

*Summer* 2021  
**NEWSLETTER**

**adss**

Asbestos Disease  
Support Society



**Asbestos Disease Support Society**

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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**



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**The ADSS Office will be closed from:**  
**Friday 17th December, 12pm - Monday 10th January, 8am.**

**Our phone lines will be operating during this time,**  
**please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can.**

**Alternatively, our after hours mobile number is 0427 785 873.**

**M E R R Y**  
*Christmas*

**adss**  
Asbestos Disease  
Support Society

*Newsletter Front cover: In recognition of National Asbestos Awareness Week, the Story Bridge was in the colours of blue and white, Friday 26th and Sunday 27th November 2021.*

*Photo Credit – Kerrie Williams*

# In Loving Memory

Victoria Fay Gear

Alan Ross Adler

Michael Robert O'Connor

Edward Swift

Shane Taylor

Marie Clayer

John Joseph Gorski

Michael Locos

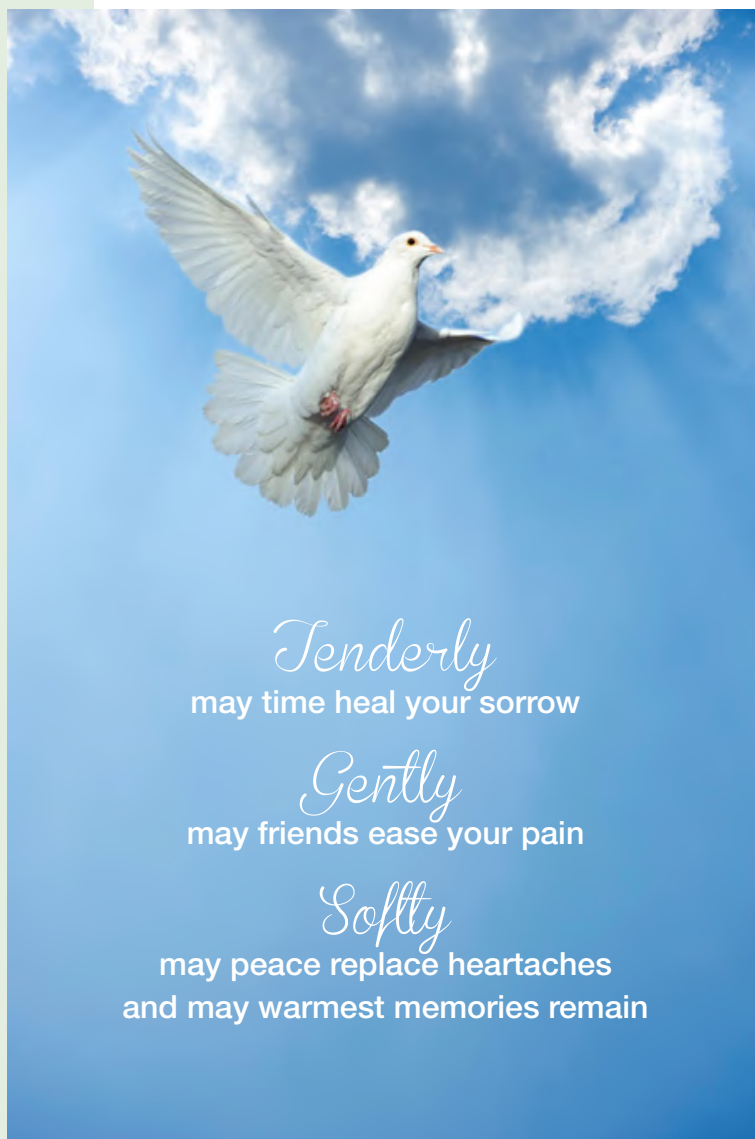
Deidre Leach

Ian Hay

Trevor Knust

Paul Joseph Campbell

Stanley Edwin Mathers



*Tenderly*  
may time heal your sorrow

*Gently*  
may friends ease your pain

*Softly*  
may peace replace heartaches  
and may warmest memories remain

# General Managers Report

TREVOR TORRENS



Welcome to the Christmas (Summer) edition of the Asbestos Disease Support Society Newsletter.

As we come to the end of 2021 and the Society's 29th year, it is timely to reflect on those who have passed on and those who are currently afflicted by an asbestos or silica related disease and their families and carers. Sadly, the Society has lost over 58 members this year from an asbestos related disease, predominantly mesothelioma. We are still seeing hundreds of cases of mesothelioma each and every year. For an issue we have known about for more than 60-odd years, that number is simply too high. Increasingly, the Society is also seeing people who have had small or incidental exposure to asbestos dust. For example, living near a facility that processed asbestos products or one-off bathroom or kitchen renovation.

Despite the importation and manufacture of asbestos containing materials being banned in 2003, we continually see the products slipping through our border, predominantly from China. In the last 2 years, asbestos has been detected in imported children's crayons, remote control cars and aircraft, manual pallet trucks, billiard table irons, bee-hive smokers, acetylene cylinders and after-market gaskets.

The most recent breach has come from USG Boral following testing conducted on raw vermiculite imported from China which detected asbestos fibre contamination. The material is used to make a fire retardant board. This not only puts workers at risk, but also their families and the general community. Unfortunately, workers have been exposed and the Society, together with their union representatives, have been providing assistance, including the registration of the exposure. While the level of contamination is claimed to be low, the point to remember is that there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres. A Society Media Release on this issue is in this Newsletter.

## Society Social Worker

A big welcome to Rhonda Wheatley, who has commenced as the Society's Social Worker. Rhonda comes to us with extensive experience after working for many years with Queensland Health.

## Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Mesothelioma in Australia 2020

The AIHW Report "Mesothelioma in Australia 2020" was released in November 2021. The report's data comes from the Australian Mesothelioma Registry, which is managed by the AIHW and records all cases of mesothelioma diagnosed in Australia since 1 July 2010.

