

October 2013



News

Presidents Message

Illegal Dumping Goes On. Again and again we see reports in our daily press and on TV.

Photos of indiscriminate and senseless dumping of dangerous asbestos by unscrupulous individuals who are most probably not even aware of the danger they place themselves in, let alone the threat that this cowardly act poses to an unsuspecting public.

To eliminate illegal dumping is nigh on impossible and will continue to be so while those carrying out extensions and renovations are obliged to pay exorbitant and expensive fees and with no real incentive given to induce them to do otherwise the practice will continue.

Although huge fines are available for those caught disposing of asbestos by illicit dumping (and very few are), these fines are rarely invoked to the limit prescribed by our laws. Those who inhabit the benches of our law courts seem continually reluctant to deliver a penalty in keeping with the requirements of public opinion. Indiscriminate dumping of asbestos may cause people to die.

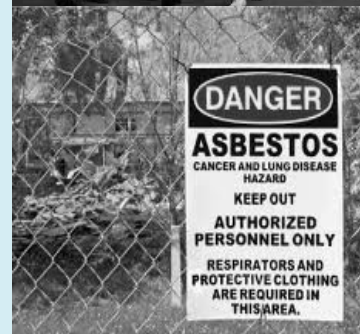
The Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia is aware of one such offender who has faced court on four separate occasions, yet has never spent one single day in prison. These people know how to work the system and simply accept a fine which they can pay off over a sustained period and go back to their old habits. Hardly a deterrent. There are however, steps that can be taken to help alleviate the problem. The first being to eliminate the savage impost heaped upon those who are willing to comply with the rules and dispose of their waste legally, another being the court's ability to apply appropriate penalties to suit the crime.

More tips that accept asbestos waste could be made available in more convenient locations. Purpose built vehicles could be used for carriage of waste to designated tips. These to be licensed and registered as such and tracked if need be.

This material can and does kill and should be treated with caution and the dangers inherent driven home to those who are exposed to it.

Barry Robson

President, Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia Inc.



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Asbestos Alert In Small Country Town

Gwydir Shire Mayor Mr. John Coulton's admissions to at least two confirmed incidents of dangerous asbestos being inappropriately handled by council workers, shows conclusively how some councils treat the threat that this substance carries with a blasé and nonchalant attitude.

A whistle blower named Mark Sankey, an employee since 2008, has made allegations that when employed at the land fill sites owned by Gwydir Council he was frequently asked to cover asbestos with garbage and leaf matter so as to hide it from view. When he questioned this instruction he claims he was threatened with dismissal. He has since been dismissed by the council who offered as the reason, "his skills were no longer required".



Mr Sankey would have been exposed to asbestos dust on many occasions. Were there any substance in these allegations (and we have no reason to think otherwise) it calls for immediate investigation on the part of WorkCover and the Environmental Protection Agency, both of whom now confirm that they will be looking into all aspects of the safety issues concerning asbestos in the shire. Having heard speakers from those organisations and others including the President of the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia Mr. Barry Robson at a seminar convened in the CWA rooms on Saturday, 12 October, many inhabitants of the sleepy little village of Wyallda will awake to the knowledge that some of them may have been exposed to deadly asbestos fibres. This is not to suggest that the township will become another "cancer cluster", far from it. In fact, very few people exposed to asbestos actually contract an Asbestos Related Disease when one considers the huge numbers of those who come in contact with it on a daily basis. It can however enter homes and offices and work places carried in on footwear and clothing belonging to those who have been exposed.

Having had personal experience with the ravages that Mesothelioma brings and were I a resident of that town or others controlled by Gwydir Council, I would be taking steps to inform those in charge in no uncertain terms that this is a material that cannot be taken for granted and must be treated with caution. Cutting up water pipes and other items that contain asbestos as it has been alleged, is inane stupidity and a practice not to be encouraged. Such acts carry a fine of up to \$1M and if incurred no doubt would be passed on to rate payers.

