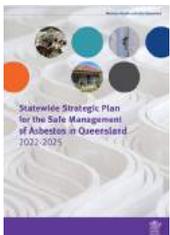
TREVOR TORRENS



The Government's Interagency Asbestos Group (IAG) will coordinate implementation of the Strategic Plan with individual agencies leading and actioning initiatives that fall within their responsibility. Progress against the actions in the Strategic Plan will be published annually on the Government's asbestos website.

The Society was consulted in relation to the development of the Strategic Plan and it is pleasing to see the inclusion of a number of initiatives that the Society has been pressing for, including:

- Examine the need for improvements to regulatory standards, including reviewing the '10m2 rule' provisions under public health and work health and safety regulations by early 2023, and adopting amendments to the model work health and safety legislation in Queensland
- Government agencies that own or control assets have prioritised schedules for the safe removal of asbestos based on risk
- Consider the establishment of a Queensland asbestos eradication agency (for government owned or controlled buildings)
- Identify and promote robust models for identifying and grading ACMs
- Engage with government agencies to ensure timely review and revision of emergency and natural disaster management planning to incorporate best-practice asbestos guidance
- Ensure existing tools for prioritising removal of ACMs are reviewed, tested, promoted and used
- Develop guidance on the strategic removal of ACMs from government owned and controlled assets
- Engage with regulators in other jurisdictions to monitor developments and share best practice approaches to asbestos awareness and management



At the end of the day a plan is only as good as the actions and outcomes that it delivers. The Society will be watching very closely how the Government progresses this the plan and the outcomes it achieves.

Asbestos Compliance Audits

Credit where credit is due – as the saying goes.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectors have commenced an audit program targeting businesses operating from buildings likely to contain asbestos (likely if built before 1990), and those that handle or store asbestos. The audits are focussing on compliance with the requirement to develop asbestos registers and management plans in accordance with

the Management of asbestos and associated risks regulation (Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011-part 8.3). Inspectors will respond to breaches of the legislation by taking enforcement action that may include the issue of statutory notices and on-the-spot fines. The state-wide audit campaign aims to eliminate asbestos-related diseases in Australia by preventing exposure to asbestos fibres. This requires the effective targeting of asbestos use and disposal while addressing the harmful legacy of asbestos in homes, workplaces and the environment.

The Society commends the Government on taking this pro-active approach to compliance.

Proposed Statutory Seller Disclosure Scheme For The Sale And Purchase Of Freehold Land

The Queensland Government is proposing to implement a statutory seller disclosure scheme for the sale and purchase of freehold land. The proposed scheme would make it mandatory for a seller of freehold land to disclose relevant information to a proposed buyer in a single document along with any prescribed certificates.

Disappointingly, the scheme does not propose to mandate the disclosure of asbestos containing materials!

Some examples of issues to be disclosed include:

- Registered survey plan for the lot
- Pool compliance certificate or notice of no pool safety certificate
- Notice under section 347, 362 or 408 of the Environmental Protection Act 1994
- Unlicensed building work' notice under section 47 of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991

If a home was built before 1990 it can contain asbestos. It is estimated that ACMs are still found in 1 in 3 homes across Australia. ACMs are dangerous to health if damaged, disturbed or deteriorating. Knowledge of the presence of ACMs in homes is essential to ensure that property owners and occupiers can take the right action to prevent asbestos exposure, for example when renovating or carrying out maintenance.

The introduction of mandatory requirements for vendors to disclose the presence, or potential presence, of asbestos in older residential properties is supported by a wide range of government and non-government stakeholders and has been recommended in various national and jurisdictional reviews.

General Managers Report

TREVOR TORRENS



Not doing so as part of these reforms would be a missed opportunity to strengthen the framework for preventing exposure to asbestos fibres, particularly in the residential sector where activities such as do-it-yourself home renovations present an ongoing risk.

The Society has made a submission to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (who has carriage of this issue) recommending that the disclosure of asbestos containing materials be included in the scheme. We will keep a close 'eye' on this issue and keenly await the Government's response.

Annual Charity Race Day: Great day! Great result! \$128,000.00 raised!

This event is our major annual fund raiser and enables the Society to continue the important work of providing assistance to sufferers of asbestos and other dust related lung diseases such as silicosis and to undertake awareness activities in the broader community.

It was a great day and wasn't it good to see over 500 attendees from the construction and associated industries come together as one to help raise these funds

There are too many people to thank individually, but I would like to recognise the Society's directors, staff and volunteers and our great supporter the CFMEU (Construction & General) for the work that was undertaken to again make the day happen – there is no 'I' in TEAM!