Unfortunately, the incidence of mesothelioma continues to remain high. As 1 May 2021, 642 cases of mesothelioma diagnosed in 2020 and reported to the AMR.

Between 1982 and 2020, the number of new cases of mesothelioma reported annually steadily increased—from 135 to 499 for men and from 22 to 143 for women. To date, the highest overall number of cases (819) were those with a date of diagnosis in 2017. However, AIHW advises it is important to note that the apparent fall in cases in 2020 is likely due to delays in the AMR receiving notifications—the number of cases for 2020 is expected to rise in 2021 and subsequent years.

The table below indicates the number (per 100,000 population) of people diagnosed with mesothelioma, by sex and state/territory, 2017–2020.

State	Males		Females		People	
	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate
NSW	754	4.0	170	0.8	924	2.3
VIC	532	3.7	134	0.8	666	2.1
QLD	500	4.4	134	1.0	634	2.6
WA	328	5.9	85	1.3	413	3.5
SA	193	4.3	56	1.1	249	2.5
TAS	57	3.8	7	0.4	64	2.0
ACT	24	3.2	5	0.5	29	1.7
NT	5	2.2	2	0.4	7	1.2
Australia	2,393	4.2	593	0.9	2,986	2.2

*Note: The above table only represents people who have been diagnosed with mesothelioma and does not take into account those diagnosed with other pleural plaques, asbestosis or other asbestos related cancers.*

Australia's consumption of asbestos peaked at around 700,000 metric tonnes during the period 1970–1979. Australia both mined and imported asbestos, which was used in the construction industry due to its durability and fire and chemical resistance. Asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) were used in over 3,000 products in the construction industry, including insulation and flooring materials, wall and roof sheeting and brake linings, as well as in ships, trains and cars. Large amounts of asbestos still remains in the built environment.

A full copy of the report can be found on the AIHW website at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer/mesothelioma-in-australia-2020/summary>

## National Asbestos Awareness Week

This year's National Asbestos Awareness Week was held 22-28 November. The campaign asks Australians to Think Twice About Asbestos and challenged complacency by reminding home renovators and tradespeople that the danger of asbestos is far from over.

Asbestos is still present in millions of homes, as well as public and commercial buildings, across Australia. At the height of its use, asbestos was in over 3,000 products and many of these products are still contained in our homes and workplaces.

The only way of eliminating asbestos disease is by preventing exposure to asbestos fibres.

In recognition of National Asbestos Awareness Week, the Society organised a lighting program in the colours of blue and white:

- 26, 27 November: Story Bridge, Victoria Bridge, Reddacliff Place sculptures
- 22 to 28 November: Queensland Parliament House
- 26 November: Queensland Country Bank Stadium Townsville
- 22 to 24 November: Townsville sign, Victoria Bridge, Wharton Reef Lighthouse, George Roberts Bridge, Old Magistrates Court House, Central Park Boardwalk Little Fletcher Bridge

The Society would like to thank the Brisbane and Townsville City Councils, QLD Country Bank Stadium and the Queensland Parliament Office of the Speaker for their assistance with the lighting program.

To raise awareness, the Society also had a promotion – “Have a cuppa on us for National Asbestos Awareness Week” at a number of construction sites, including, Queens Wharf, 80 Queen St and 443 Queen St.

Finally, thank you to Shane King MP, Member for Kurwongbah who gave a shout out on Facebook to recognise the Society and National Asbestos Awareness Week. – <https://www.facebook.com/ShaneKingMP/videos/1045949506190004>



## 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 Australian Government's Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency.

This committee is undertaking some interesting work, including:

- 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.

**This is important work and it will be interesting to observe the Australian Government's response to any future recommendations.**

## Ecumenical Service

The 29th Ecumenical Service was held at the Cathedral of St Stephens on Friday 26 November, followed by delightful light lunch catered for by St Leo's Catering. The service is the Society's most important event of the year where we came together to remember those who have succumbed or have been inflicted by an asbestos or silica related disease. We gave thanks to all those people who do their utmost in supporting the Society and supporting sufferers, their families and carers - whether they be Society volunteers, doctors, researchers, carers, community leaders, family members, lawyers, unions or employers. Without the support of so many people, the Society would not be able to do what it does for that we are very appreciative.



*Butterfly Memorial Board*

## 2021 Annual General Meeting

The Society's Annual General Meeting was held at Brisbane City Hall on Wednesday 20th October. Thank you to those members who were able to attend. The Chair of the Society, Phil Blair delivered the Board Report to members which can be found on the Society's website at:

<https://www.adss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2021-Board-Report.pdf>



## Finances

The Society's 2020/2021 Audited Financial Statements were also presented at the AGM.

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. This was certainly aided by our 2021 Charity Race Day (which was cancelled by COVID in 2020) which raised just over \$140,000.00.

Additionally, in terms of financial stewardship, it is important to note that the auditors confirmed an unqualified audit opinion. The Society's audited financials can be found on our website at:

<https://www.adss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ADSS-2021-Financial-Statements-Signed.pdf>

It takes a lot of support to provide the Society's services. On behalf of the Society, I would like to thank the construction industry, our corporate sponsors and the many donations from individuals that we regularly receive.

Our finances are in good shape, which allows the Society to provide comprehensive services to asbestos and silica disease sufferers, their family and carers, undertake awareness activities and advocate on asbestos and silica related issues.

## Director Elections

The Society is governed by a Board of nine (9) Directors elected by and from the membership. A Director's term of appointment is two (2) years with compulsory retirement of half the sitting Directors at every Annual General Meeting. A retired Director is eligible for re-election. In 2021, nominations were called for four (4) Director positions, with seven (6) nominations received. This necessitated a ballot of the Society's membership.

The election was supervised by Thady Blundell of Turner Freeman lawyers. The Society forwarded 635 ballot papers, with 215 returned. The result saw the following members elected to the Board:

- Phil Blair
- Bianca Neve
- Magot Hoyte
- Peter Close

All are returning directors. Thank you also to Leo Jensen and Glenda Richards for their nominations.