To this end, ADFA would strongly advise anyone who has been in the vicinity of any work being carried out that may have involved disturbing asbestos in situ to contact the National Asbestos Register and inform them so you can be placed on record. **Contact them on 1300-363-079.**



**ASBESTOS DISEASES FOUNDATION
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Media Release

Friday September 27, 2013

GWYDIR SHIRE MUST ADD WORKERS AND RESIDENTS TO NATIONAL ASBESTOS REGISTER FOLLOWING ADMISSIONS

Gwydir Shire Mayor John Coulton's admissions of at least two confirmed incidents of asbestos being inappropriately handled by council workers should be more than enough reason to add anyone potentially exposed to asbestos to the national register and ensure a full review of council procedures, according to the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia.

The asbestos victims group said any workers or community members who could potentially have been exposed to asbestos fibres during those two incidents should be immediately be informed and be added to the National Asbestos Register.

ADFA president Barry Robson said it was also essential, in light of the Mayor's admissions of two confirmed asbestos breaches, that WorkCover and Environment Protection Authority inspectors be fully assisted in their independent investigation of work practices at Warialda, and elsewhere in the Shire.

"If the Mayor is correct in his assertions that there is no issue with council work practices involving asbestos, then how can he explain the two concerning safety breaches that he has now admitted to the public," Mr Robson said.

"Given he has admitted that asbestos piping from a council repair job was illegally dumped at an unauthorised site, then later removed and disposed of correctly, and that on another occasion asbestos was taken to a contractors home, rather than being properly disposed of, it is clear there are issues warranting investigation.

"ADFA believes the logical next step is to have all the workers involved, and any nearby residents, informed of their potential exposure and added to the National Asbestos Register."

Mr Robson said both WorkCover and the EPA had confirmed they are investigating a further series of allegations made by residents and former council workers, with an inspector meeting council staff and examining a number of work sites yesterday.

He said further allegations had also now come forward that a council contractor used to transport asbestos waste had not been appropriately accredited for the work.

ADFA representatives will return to Warialda in coming weeks to attend a community meeting, provide an update on the investigations, and provide general advice to residents and workers.

For media comment please call ADFA President Barry Robson on 0407 235 685

More Successful Achievements from ADRI

As a committee member of the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia I am frequently asked about the existence of the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute (ADRI) and the work that is done there. As the name would suggest, investigation and important research is carried out into the cure of Mesothelioma cancer and prevention of other Asbestos Related Diseases that will plague our society for many years to come.

Situated at Concord Hospital and staffed by a team of dedicated research scientists, ADRI is headed up by Professor Nico van Zandwijk (call him Nico), the inaugural Director who has held this important position since the Institute opened in January 2009.

When it comes to discussing the work done by these people my mind is a desert. I do know for certain that giant steps taken by this group have led to results that have been recognised both here and overseas as tremendous advances in the field of medical research into Asbestos Related Diseases. Another thing I am aware of is the dedication and talents of its Director. When I first met Nico some years ago I was taken in by his enthusiasm and willingness to discuss his work and plans for future developments. We were sitting in his office and I asked if he would fill me in on appointments prior to coming to ADRI. After a moment's thought he stepped to his computer and in a short time handed me nine pages containing a history of his background and achievements in the field of scientific research. This gentle and affable man is always readily approachable and fills his life with a desire to succeed and we here at ADFA feel richer for the experience and knowledge he and his fellow scientists bring to us.

Mike O'Donnell, ADFA

Professor Nico van Zandwijk – Director

Professor Nico van Zandwijk, Director of the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute (ADRI), is Professor of Medicine at the University of Sydney.

In 2007 he joined ADRI after a long career in thoracic oncology in Europe. In 1985 he founded the department of thoracic oncology at the Netherlands Cancer Institute and made major contributions: to the identification of prognostic factors in lung cancer and malignant mesothelioma; to chemoprevention studies in lung cancer, and major national and international clinical trials. He served as secretary (1982-1988) and chair (1988-1994) of the EORTC Lung Cancer Cooperative Group. He chaired the Dutch Guidelines Committee for Diagnosis and Treatment of Lung Cancer and State Committees on Asbestos-related diseases, and Asbestos & Lung Cancer of the Dutch Health Council (2002-08). He was a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association for the Study on Lung Cancer (IASLC) (2005-09) and the advisory board of the Thoracic Oncology Section of the French National Cancer Institute (INCa) (2006-2008) and co-chaired the (IASLC) World Conference on Lung Cancer 2011 in Amsterdam and is a member of the Core Program Committee for the WCLC 2013 in Sydney. He has been plenary speaker at ASCO and IASLC meetings and currently serves on the editorial board of Cancer Prevention Research, a journal of the AACR. He is a member of the National Lung Cancer Advisory Group of Cancer Australia and the National Asbestos Management Review Panel. He has authored or co-authored more than 250 peer-reviewed international scientific papers and book chapters and has long-standing collaborations with investigators from other states in Australia, Europe, Canada, the US, Japan and Korea



Courtesy of the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute's (ADRI) 2012 Annual Report

Meet Serafina Salucci

Serafina Salucci grew up knowing nothing about asbestos yet the danger she was exposed to was as simple as child's play.