We had many other sponsors that deserve recognition including: RudTek, Future Skills, Xvend, Mining & Energy Division of the CFMEU, ETU, Turner Freeman Lawyers, BUSSQ, Qld Council of Unions, BERT/CIP – a big cheers!

Once again, a big thank you to everyone who supported the day



Annual Raffle

In conjunction with the Charity Race Day, we also had the draw for our annual raffle. Thank you to the sponsors, those who assisted with tickets sales and those who purchased tickets.

Winners of the raffle were:

1st Prize
(Sponsors: Creative Safety Initiatives, FTF Pty Ltd & Total Tools)
Trailer plus various goods

Ticket No. 574

Winner – Issa E (HQ Projex)

2nd Prize
\$1,500 Flight Centre Travel Voucher
(Sponsor: Turner Freeman Lawyers)

Ticket No. 1758

Winner – Jason Constable

3rd Prize (Sponsor: Turner Freeman Lawyers)
\$1,000 Various Gift Cards

Ticket No. 1625

Winner - Max Davis



Thank you for your Donation

A big thank you to everyone who has donated to the Society since last Newsletter. Without this support we could not provide support! In particular, we would like to recognise the following donations over \$500.00:

- Turner Freeman Lawyers
- CFMEU Members
- Vend2Go
- FreshVend
- Jacqueline Geen
- Beta Sigma Phi Epsilon Chapter
- Andrew Bungey
- Helen Knox
- Glenda Richards
- Fernanda Moffat
- Robert John Lewis
- Anora Foundations
- Pro Concrete Group Pty Ltd
- HazSure Consultants

All the Best

Trevor Torrens
General Manager



DUST DISEASES – WHAT ARE MY COMPENSATION ENTITLEMENTS?

Dust Diseases – What Are My Compensation Entitlements?

I have previously commented on the fact that one of the unusual aspects of dust diseases is that dust such as asbestos and silica can cause a whole host of different diseases.

Asbestos can cause pleural plaques which are largely seen asymptomatic but then can also cause more disabling disease such as asbestosis and pleural thickening and then of course lung cancer and mesothelioma.

Silica exposure can also cause a host of lung problems such as simple silicosis, accelerated silicosis and progressive massive fibrosis to name but three. There can also be autoimmune reaction to silica exposure.

Much like the fact that dust exposure can cause various diseases, dust diseases do not all have one answer in terms of compensation entitlements.

The above was brought home to me when a member recently asked whether he was eligible for a pension. He had been speaking to another person who was receiving a lifetime pension for a dust disease. The member who asked the question though is not entitled to a pension and the reason for this is because of the place of dust exposure.

Place of Exposure

A key factor in determining compensation entitlements for those with dust disease is where did the exposure occur? The place of exposure is not so much the town or city in which the exposure occurred but the jurisdiction in which it occurred. Australia has different compensation entitlements depending upon the state or territory in which the exposure occurred. Each state and territory has different systems for compensating those with dust disease.

For instance if a person is exposed in New South Wales, they can have both Workers' Compensation benefits and Court benefits that exist side by side and both entitlements often need to be pursued. There are no lump sums though available for those with dust disease under the New South Wales Workers' Compensation system.

In Queensland, the opposite is true. Lump sums are available under the Workers' Compensation system but you cannot obtain double compensation in the sense of receiving Workers' Compensation benefits

and then enjoying Court benefits on top of that. Victoria and South Australia have entitlements that are somewhat akin to both New South Wales and Queensland.

Another issue that arises is that those with dust diseases are sometimes exposed in multiple jurisdictions and it is a matter of deciding which jurisdiction is most advantageous. Again, double compensation cannot be obtained.

Different Time Limits

Not only are the entitlements different state by state but in some jurisdictions there are no time limits for pursuing claims and in other jurisdictions such as Queensland for Workers' Compensation benefits, there are quite strict time limits – 6 months from diagnosis to lodge a claim.

Some members who develop dust diseases also have had exposure overseas and therefore those jurisdictions to consider with their own entitlements and time limits and other matters to consider.

Seek Advice Immediately

Whilst the above is complicated, the key message is that anyone diagnosed with dust disease should contact the Society as soon as possible to start to investigate their entitlements and seek support. This will allow time for consideration of the above issues, particularly where there are exposures in multiple jurisdictions.

If you have any questions about this article, do not hesitate to contact the Society.