Following the conclusion of the AGM, Phil Blair and Bianca Neve were endorsed by Directors to fulfil the roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board respectively for the next 12 months.



Absent – Margot Hoyte

## Annual Dust Disease Symposium

In partnership with Turner Freeman Lawyers, the 2021 Dust Disease Symposium was held at Brisbane City Hall on Wednesday 20th October. Our guest speakers were Dr Keith Horwood, oncologist and Dr Richard Slaughter, radiologist. Both speakers delivered excellent and very informative presentations. The positive feedback to the Society was quite remarkable! **The Symposium was professionally filmed and we are able to provide copy of the presentations on USB. Please contact the Society if you would like one forwarded to you.**

## Thank you for your donation

The Society would like to thank all those that have made a donation to the Society since the last Newsletter. Without your kind financial support, the Society would not be in a position to provide the services, advocate on your behalf or lobby Government for improvement in asbestos related matters. In particular, we would like to recognise the following donations over \$500.00.

- Thomas Graham O'Brien
- United Workers Union
- Don Harris
- Rex and Helen Nightingale
- David Matakovich – Vending
- L Stockland
- CFMEU Members Qld/NT
- Turner Freeman Lawyers
- Euro Precast QLD Pty Ltd
- Niepe Construction
- Anora Foundations
- Linus Power MP
- Hutchinson Builders
- HazSure Consultants

I would like to thank the Society' staff – Kerrie Williams, Kay Ravbar, Karen Selman and our wonderful volunteers, (particularly Pat Cini and Mark O'Conner!) and the dedicated Board of Directors for all of their hard work and assistance throughout the year. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff of the Society I wish you a Merry Christmas, joyful holidays and a happy and safe New Year.

*Trevor Torrens*

**Trevor Torrens**

General Manager

# Our Legal Advisor



THADY BLUNDELL

## STAYING IN CONTACT

The connection that lawyers and those with dust diseases have can be brief. Some cases can be quite protracted and take some time, but others can be dealt with fairly quickly – it all depends on the circumstances. The outcome though is once a compensation claim is determined, our role of lawyers is largely at an end.

The fact is though, asbestos, silica, and other dust induced diseases continue to progress. The finalisation of a claim for compensation is just that. It has no impact on the progress of a disease, although it is hoped that receipt of compensation can provide some solace and help with expenses.

The important message though is to continue to keep in touch with the Society, as the Society has a large role to play throughout a person's journey with dust disease.

One of the things we have discovered is that it is hard to plot an accurate prognosis in respect of a person's dust disease. With the advent of the increased knowledge of silica induced diseases, there are believed to be other consequences of the inflammation caused by silica and other dusts on the body.

Staying in contact with the Society, and indeed with your lawyer, is important moving forward so that the full impact of a dust disease can be understood. The more information we have about the usual progress of a disease, the easier it is to claim appropriate compensation.

The Society provides extensive information about dust diseases, social support, occupational therapy services, and other services which are readily accessible.

The Society with Turner Freeman holds a large number of information seminars – Morning Teas and Symposiums, throughout the year and indeed throughout Queensland, Northern New South Wales, and the Northern Territory. It is important to attend these to maintain contact with the Society and learn more about dust disease, treatment, curative developments, and support. Just this year there has been a significant step forward in the treatment of mesothelioma with immunotherapy now on the PBS scheme for that disease and studies showing a real benefit to the treatment.

As we move into 2022, it is important that all members maintain contact with the Society and attend functions when they can.

# Society Social Worker



RHONDA WHEATLEY

## New Social Worker for ADSS:

I would like to introduce myself, Rhonda Wheatley as the new Social Worker for the Asbestos Disease Support Society and the Silicosis Support Network. By way of background, I originally started my social worker career in Adelaide, working in the aged care, homelessness and mental health community services sector. After volunteering in India, I relocated to Brisbane in 2012 working with Queensland health as a mental health clinician and with the Salvation Army as case manager at the detention centre on Nauru. I am passionate about social justice and working to break down systemic barriers for disadvantage groups.

My role is to provide direct counselling and support services to assist members, assessment of individual needs and help navigate the sometimes complex community services that are available.

Outside of my social work practice, I enjoy spending time with family and friends, love gardening, aqua aerobics, bush walks and crocheting.

I am looking forward to attending the morning teas, meeting the members and being part of the Society's team.

Kind Regards,  
**Rhonda**



# Society Clinical Nurse

KAREN SELMON



## A YEAR IN REVIEW

As the year comes to a close and following Asbestos Awareness Week (22nd - 28th November 2021), it is opportune to reflect on the support services that Asbestos Disease Support Society has provided during 2021.

In a year that saw opening and closing of state borders, city and regional lockdowns, the Society was once again able to host morning teas which had been cancelled in the previous year due to Covid 19 restrictions. This year the Society, in conjunction with Turner Freeman Lawyers, hosted 24 morning teas which included a number in the Greater Brisbane and Morton Bay areas, Gold Coast, Ballina (Northern NSW), Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Beaudesert, Warwick, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and Gympie. The overall attendance of the morning teas was over 700 people. The morning teas are an important part of the Society as they provide information on asbestos related disease and silicosis and promote the awareness of the dangers of asbestos and silica in both the workplace and general community. It is also a great opportunity to meet with our members and for our members to make connections with other people who are also affected with asbestos related diseases and silicosis.

In addition to the morning teas, the Society and Turner Freeman Lawyers also hosted a Dust Disease Symposium at Brisbane City Hall on 20 October 2021 which was attended by over 100 people. The symposium is an annual event where this year the speakers were Dr Keith Horwood (Oncologist) and Dr Richard Slaughter (Radiologist).

Another important service is the Ecumenical Memorial Service which was held on 26 November 2021 at St Stephens Cathedral in memory of members who have passed away due to an asbestos related disease. Unfortunately, this year we have lost 58 of our members to an asbestos related disease which included mesothelioma, asbestos related cancers, asbestosis and pleural plaques.