To an innocent seven-year-old, powdery white offcuts from the sheeting her dad used to build a garage in the family's Sydney suburban backyard made good chalk for drawing on the driveway.

Serafina and her two brothers grabbed bits to throw it at each other, then played frisbee with them – like countless thousands of kids who grew up in the 1960s and 70s.

Serafina Salucci has never been near an asbestos factory, never renovated or done any work herself with asbestos sheeting.

Yet in 2007 she was diagnosed with cancer associated with the incurable disease mesothelioma.

She became one of the younger "third wave" of victims, exposed to asbestos fibres through home use, among hundreds of Australians diagnosed with mesothelioma every year.

Her daughter Alissa was sitting on her knee when the specialist gave Serafina and her husband the bad news. With four children of her own aged under 10, she had everything to live for.

Serafina, now 43, has endured two major operations and much radiotherapy and chemotherapy, so far defying doctors' predictions of life expectancy of no more than a few years.

She is now using her precious time to speak out on the continuing threat asbestos poses to the community.

"When I was young no one knew the dangers, except the makers James Hardie," she said.

"Now there's no excuse. While asbestos is still in our older buildings, like houses, hospitals, schools, there's a risk of exposure if fibres become airborne, so we must work to safely get rid of it."

Serafina fears that the community is unaware of the dangers now that asbestos is no longer widely sold and it disturbs her to hear home handymen talk of wetting down old asbestos sheeting to remove it.

"The Aussie 'she'll be right' attitude isn't good enough," she said. "There is no safe level of asbestos exposure – just look at me."

Serafina manages to care for her husband and children but after two operations which removed a lung and several ribs, she tires easily.



Last year she spent an exhausting day walking the long halls of federal Parliament House as part of a delegation which met PM Julia Gillard and senior ministers.

"I met the PM and it's good they've agreed to an Office of Asbestos Safety, now it really needs the funding to identify all the buildings still containing asbestos and take action," she said.

Serafina's father died many years ago and she is relieved her two brothers and mother are in good health.

"One of the first things I thought of when I was diagnosed was to thank God that dad wasn't around because I don't know that he would have coped, I know he would have blamed himself," she said.

"Dad and mum didn't know the danger, it wasn't their fault because no one knew. But these days we have to protect people the best way we can."

Article courtesy of Make Australia Asbestos Free by 2030 Campaign.

Those who are regular readers of ADFA News would be aware of the name Serafina Salucci. Serafina, apart from being a very brave lady who lives with a positive attitude, has also been diagnosed with Mesothelioma.

In each Newsletter, ADFA seeks to highlight the plight of one of those unfortunate enough to have contracted this malignant and debilitating disease. She has kindly allowed her story to be told here.

ADFA would like to take this opportunity to thank Serafina for her contribution and hopes her return to good health lies ahead. Her bravery is to be admired and an abject lesson for us all.



The Looming Threat Of The Domestic Leaf Blower

No doubt most people would have heard of air blowers also known as leaf blowers. The main purpose of this evil creation appears to be to deliver as many leaves and as much debris from your front yard as possible onto your neighbours front yard or into the gutters and drains. These blowers may be found in many garden sheds across the country and, more disturbingly, in many of our schools.

Leaf blowers expel a powerful jet of air capable of blowing into the air any loose material in its path. Unfortunately, asbestos may be present inside school buildings. This could be as a result of prior building on the site, renovations affected in the home and fibres carried in on a child's clothes or feet or from asbestos dumped on school grounds. If there is asbestos present it will most certainly be contained in the dust thrown up by these blowers. The shards of asbestos are spear shaped and so tiny they are rarely visible to the naked eye. As if asbestos was not critical enough, there is also the threat



to those who suffer the debilitating curse of asthma. Asthmatics are susceptible to airborne dust particles distributed by blowers, particularly if they are used inside buildings.