Society Social Worker

RHONDA WHEATLEY



Spring is here and with the change in seasons it is a good time to reflect on our daily routines and how we look after ourselves. Small changes in what we do day to day can have a positive effect on our overall health. These could range from spending time in a local park, eating more fresh fruit and vegetables, reaching out to family or friends, trying out a new relaxation technique or mindfulness. These small changes are very helpful in building resilience, increasing emotional wellness, and managing life challenges.

When talking with members one of the big take away messages has been the importance of emotional and physical wellbeing, asking for help when it is needed, talking with people who understand plus remaining connected with family/friends and the community.

Emotional Wellness is defined as the ability to successfully handle life stressors and adapt to change and difficult times.

Please see information over the next two pages from the National Institute of Health, <https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>. It is a good check list on how we can look after our emotional wellbeing.

Kind regards,
Rhonda
Society Social Worker



Emotional Wellness Checklist

Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Here are tips for improving your emotional health:

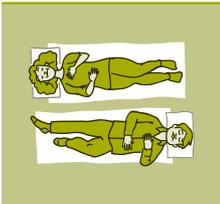


BRIGHTEN YOUR OUTLOOK

People who are emotionally well, experts say, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called resilience. Another sign of emotional wellness is being able to hold onto positive emotions longer and appreciate the good times.

To develop a more positive mindset:

- Remember your good deeds.
- Forgive yourself.
- Practice gratitude. Create positive emotions by being thankful every day.
- Spend more time with your friends.
- Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life.
- Develop healthy physical habits.



REDUCE STRESS

Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it's needed most. But if stress lasts a long time—a condition known as chronic stress—those "high alert" changes become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience.

To help manage your stress:

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly.
- Build a social support network.
- Set priorities.
- Show compassion for yourself.
- Try relaxation methods.
- Seek help.



GET QUALITY SLEEP

To fit in everything we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It's vital to your well-being. When you're tired, you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep.

To get better quality sleep:

- Go to bed and get up each day at the same time.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet place.
- Exercise daily.
- Limit the use of electronics.
- Relax before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol before bedtime and stimulants like caffeine or nicotine.
- Consult a health care professional if you have ongoing sleep problems.

For other wellness topics, please visit www.nih.gov/wellnesstoolkits



continued on next page



BE MINDFUL

The concept of mindfulness is simple. This ancient practice is about being completely aware of what’s happening in the present—of all that’s going on inside and all that’s happening around you. It means not living your life on “autopilot.” Becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started.

To be more mindful:

- Take some deep breaths in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
- Enjoy a stroll, notice the sights around you.
- Practice mindful eating. Be aware of each bite and when you’re full.
- Be aware of your body. Do a mental scan, bringing your attention to how each part feels.
- Find mindfulness resources, including online programs.



COPE WITH LOSS

When someone you love dies, your world changes. There is no right or wrong way to mourn. Although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, most people can make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends. Learn healthy ways to help you through difficult times.

To help cope with loss:

- Take care of yourself.
- Talk to a caring friend.
- Try not to make any major changes right away.
- Join a grief support group.
- Consider professional support.
- Talk to your doctor if you’re having trouble with everyday activities.
- Be patient. Mourning takes time.



STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being.

To build healthy support systems:

- Build strong relationships with your kids.
- Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
- If you’re a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- Take a class to learn something new.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school, library, or place of worship.
- Travel to different places and meet new people.

For other wellness topics, please visit www.nih.gov/wellnesstoolkits





KAREN SELMON

UPDATE ON CLINICAL TRIALS FOR MALIGNANT PLEURAL MESOTHELIOMA

CHECK MATE 743 - NIVOLUMAB AND IPILUMUMAB

In July this year, Bristol Myers Squibb announced a 3 year data update for the Checkmate 743 Clinical Trial for the treatment of unresectable Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma (MPM) with dual immunotherapy Nivolumab (Opdivo) and Ipilimumab (Yervoy).

The Asbestos Diseases Support Society (ADSS) was invited to The Real World Management of Mesothelioma workshop, where presentations were given by Bristol Myers Squibb, Oncologists, Radiologists, Thady Blundell from Turner Freeman and Trevor Torrens, General Manager of ADSS.

The data presented by Bristol Myers Squibb demonstrated a durable survival benefit with Opdivo and Yervoy as first line treatment compared to standard chemotherapy in malignant pleural mesothelioma regardless of histology (epithelioid, sarcomatoid, or biphasic). With a minimum follow up of 3 years, 23% of patients treated with Opdivo and Yervoy were alive at three years compared to 15% of patients treated with standard chemotherapy.