The Society also supports a number of local support groups which hold monthly or quarterly catch ups for people affected by an asbestos related disease. The support groups are held in Chermside, Sunnybank, Gold Coast, Rockhampton, Ipswich, Sunshine Coast, Bundaberg and Hervey Bay. All of these support groups are facilitated by a volunteer and the Society is extremely grateful to the facilitators for their time and effort in helping to organise these groups.

One of the main aims of the Society is to provide support to our members who are affected with a dust disease. Not only is this provided via our morning teas, Symposium and support groups, but also through telephone support from our Social Worker, Clinical Support Nurse and volunteers. During the past 12 months we have provided 830 telephone calls to support Society members. Some of these calls were made from our two volunteers Pat Cini (also a board member and life member) and Mark O'Connor who have both experienced caring for loved ones affected by an asbestos related disease. Pat and Mark have made over 260 calls this year. Thank you to Pat and Mark for volunteering their time. Social Worker Meg Redmond (who has emigrated to Ireland!) also supported our members to navigate access to services that are available to them. As the Clinical Support Nurse, I have had the privilege to support our members through 330 phone calls. These support calls are to "check in" with members and to provide information and support where possible.

The Society would not operate without the expertise of our General Manager Trevor Torrens and Kerrie Williams and Kay Ravbar who have been working with the Society for the past 12 years. Kerrie and Kay are the voices you hear when you ring the Society and have years of experience in providing support and organising all of the events that bring information and support to members. Trevor strives to keep the Society as an important source of support for members and others of the community that may have an exposure to toxic dusts, such as asbestos and silica.

On reflection, 2021 has been a positive year where we were able to reconnect with members through community events which is an extremely important part of providing support and information on asbestos related disease and silicosis. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas and I look forward to meeting up with you next year.



Bundaberg Support Group

# Did You Know?



Australian Government  
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

## Asbestos stocks and flows

In 2021 the [2015 Australian Stocks and Flows Model for Asbestos](#) was updated to reflect new information from literature and industry experts. It allows for updated annual estimates of:

- legacy asbestos remaining in the built environment (stocks); and
- quantities of Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) reaching the end of the productive life to waste or disuse (flows).

The national model provides best estimate results to examine asbestos stocks and flows, now and into the future. The model's estimated flows to waste do not include soil and rubble contaminated with ACMs, and so may differ to other waste reporting totals.

### Stocks

After peaking in 1980 at around 11 million tonnes, ACM stocks are predicted to decline at just above 10% per decade. This modelling means, without significant intervention, ACM stocks will decline to around 1 million tonnes by 2060.

The graph below shows the composition of the of the estimated 6.4 million tonnes of Australia's asbestos legacy remaining in stocks in 2021. For example, flooring stocks are currently estimated at 14,500 tonnes.

## Best estimates



1980

**Australia's ACM stocks peaked at approximately 11 million tonnes.**



2021

Current ACM stocks are estimated at approximately 6.4 million tonnes.



2030

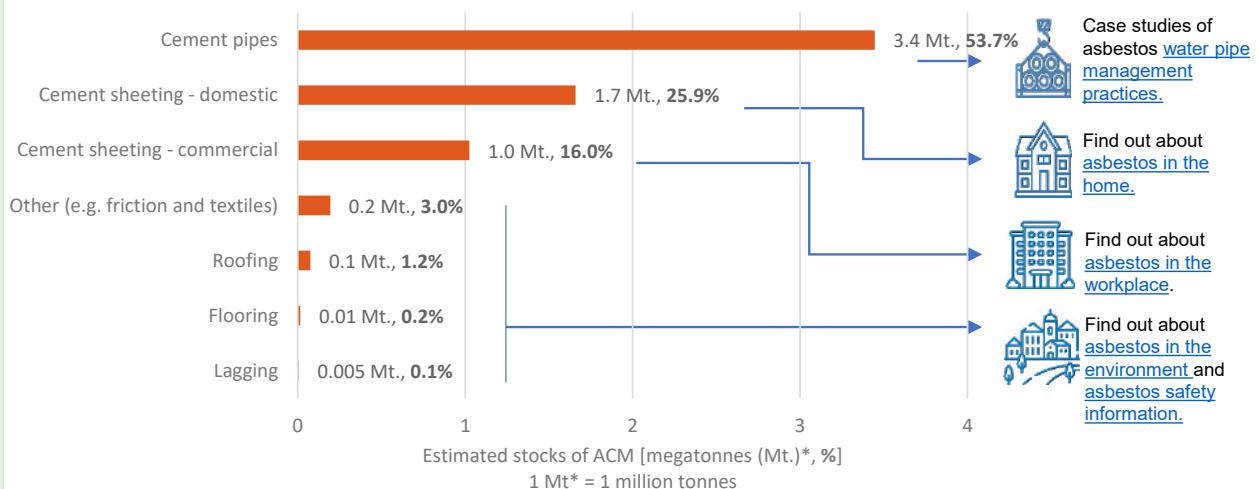
ACM stocks are forecast at approximately 4.9 million tonnes. **ACM flows are forecast to peak at approximately 167,000 tonnes.**

### Flows

Many asbestos products are starting to reach end of life. For example, many have been in the built environment for between 40 to 80 years.

Most ACMs reaching end of life would be taken to landfill, while some, for example asbestos cement water pipes, may be left *in situ* with regular monitoring.

## 2021 stock composition and links to further reading



Source: Blue Environment for ASEA 2021.

## The Business Post

**The government is planning to formulate a policy regarding the import and use of asbestos in Bangladesh – a mineral which has been linked to various deadly health conditions and cancer such as mesothelioma.**

As part of the preparatory work, the Department of Environment (DOE) sent a letter to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the last week of October, requesting an inter-ministerial meeting to gather recommendations for the policy decision, insiders say.

The letter, signed by DOE Director General Ashraf Uddin, says, “As recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the use of asbestos should be banned in the production of cement products to prevent asbestos-related cancers.