Asthmatic children, whose numbers appear to be increasing, may well suffer on a daily basis from the effects of these machines, with their parents quite oblivious as to the reason why. However, there is one man whom ADFA introduced you to in our last issue of ADFA News who has been waging a relentless campaign to have these blowers removed from our schools.

Dr. Alan Purcell is a retired scientist living in Perth. He is a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin and Queens University in Belfast. Prior to his relocating to Australia as Chief Veterinary Pathologist in the Department of Agriculture in Western Australia he held the position of Head of the Mammalian Diagnostic Unit at the Veterinary Research Laboratories in Northern Ireland. As Superintendent of animal facilities at the University of

Western Australia he wrote the draft of the Animal Welfare Act. Charged with the welfare of animals in his care he was well aware of the importance of clean air for experimental ani-



mals. Blowers would not be tolerated inside animal houses as this would be considered as animal cruelty by the Animal Ethics Committee of the University. After retiring, this keen gardener took up a position with the Department of Education, in Western Australia, as a gardener. It was in this capacity that he became aware of the potential danger existing in our schools when hundreds of pupils, as well as teachers and school administration staff were open to exposure to airborne contamination by dust and dirt blown into the air by powerful blowers.



Dr Purcell began a campaign to raise awareness about this hazard in our schools. His campaign involves dozens of emails and letters to various Government bodies such as the Health Department which appear to be most concerned to cover this issue up. This is disgraceful. Parents who have asthmatic children or a fear of other airborne contaminants such as asbestos, should contact the principal of their child's school and ascertain whether or not blowers are being used, to "clean" inside buildings.

If people are aware that these blowers are being used in schools, they should contact ADFA and help us bring to an end this harmful and unnecessary practice, which only spreads contamination through buildings and increases the risk of children being exposed to asbestos fibres, consequently developing asbestos related diseases later in life as well as developing respiratory diseases.



Illegal Dumping Goes On...

All too frequently we see photos of illegal dumping of dangerous asbestos waste appearing in our newspapers and on television. While unscrupulous and non-caring individuals pursue this practise, little thought is given to the means whereby solutions are sought to help eradicate the problem.

Dumping asbestos will always present an on going problem. Despite fines of up to \$100,000 in place for the few offenders who are ever caught and processed through our court system, not one has ever been hit with a fine that comes remotely close to this figure.

In the case of a company, this penalty may be as high as \$1M. To the rate payer who has to foot the bill for the clean up, these figures may look reassuring. In reality, if these penalties are not invoked, they are literally not worth the paper they are written on. Those who sit in judgement on our court benches must be made to realise that scattering asbestos throughout the countryside is **not** akin to a few empty jam tins left in a shopping bag on the side of the road. Asbestos kills.



ADRI

The **Asbestos Diseases Research Institute** aims to improve the diagnosis and treatment of asbestos-related diseases and at the same time to contribute to more effective measures to prevent exposure to asbestos.

The ADRI's primary objective is to make asbestos related disease history, and to provide a better future for all those Australians unfortunately exposed to asbestos.

The Killer Company

You did not have to kill
To make your hay
The sun would still shine if you tried another way
Instead you turned your eye, you did not hear us cry
As you kept on counting
Our grief kept on mounting

Submitted by Irene Dixon, ADFA Member

Another Hat for The 'Pres'

ADFA's President, Barry Robson has acquired another hat to add to his collection. He has been appointed to the Board of the first Australian Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency. This newly formed group will be headed up by Mr. Peter Tighe, until recently the National Secretary of the Communication, Electrical and Plumbing Union, a position he has held since 1995.

Along with being the President of ADFA, Barry is also a Board member of ADRI as well as President of the Blacktown and Mt. Druitt Cardiac Support Group. Barry works tirelessly as a volunteer and we at ADFA in particular value the outstanding progress made by our organization since he took charge in 2002.

Congratulations Barry, you have earned the gratitude of us all.

DID YOU KNOW...