Treatment with the dual immunotherapy treatment has continued to show an improvement in medium overall survival of 18.1 months compared to 14.1 months with chemotherapy.

DREAM3R - DURVALUMAB WITH CHEMOTHERAPY AS FIRST LINE TREATMENT IN ADVANCED PLEURAL MESOTHELIOMA

The Dream3R clinical trial is a phase III trial and is a combination of Durvalumab (immunotherapy) and standard chemotherapy. Durvalumab is a protein that works by blocking a body substance called programmed death ligand (PD-L1), which then enables the body's immune system to attack cancer cells. The Dream3R is a randomised clinical trial where two thirds of participants will receive the combined treatment of Durvalumab and standard chemotherapy and one third will receive standard chemotherapy.

The Dream3R trial is continuing to recruit patients with trial sites in Australia and worldwide.

Please check with your treating physician to see if you are eligible for these treatments.



On the National Front

ASBESTOS EXPOSURE THE HIDDEN COST OF DIY BOOM
BY MICHELLE BALTAZAR - AUGUST 31, 2022

In the renovation boom sparked by the pandemic two years ago, it's easy to forget about some of the dangers of DIY fixes.

One that comes to mind is the risk of asbestos exposure. Asbestos was a popular building product used in most houses between the 1940s and the late 1980s.

Little did we know then that it can cause cancer, and so many lives have been cut short because those who were exposed to it - labourers, subcontractors, homeowners - didn't know the price they were paying for building a dream home or fixing up an old one.

We do now, but some people still skip getting professionals in to remove asbestos from their homes when they are renovating.

The cost of removing asbestos safely by a licensed business can be between \$25 and \$50 a square metre. It's a small price to pay given the risks of doing it yourself. Local councils also impose harsh penalties for dumping asbestos-laden materials illegally.

The rule of thumb is this: if a home was built before 1990, chances are high that it contains asbestos both inside and outside. It is found in one in three Australian homes, according to the federal government's Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency.

The agency is running a campaign informing residential property buyers, sellers, renters and landlords of their responsibilities and rights when buying or renting a home that may contain asbestos.

"By knowing where asbestos can be in a residential property, we can all keep safe," says the agency.

Justine Ross, the chief executive, says sellers must disclose the presence of asbestos to protect buyers.

"In some states and territories, they may be legally obligated to do this," she says. "Similarly, we want landlords to identify, disclose and manage the presence of asbestos in their properties to minimise the health risks for renters."

Landlords may be eligible for tax deductions for asbestos testing and removal. The cost varies, but taking five samples for asbestos testing could set you back around \$950. This is a tax-deductible expense.

As more houses built before the 1990s are passed on to a new generation of owners, one of the things that should be legislated is the inclusion of an asbestos report in a pre-purchase building inspection. At the moment, this is not a requirement and can be overlooked in the sale process.

The asbestos agency's website (asbestossafety.gov.au) has online tools that can help both the buyer and the seller of a property to disclose which areas have asbestos. The website also provides a list of asbestos disposal facilities and what to do if you think you've been exposed to it.



On the National Front

HOW THESE HIDDEN TOXINS CAUSE SERIOUS LUNG PROBLEMS ON WORK SITES



Construction workers are well aware of the obvious risks they face at the workplace from common dangers such as asbestos and silica dust.

But lesser-known toxins can be silent killers on construction sites.

These include diesel exhaust fumes, wood, welding fumes, chemical solvents, epoxy and other resin vapours, benzene, arsenic and legionella.

These hazards are all linked to lung disease and they pose a real health threat to tradies. In most cases respiratory illnesses caused by these substances are irreversible and in some cases, fatal.

These conditions include lung cancer, pulmonary fibrosis, asthma, pulmonary oedema, pneumonia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes conditions such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

A study by Safe Work Australia found an estimated 96 per cent of Australia's construction workers had been exposed to at least one carcinogen, while 53 per cent were estimated to have probable exposures to at least four carcinogens.

In addition to well-known hazards such as UV radiation, tobacco smoke and crystalline silica, the most common carcinogens were diesel engine exhaust, wood dust, nickel and lead.

Painters, concreters, carpenters, welders, plumbers, engineers and demolition workers are among those most at risk, Safe Work Australia's Australian Work Exposures Study found.