“Bangladesh currently has no direct policy or regulations in this regard. As a result, the country faces the risk of asbestos-related health hazards.”

So, under the circumstances, the DOE requested an inter-ministerial meeting with the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Health and Family Planning, House Building and Research Institute and The Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

Four companies in Bangladesh produce cement sheets and another such factory is currently under construction.

Speaking with The Business Post, Director of DoE (Environmental Clearance) Masud Iqbal Md Shameem said, “We are currently not issuing or renewing any clearance certificates for factories where asbestos is being used as a raw material, considering its health hazards.

“Some industries – who use asbestos – are operating in the country, and they have made investments. But we have to consider the substance’s impacts on human health. We are yet to hold the inter-ministerial meeting. Recommendations gathered in the meeting will be highlighted in the policy.”



Shameem continued, “The commerce ministry formulates import policies that remain active only for a few years, but we seek a permanent solution to asbestos.

“The DOE’s director general has the jurisdiction to issue an official order, and the environment ministry possesses jurisdiction to give directives. We are looking forward to the inter-ministerial meeting.”

Cement sheets have a huge demand in Bangladesh for being cheap, heat and fire-resistant, and have an average lifespan of 40-50 years.

But alongside these sheets, asbestos is used to manufacture tiles, pipes, electric insulators, brake pads for cars and many other products.

There are six types of asbestos – actinolite, amosite, anthophyllite, chrysotile, crocidolite and tremolite. Among those, chrysotile makes up for 90 per cent of the global use and is also used heavily by cement sheet manufacturers in Bangladesh.

Asbestos is classified as being carcinogenic to humans. Addressing the matter, the DOE letter said, “According to the WHO, asbestos has no acceptable limit for human exposure. A single fibre of asbestos can cause cancer in the human body.

“The WHO recommends halting the use of all types of asbestos – including chrysotile – to help curb cancers caused by this substance.”

Despite the severe health hazard posed by this toxic material, six companies in the country imported a staggering 24,019 tonnes of asbestos in the Fiscal Year 2018-19.

In 1998, Bangladesh imported only 1,010 tonnes, but then logged a two-fold rise in 2010. The figure jumped to 12,100 tons in 2014.

According to a 2017 WHO report, the aggregate annual asbestos production and consumption across the globe went down from 4.8 million tonnes in 1980 to 2 million tonnes in 2013. But Bangladesh is now moving in the opposite direction.

On the issue, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change’s Additional Secretary Md

Moniruzzaman said, “A date for the inter-ministerial meeting will be fixed soon.

“The ministry secretary already gave some instructions in this regard at another meeting held on November 16 at the secretariat.”

### Health impacts of asbestos

A 2014 World Health Organisation (WHO) report on chrysotile asbestos says the substance is classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as being carcinogenic to humans.

Exposure to chrysotile, amosite and anthophyllite and to the mixtures containing crocidolite results in an increased risk of lung cancer and other serious health complications, which kills around 107,000 people across the world annually.

Another WHO report released in 2017 says, at present, four countries – Brazil, China, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation – produce over 99 per cent of the world’s asbestos, while 25 countries each consume at least 1,000 tonnes of asbestos per year.

According to this organisation, the annual global healthcare costs associated with the health effects of asbestos are estimated to be \$2.4 billion – \$3.9 billion, excluding the additional costs of pain, suffering and welfare losses.

The International Chrysotile Association (ICA) itself admits the risk of lung cancer in its own publication titled “Science-based facts: Relevant health issues.” It says that chrysotile can cause lung cancer 10 times lower than amosite and 50 times lower than crocidolite.

In case of mesothelioma, the risk is 100 times lower than amosite, and 500 times lower than crocidolite.

### What about alternatives?

According to the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat, many countries are using asbestos alternatives considering the health hazard posed by this substance.

They suggested using synthetic fibres such as polyvinyl alcohol and polypropylene, and vegetable or cellulose-based fibres such as bamboo, sisal, coir, rattan shavings and tobacco stalks.



### Japan's top court holds state liable for asbestos diseases in workers

Japan's top court on Monday ruled in favour of around 500 plaintiffs in four suits seeking damages from the state over diseases contracted by construction workers following exposure to asbestos.

In the first unified judgment handed down by the Supreme Court over the suits, the ruling said the government was negligent in its duty to protect workers from contracting lung cancer and other diseases linked to asbestos.

It said manufacturers of construction materials containing asbestos were also responsible to some extent, in its ruling on the four lawsuits filed with district courts in Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka and Kyoto.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who will meet with the plaintiffs on Tuesday, is planning to offer them an apology, a ruling party source said.

As a way to support the victims, the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and Komeito decided to propose that the government pay compensation of up to 13 million yen (\$119,000) to each victim exposed to asbestos.

Toshitaka Onodera, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, told reporters it will accept the compensation proposal.

In the ruling, Presiding Judge Takuya Miyama said the state should have warned of the dangers of asbestos by October 1975 through labels on construction materials or at construction sites, and should have instructed workers to wear dust-protective masks.

"It significantly lacks rationality" that the state did not exercise its authority to regulate the use of asbestos, Miyama said.

The substance, a naturally occurring fibrous mineral, was widely used for insulation, fire protection and sound absorption, in buildings.

Since 2008, a number of damages suits, including the four on Monday, have been filed nationwide related to asbestos exposure at construction sites, with a total of 1,200 plaintiffs as of April this year, according to the lawyers involved. The plaintiffs include bereaved family members of workers exposed to asbestos.

"I feel responsibility and offer my deep apologies," said Yoshihisa Tamura, minister of health, labor and welfare, in a statement.

The four suits were examined by the top court after high court rulings differed in assigning responsibility to the state and manufacturers.

The top court had previously ordered the state and manufacturers to pay compensation to the victims but had not provided detailed reasoning for awarding damages.

The plaintiffs argued that state regulations for asbestos, which did not require workers to wear protective masks, were insufficient. They also said manufacturers failed to properly indicate the dangers of the material.