That Telstra has hired some 200 safety specialists to oversee the training of workers employed on the NBN rollout. Much attention has been paid to the removal of the “pits” which were placed in the ground many years ago when the original underground lines were laid. Asbestos was used in the manufacture of these box shaped containers which are said to be numbered in the tens of thousands throughout the country. They are systematically being replaced by a similar and safe alternative as work proceeds. Any employee or others who think they have been in contact with asbestos while on site are advised to register with the newly formed National Asbestos Register. The information supplied may be of use as evidence in the event of any future compensation claim. Reach them on free call **1800-888-468** or <http://deewr.gov.au/national-asbestos-exposure-register> and ask for an application form.

That on December 12th 2004 in the state of New York a father and son team who were owners of asbestos companies were sentenced to the longest Federal prison terms for environmental crimes in U.S. history. The crimes related to a ten year scheme to illegally remove asbestos. They were convicted on eighteen counts of conspiracy to violate the Clean Air and Toxic Substances Act. Counts included obstruction of justice, money laundering, mail fraud and bid rigging, all related to the on going asbestos clean up. The son pulled 25 years in prison, the forfeiture of \$2M in illegal proceeds as well as 23 million dollars in compensation to victims. The father was sentenced to 17 years in prison and forfeiture of \$1.7M in illegal proceeds and restitution of \$22M to the victims. The then Attorney General, Janet Reno remarked, “knowingly removing asbestos improperly was a crime. Exploiting the homeless to do this work is cruel.”

That James Hardie consumed about 70% of the asbestos fibre used annually in Australia, some of which was imported from South Africa and Canada. Of its many thousands of uses, surely two of the strangest must be in the filter-tips of cigarettes manufactured by some tobacco companies and also in face powder which was made from magnesium trisilicate a naturally occurring ingredient in asbestos.

That the recently introduced Mesothelioma Bill passed through the House of Lords has been roundly condemned by campaigners seeking compensation for asbestos victims. This legislation was to pay compensation to those negligently exposed to asbestos who cannot trace the origins of their disease. Neither their employer or the employer's insurer can be identified. The bill will award 70% of the average civil compensation pay-out to about 300 Mesothelioma victims annually and only to those diagnosed on or before July 25th 2012. It also excludes those affected with an asbestos related disease such as asbestosis and pleural plaques. The bill still has to go to the House of Commons with first payments to commence in July 2014. However activists say the bill should pay 100% and back date to at least February 2010. “We will not let up on our fight for 100% compensation as the bill continues its passage through Parliament and thereafter with a new government if necessary. These are innocent victims and hundreds of them will be denied justice if the bill is not changed.”

That twice as many people in Wales die from Mesothelioma than car accidents.

ADFA Race Day

Join ADFA for one of the most attractive events on the racing calendar.

Held in the beautifully appointed Grand Pavilion at Rosehill Gardens, this is the 5th occasion that ADFA has staged this meeting and more than 600 visitors attend. It is the one and only event given to fundraising each year and thankfully well supported as ADFA receives no Government financial support.

We urge those wishing to attend to hurry along and reserve their tickets early as tables sell quickly. Form a group of friends and be entertained as you enjoy a sumptuous three course lunch and drinks served by attentive waiting staff. You will be seated at tables overlooking the winning post and the beautifully manicured gardens of one of the finest venues of its kind in the country. There will be games and competitions to entertain you along with best dressed Lady and best dressed Gent prizes. Children are also welcome.

Even if you are not a race follower, come along and give yourself a great day out.



Please call Jean on 1800-006-196 or email info@adfa.org.au for bookings and further information.

LAST RACE SOLD!!!

The last remaining race for our upcoming annual fund-raiser to be held at the colourful Rosehill Gardens on the 2nd of November has been sold.