The initial symptoms are often not noticeable, emerging years after first exposure, and when symptoms do appear, some workers aren't seeking medical help.

Others may think they are safe because they are only exposed to low levels of harmful substances, but any exposure, even at the minutest levels, can lead to debilitating or chronic diseases.

Some substances only pose a health risk if exposure to them happens over a long time, while others cause illness immediately.

A number of approaches can help protect workers, beginning with a risk evaluation and control techniques such as respiratory protective equipment (RPE) and improved, regular exhaust ventilation.

On the National Front

FOOLISH WITTENOOM TOURISTS RISKING THEIR LIVES FOR A SELFIE
TESS DICKIE THE WEST AUSTRALIAN - 9 JULY 2022

The West Australian

The Wittenoom asbestos mine is one of the darkest legacies in West Australian — if not Australian — history.

Between the 1940s and 1960s, thousands of Australians mined blue asbestos at Wittenoom Gorge, exposing themselves, their families and local residents to unimaginable health risks.

The mine officially closed in 1966, but the damage was done. According to the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia, more than 2,000 people have died to date from asbestos exposure in Wittenoom. That number could continue to rise as the years go on.

Despite the passage of time — 1966 was, after all, more than 50 years ago — Wittenoom remains contaminated and continues to pose a significant health threat to anyone nearby.

However, alarmingly, people continue to visit the area as tourists and risk their lives.

To those people, I have a very simple message: please stop. **It's dangerous, it's life-threatening, and it's simply not worth it.** Visiting Wittenoom for leisure is both irresponsible and ignorant.

The mining activities many decades ago left behind 3 million tonnes of toxic asbestos tailings. To this day, these tailings — laden with deadly asbestos dust and fibres — remain littered around Wittenoom, ready to be inhaled straight into the lungs of anyone in the area.

Even small and fleeting amounts of exposure to asbestos dust and fibres can cause mesothelioma, an incurable cancer that can rip life away from you. You don't need prolonged and repeated exposure to asbestos for it to be a problem.

In other words, one trip to Wittenoom could be fatal. I'm a senior lawyer who works with people suffering from asbestos-related diseases. I've seen first-hand

the devastating effects asbestos can have on both individuals and their families, as their lives are cut short from these terrible diseases.

I commend the steps being taken by authorities to discourage public access to Wittenoom, and to shut down the town completely. While deeply saddening, it's the only logical and safe option anyone can take to prevent the risk of serious disease.

However, time and time again we see people disregard these warnings and visit Wittenoom for leisure.

Whether these people are aware of the significant health risks and choose to ignore them is unknown. Whatever the case may be, it reflects a serious need to continue educating the community about what happened at Wittenoom, and that it's still very dangerous today.

That fact that many locals have deep connections to Wittenoom and the surrounding land is certainly not lost on me — especially cultural connections. However, it cannot be ignored that it is one of the most dangerous places on earth, with asbestos tailings polluting both the land and air.

It is, after all, the largest contaminated area in the southern hemisphere.

Exactly how governments and authorities should clean up the terrible mine site and take actions to restore the land is outside my area of expertise and not something I can answer.

But where my expertise does lie is asbestos-related diseases. And it is with that knowledge that I reiterate my message to anyone considering visiting Wittenoom as a tourist: just don't do it.

It's dangerous, it's life-threatening, and it's simply not worth it.

Australia is one of the most incredible countries on earth. There are countless vibrant national parks and spaces suitable for hiking, camping and exploring.

If you're after an outdoor adventure, go anywhere your heart desires — just not Wittenoom.



Did You Know?

MR FLUFFY – A SILENT KILLER.

Mr Fluffy – a silent killer.

The ACT Government has launched the Loose-Fill Asbestos Disease Scheme to provide financial support to people who contract an asbestos-related disease after living in a loose-fill asbestos insulation ('Mr Fluffy') affected property. The ACT and Australian Governments have committed \$16 million to the Scheme, which will be administered by the ACT Government.

It was announced just two days before the death of long-time campaigner James Wallner (supported by his good friend James O'Loughlin) who contracted mesothelioma after growing up in a Mr Fluffy house in Canberra. He died ten months after being diagnosed with the disease.

What is Mr Fluffy?

During the 1960's and 1970's a contamination event occurred throughout the ACT known as Mr. Fluffy. Asbestos was pumped into the roofing spaces of homes and marketed by 'Mr Fluffy' as the perfect insulating material. Advertised as "asbestosfluf", the companies selling and installing the insulation boasted that the material retains effectiveness forever. The insulation was a cost-effective and popular insulation choice for homeowners during the 1960s and 1970s.