The state, meanwhile, argued it only had a responsibility to protect company employees as self-employed workers are responsible for their own health and safety.

Manufacturers denied responsibility on the grounds that it was impossible to confirm which materials were responsible for the diseases contracted.

The use of the substance was gradually regulated as it was found that inhaling asbestos fibers could cause lung cancer and other diseases. Due to the decades-long latency period, it was referred to as a "silent time bomb."

A law to provide financial support to people suffering from asbestos-linked diseases took effect in Japan in 2006.

# Media Article

## LAST HOMES IN ASBESTOS-RIDDLED WITTENOOM TO BE DEMOLISHED, BUT SOME WANT TO STAY

By Isabel Moussalli and Andrew Tyndall - Posted Fri 12 Nov 2021



Governments have attempted for decades to remove traces of the town but some homes remain. (Supplied)



Peter Heyward moved to Wittenoom in 1992, when the population had already dwindled. (Supplied)

## 9 NEWS

The former asbestos mining town of Wittenoom has claimed many lives, but it is not enough to deter some who proudly call it home.

### Key points:

- Blue asbestos mining stopped in 1966 but tailings remain
- The WA Government officially struck Wittenoom from the map in 2007
- Three people still collectively own 14 properties

After years of compensation offers, the WA government will turn to forcibly removing the remaining properties, under a bill expected to pass Parliament.

It is hoped the clearing of the former town site will reduce the attraction for visitors, who ignore significant health warnings of asbestos fibres on the ground and in the air at Wittenoom.

Just 12km away lies three million tonnes of asbestos tailings.

### 'This is home'

Peter Heyward moved to the area in the 90s and said he knew of the dangers but enjoyed the lifestyle.

"This is just beautiful living here," he said.

"Looking at the mountains, you get the view of the savanna and you're right beside a gorge that's got water all year round."

Long-term resident Lorraine Thomas said she had options if she was forced to leave, but she hoped to live out her life in Wittenoom.

"This is home, and I haven't got anywhere else that I've found in this state or in this country that I'd like to call home," she said.

"They can't move the hills, the whole area... I love the weather.

"No person can take that from me."



Lorraine Thomas says she owns several properties in Wittenoom and intends to stay. (Supplied)

The WA government's planned eviction and demolition would come with an undisclosed amount of compensation.

Mario Hartmann is one of the residents who recently took up an offer to hand over his property, but it has not kept him away.

"It's too cold down south so I come in winter to enjoy the warm weather," he said.

# Media Article

## LAST HOMES IN ASBESTOS-RIDDLED WITTENOOM TO BE DEMOLISHED, BUT SOME WANT TO STAY

By Isabel Moussalli and Andrew Tyndall - Posted Fri 12 Nov 2021



Mario Hartmann said the older houses in Wittenoom were built with timber while newer houses contained asbestos. (Supplied)

### Tourists warned to stay away

With more West Australians exploring their own state during the pandemic's travel restrictions, Mr Hartmann noticed a surge in visitors.

"This year I've never seen that many people come here, some days you would have 50, 60 cars going out [to the gorge and the asbestos tailings]," he said.

It is an alarming figure for Curtin University Associate Professor Alison Reid, who has examined the health impact of the mine.

"People [who visit Wittenoom] are putting themselves unnecessarily at risk," she said.

"We know that the risk of mesothelioma [a rare cancer] can occur with low exposure, so I think in that case it should be closed."



Piles of asbestos tailing still litter the area. (Supplied)

At least 1,200 former Wittenoom residents and workers have died from lung cancer and mesothelioma, according to a database maintained by UWA's Occupational Respiratory Epidemiology Group.

"The Flying Doctors used to hone in on the town of Wittenoom from the blue haze on the horizon and that was the dust...that's how the workers and the people in the town got exposed, through that dust.

"It has made Western Australia have the highest rates of mesothelioma in the world."

The area is no longer on official maps, it was declared a contaminated site and the state government have repeatedly warned the public against visiting.



Wittenoom Gorge is closed to the public but still attracts "danger tourists" and some locals. (Supplied: State Library of Western Australia)

Lands Minister Tony Buti said visitors posed a risk to the wider public because cars could spread particles beyond the area.

"There is no question that this area is one of the saddest chapters in WA history," he said.

"However, we must be realistic, and the fact is it's unlikely Wittenoom will ever again be a safe place to live or visit."

The Banjima traditional owners last month petitioned the state's parliament to go further than removing the remaining infrastructure and clean up the area so it is no longer contaminated.

Mr Buti said the Banjima people were members of a steering committee, which would "progress ongoing management options and advise the state government on what actions could be considered to maintain public safety in the area and reduce ongoing impact on country".

# ADSS Media Release

**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, NO MORE ASBESTOS IMPORTS**  
11 NOVEMBER 2021

“Revelations that asbestos products and materials are making their way into Australia is deeply concerning.” Trevor Torrens, General Manager of ADSS said.

The most recent breach has come from USG Boral following testing conducted on raw vermiculite imported from China which detected asbestos fibre contamination. Asbestos has also previously been detected in imported children’s crayons, remote control cars and aircraft, manual pallet trucks, billiard table irons, bee-hive smokers, acetylene cylinders and after-market gaskets.

The importation of asbestos containing products has been banned since 2003.

Most of the imports are from China, where material is defined as “asbestos free” if it contains up to 5 percent asbestos. “This not only puts workers at risk but the whole community.” said Mr Torrens.

“For anyone who thinks asbestos-related diseases are a thing of the past, think again.”

“Every year in Australia, there are an estimated 4,000 deaths from past exposure to asbestos. That’s one of the highest death rates of asbestos-related diseases in the world.” said Mr Torrens.

ADSS is calling on the Federal Government to create a specialist unit within Border Force focused on stopping illegal asbestos imports. This was a recommendation of the 2018 Senate Inquiry into Non-conforming building products: the need for coherent and robust regulatory regime. The recommendation was not implemented.

“The USG Boral issue is troubling”. Mr Torrens said. “Not only have these workers been exposed, but they have potentially taken it home to their family on their clothes”.

A statement from the company says, “asbestos contamination found in the vermiculite ingredient itself are very low...”. However, Chair of ADSS, Mr Phil Blair said, “The level of asbestos fibre contamination is irrelevant. There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres. This is endorsed by no less than the World Health Organisation.”

“We have enough asbestos materials still in our community from our past misguided love affair of this stuff – we certainly don’t need anymore.” Mr Blair said.

When asbestos fibres get into the lungs, which can occur if the asbestos product is disturbed or in a friable condition, it can cause deadly conditions like mesothelioma, asbestosis, lung and other cancers. Known as the latency period, these diseases can take many decades to develop.

The Asbestos Disease Support Society is a registered charity and was established in 1992 to support sufferers of asbestos related disease, their families and caregivers and promotes awareness about the risks of exposure to asbestos.

## **ENDS**

Media Contact: Trevor Torrens (ADSS) M 0435 895 928 or [trevort@adss.org.au](mailto:trevort@adss.org.au)



*Raw Vermiculite Flake*



# ADSS Media Release

**NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK 2021:  
THINK TWICE ABOUT ASBESTOS, IT'S IN 1 IN 3 HOMES.  
18 NOVEMBER 2021**

This year's National Asbestos Awareness Week (22-28 November) campaign asks Australians to Think Twice About Asbestos. The campaign challenges complacency by reminding home renovators and tradespeople that the danger of asbestos is far from over.

Asbestos is still present in millions of homes, as well as public and commercial buildings, across Australia. At the height of its use, asbestos was in over 3,000 products and many of these products are still contained in our homes and workplaces.

In homes built before 1990, asbestos can still be found anywhere. This affects 1 in 3

homes nationwide.

There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos and when fibres get into the lungs it can cause asbestos-related diseases, including the incurable mesothelioma. The Asbestos Disease Support Society advocates for an Australia free of asbestos-related diseases.

"For anyone who thinks asbestos-related diseases are a thing of the past, think again. Asbestos is still causing cancer in Australians." Trevor Torrens, General Manager of ADSS said.

"Every year in Australia, there are an estimated 4,000 deaths from past exposure to asbestos. That's one of the highest death rates of asbestos-related diseases in the world," said Mr Torrens.

"Whether its DIYers doing small or large jobs around the house, or tradies on a residential worksite, the Think Twice About Asbestos campaign reminds them of the dangers of damaged, disturbed or deteriorated asbestos."

By preventing exposure to asbestos fibres, asbestos-related diseases can be eliminated.

"With more Australians having more time for DIY during the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to tell them how to be safe around asbestos." said Mr Torrens.

"If you're considering DIY renovations and maintenance, 'Get in the know, take it slow and get a pro'."

"People working on homes built before 1990 can stay safe if they know where asbestos is,

if they don't disturb or damage it, and if they seek professional help to locate, manage or remove it."

The National Asbestos Awareness Week campaign promotes the role of licensed asbestos professionals for both home renovators and tradespeople.

"Even tradies need to call a licensed asbestos professional if they don't have the equipment, skills, training or licence to handle asbestos." said Mr Torrens.

In recognition of National Asbestos Awareness Week, the Society has a lighting program in the colours of blue and white:

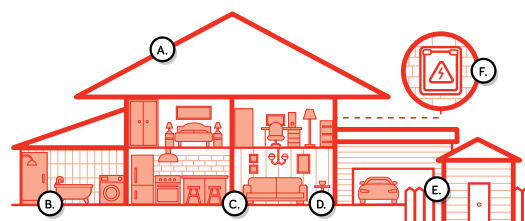
- 26, 27 November: Story Bridge, Victoria Bridge, Radcliff Place sculptures
- 22 to 28 November: Queensland Parliament House
- 26 November: Queensland Country Bank Stadium Townsville
- 22 to 24 November: Townsville sign, Victoria Bridge, Wharton Reef Lighthouse, George Roberts Bridge, Old Magistrates Court House, Central Park Boardwalk Little Fletcher Bridge

The Asbestos Disease Support Society is a registered charity and was established in 1992 to support sufferers of asbestos related disease, their families and caregivers and promotes awareness about the risks of exposure to asbestos.

## ENDS

Media Contact: Trevor Torrens (ADSS) M 0435 895 928 or [trevort@adss.org.au](mailto:trevort@adss.org.au)

### Asbestos locations diagram



A. Exterior	B. Bathroom, toilet and laundry	C. Kitchen	D. Living areas	E. Backyard	F. Other areas
Roof sheeting, gutters, downpipes, ridge capping, insulation ticks, cladding and lining under eaves.	Wall and ceiling panels, vinyl floor tiles and backing for wall tiles.	Wall and ceiling panels, backing for splashbacks, vinyl floor tiles, backing of vinyl flooring and insulation in showers.	Wall and ceiling panels, carpet underlay and insulation in domestic heaters.	Fences, garden sheds, garages, carports, outdoor toilets, dog kennels, buried and dumped waste materials.	Backing of electrical switchboards, insulation in roof cavities, hot water pipe insulation, textured paint and plaster patching compounds.

# THINK TWICE ABOUT ASBESTOS

ASBESTOS  
AWARENESS  
WEEK  
November 22-28 2021

## Asbestos facts

- An estimated 4,000 Australians die annually from asbestos-related diseases. This is more than triple the annual road toll.
- Approximately 700 people die annually from the aggressive cancer mesothelioma which is caused by exposure to asbestos.
- Asbestos was used in over 3,000 products before 1990 — many of these were in residential construction and fit out.
- Asbestos was completely banned in Australia in 2003 (December 31, 2003).
- An estimated 6,000 tonnes of asbestos are illegally dumped every year.
- The World Health Organization says there is no known safe minimum level of exposure to asbestos.
- You cannot see asbestos fibres — they are invisible to the naked eye.