The problem with Mr Fluffy insulation is that the 'friable' asbestos texture allowed it to migrate into corners of the roofs, sit on top of cabling, pipes, into the cracks and settle. The tiny asbestos fibres were able to contaminate the entire house after being pumped into the ceilings.

In response to the growing concern about the health hazards of Mr Fluffy's product, a government audit identified most of the homes in the ACT containing Mr Fluffy insulation.

A clean-up program was conducted by the government between 1989 and 1993 and was thought to have managed the problem. In fact, the ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce believes the remediation of about 1,000 homes during the original asbestos removal program was botched; some homes were cleaned poorly and others were missed altogether.

In 2014, some 25 years after the first clean-up, a home demolition scheme was established. It had been discovered and confirmed that Mr Fluffy homes in Canberra were unsafe for habitation considering the asbestos-related health risks that were posed to homeowners and their families.

The scheme involved the ACT Government purchasing the houses contaminated by Mr Fluffy asbestos insulation, the demolition of these houses, and the sale of the land for redevelopment.

The Mr Fluffy companies are "long gone" and no legal case has ever been brought against them.

The Society at Work



7.7.22 - ADSS Member Jacqui Geen - Donation to the Society for an P.O.C



8.7.22 - Sunnybank Support Group



11.7.22 - Bristol Myers Presentation



13.7.22 - Logan Morning Tea



13.7.22 - Logan Morning Tea



19.7.22 - Gladstone Morning Tea



20.7.22 - Bundaberg Morning Tea



20.7.22 - Bundaberg Morning Tea



21.7.22 - Hervey Bay Morning Tea



21.7.22 - Hervey Bay Morning Tea



22.7.22 - Gympie Morning Tea



26.7.22 - Ipswich Support Group

The Society at Work



27.7.22 - MUA Presentation



27.7.22 - QLD Nurses Union Convention



27.7.22 - United Workers Delegates Convention



4.8.22 - Chermside Support Group



10.8.22 - Hervey Bay Support Group



18.8.22 - Rockhampton Support Group



18.8.22 - Bunnings Trade Expo



18.8.22 - CFMEU Delegates Convention



26.8.22 - Helen Cavayes Retirement



31.8.22 - North Brisbane Morning Tea



31.8.22 - North Brisbane Morning Tea



6.9.22 - Ipswich Morning Tea

The Society at Work



6.9.22 - Ipswich Morning Tea



6.9.22 - Ipswich Morning Tea



6.9.22 - Ipswich Morning Tea



14.9.22 - ADSS Charity Race Day



14.9.22 - ADSS Charity Race Day



14.9.22 - ADSS Charity Race Day



14.9.22 - ADSS Charity Race Day



14.9.22 - ADSS Charity Race Day



15.9.22 - Rockhampton Support Group



27.9.22 - Ipswich Support Group



27.9.22 - Ipswich Support Group



28.9.22 - Sunshine Coast Support Group

Support Those Who Support The Society



Thanks to QLD Health for providing funding to ADSS to help carry on our services.

Corporate Sponsors



**Turner
Freeman**
LAWYERS

Corporate Members

Allens Industrial Products Pty Ltd
Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU)
Aztech Services Australia Pty Ltd
Beta Sigma Phi – Bayside Chapter
Building Employees Redundancy Trust (BERT)
Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union (CFMEU) - Mining & Energy Division
Construction Income Protection Limited (CIPL)
Corvex Pty Ltd
Demolition & Asbestos Industry Association (QLD) Inc. (DAIA)
DOTS Allied Health Services Pty Ltd
Electrical Trades Union (ETU)
Electro Group Training Group Limited
Future Skills

GBAR Group
Gumdale Demolition Pty Ltd
Hype Promotions
IRT Asbestos Management Pty Ltd
Kallibr
Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)
North Australian Contracting
Office of Industrial Relations
Plumbers Union QLD (PPTEU)
Queensland Building & Construction Commission (QBCC)
Queensland Council of Unions (QCU)
Queensland Nurses & Midwives Union
Specsavers Indooroopilly
The Construction Training Centre (CTC)
United Workers Union
X Vend



The contact details for all our corporate sponsors and corporate members are available by ringing the ADSS office on 1800 776 412

DONATE NOW

ADSS is an endorsed charity (ABN 29 150 479 514).

Donations of \$2.00 or more are tax deductible.

We thank all members for their ongoing support.