**Houses built before  
1990 can contain asbestos.**



## Asbestos in DIY

- 57% of Australians are 'DIYers'. These are people who do, or would, undertake at least part of a renovation or maintenance project by themselves.
- 40% of DIYers have worked on a risky property (built before 1990).
- At least a third of projects started in the last 5 years began during early COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (the four months from March to June 2020).
- Almost no DIYers (only 5%) named asbestos as a high-risk consideration in DIY, without being prompted. This compares to 22% for electrical work.
- 1 in 5 DIYers encountered asbestos in a previous project. Only half sought professional help to deal with it.
- Most DIYers felt it was important to know how to manage asbestos risks, but only half felt confident identifying or managing asbestos.

**Over a third of those who have encountered asbestos admitted to illegal and dangerous disposal — mostly in their own or a neighbour's household bin.**



# THINK TWICE ABOUT ASBESTOS

ASBESTOS  
AWARENESS  
WEEK  
November 22-28 2021

## Where can you find asbestos in your home?

These locations are examples of where asbestos can be, in homes built before 1990.

### Inside the home

- wall and ceiling panels, particularly in wet areas such as the kitchen, bathroom, toilet and laundry
- vinyl floor tiles
- backing for vinyl and linoleum flooring
- backing for wall tiles and splashbacks
- carpet underlay
- insulation in domestic heaters and stoves
- backing of electrical switchboards
- insulation in roof cavities
- hot water pipe insulation
- in textured paint and plaster patching compounds.

### Outside the home

- roof sheeting and ridge capping
- gutters and downpipes
- imitation brick cladding
- lining under eaves
- fences, garden sheds, garages, carports, outdoor toilets and dog kennels
- buried and dumped waste materials.

**Asbestos is dangerous if damaged, disturbed or deteriorating. Know the risks and protect yourself during work or renovations.**



# ADSS Race Day

Despite not being able to get to the starter's gate in 2020, due to you know what, the Society's very popular Charity Race Day was back and racing at Doomben Racecourse on Wednesday 22 September.

The event has always been a great opportunity to network with other people in the construction and associated industries, have a bite to eat, a refreshing drink, a flutter on the "ponies" and enjoy good company in a relaxed social setting.

With a little over 600 attendees and generous support from sponsors just over **\$140,00.00** was raised, which is a tremendous effort considering the environment we have been living in for the past while.

In conjunction with the Race Day, the Society's annual raffle was also drawn. In addition to the first prize of a trailer loaded with goodies, there was second prize of \$1,500.00 of travel vouchers and third prize of \$1,000.00 of various gift vouchers.

## The winners were:

- 1st Prize: Anaru Campbell Ticket no. 2513
- 2nd Prize: Grant Thomason Ticket no. 1579
- 3rd Prize: Anthony Perrett Ticket no. 1613

A big thank you on behalf of the Society to all attendees and the following sponsors:

Turner Freeman Lawyers, CBUS, Electrical Trades Union, CFMEU (Construction & General Division), Windsor Management Insurance Brokers, CFMEU (Mining & Energy Division), BERT & CIP, Queensland Council of Unions, BMD, Creative Safety Initiatives, Total Tools, FTF Pty Ltd, XVend, Rudtek Pty Ltd, AH Beard, Sealy, The Comfort Group & Jess Pugh MP.



# The Society at Work



16.9.21 - Rockhampton Support Group



22.9.21 - ADSS Charity Race Day



23.9.21 - North Lakes Morning Tea



23.9.21 - North Lakes Morning Tea



23.9.21 - North Lakes Morning Tea



8.10.21 - Sunnybank Support Group



13.10.21 - Hervey Bay Support Group



14.10.21 - Ipswich Morning Tea



14.10.21 - Ipswich Morning Tea



20.10.21 - ADSS Symposium



20.10.21 - ADSS Symposium



28.10.21 - Gold Coast Morning Tea

# The Society at Work



28.10.21 - Gold Coast Morning Tea



4.11.21 - Chermside Support Group Xmas Lunch



9.11.21 - Redcliffe Morning Tea



9.11.21 - Redcliffe Morning Tea



9.11.21 - Redcliffe Morning Tea



10.11.21 - Hervey Bay Support Group



12.11.21 - Sunnybank Support Group Xmas Lunch



18.11.21 - Gold Coast Support Group Xmas Lunch



18.11.21 - Rockhampton Support Group Xmas Lunch



22.11.21 - Asbestos Awareness Week



23.11.21 - Ipswich Support Group Xmas Lunch



24.11.21 - Blue Lights of Townsville

# The Society at Work



24.11.21 - Blue Lights of Townsville



24.11.21 - Blue Lights of Townsville



24.11.21 - Sunshine Coast Support Group Xmas Lunch



25.11.21 - QLD Parliament House lit up Blue



25.11.21 - QLD Parliament House lit up Blue



26.11.21 - Ecumenical Service



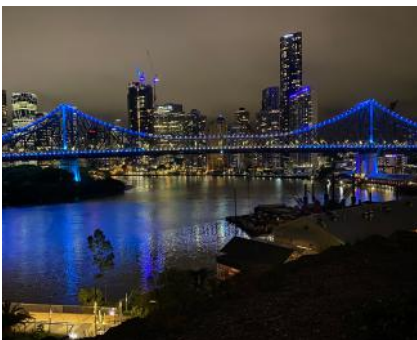
26.11.21 - Ecumenical Service



26.11.21 - Ecumenical Service



26.11.21 - Ecumenical Service



26.11.21 - Story Bridge Lit up Blue for Asbestos Awareness Week



26.11.21 - QLD Country Bank Stadium (Townsville) Lit up Blue for Asbestos Awareness Week



27.11.21 - Victoria Bridge lit up Blue

# Support Those Who Support The Society



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

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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)  
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IRT Asbestos Management Pty Ltd  
Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)  
North Australian Contracting  
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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.*