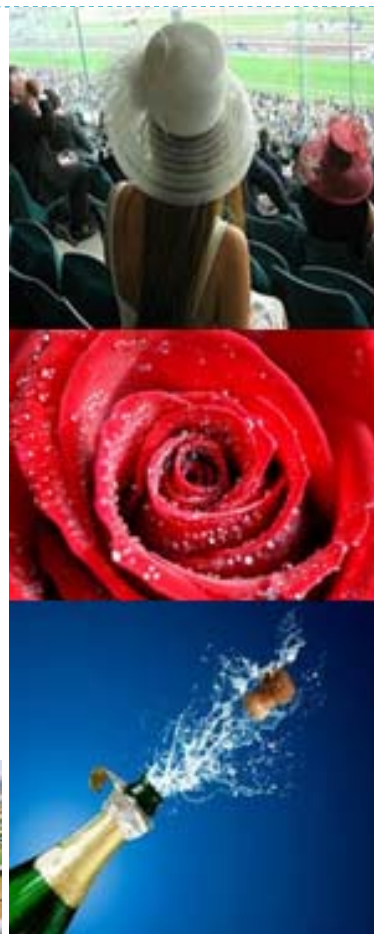
As predicted, all the races were snapped up in quick succession. Except one. This seems to be a familiar occurrence each year and causes us some minor concern. Under these circumstances ADFA would have to bear the cost which is sizable and therefore, fewer funds to help us through the next year.

It is in such times that we have to call on our hard working and amiable President, Barry Robson, to come to our aid. Barry is a passionate advocate for ADFA and spends many, many hours of his time taking care of business. Apart from day to day running of our organisation and a growing list of new members, he has to travel frequently and often interstate to attend meetings on matters involving all aspects of asbestos. When he picks up the phone or knocks on the door of anyone of his many contacts he makes them an offer too good to

refuse and the problem is solved.

We must now take the opportunity to say how grateful ADFA is for the generosity and kindness shown by those who sponsor one of our races and come forward and in some cases without any soliciting who are ever willing to put their money up for such a worthy cause. They may be assured that every cent is spent wisely in helping those victims of an asbestos related disease, as well as research into discovery of a permanent cure that has plagued our country for many years. We are all volunteers who give of our time willingly and nothing is skimmed off the top in the form of administration costs.

ADFA looks forward to meeting you all at what is shaping up to be the best event that we have ever staged.



Golf Day

ADFA would like to give a huge vote of thanks to Tony Khoury and his band of merry golfers who took part in his recent golf day. Tony is a likable bloke and a great supporter of our organisation who never falters when an opportunity occurs to

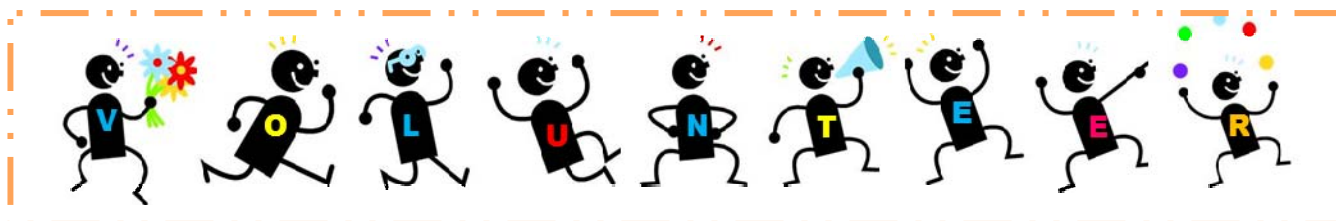
lend us a hand. On this occasion his fellow golfers kicked in and dug deep and as a result ADFA was the recipi-

ent of a sizable donation for which we are most grateful. ADFA receives no government support so Tony and his colleagues can rest assured that every cent will be put to good use.



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Many thanks again, to all who took part in the golf day. You're great!



My dictionary describes a volunteer as one who offers his or herself to undertake services or help without expectations of payment or reward. Of course you don't expect payment or rewards because you are a volunteer. You don't expect promotion or advancement because everyone is on a similar level to yourself. You may find the work you do is casual or full time. Whatever the case, you will be a hands-on person carrying out duties given to you without question. You will never strike or hold stop work meetings seeking better conditions. You will never ask for pay increases because there isn't any pay. Sometimes the work you do may be boring and physical and in most cases you have to pay your own way to get to your worksite. So why do people volunteer to undertake this work? There is certainly no glamour involved. There is a myriad of reasons however and this question is best answered by talking to those who do volunteer their time and skills.

ADFA has a group of five volunteers [two men and three women] who are responsible for the smooth running of this highly regarded and desirable charity. Some of our volunteers have been with us for more than ten years. We are the oldest established and foremost leaders in our field in this country having been formed more than twenty years ago. These five members form the committee. To this end ADFA is desirous of appointing several additional members to the committee for additional positions soon to be created and is offering members and others the opportunity to join us. The pre-requirements needed are to be available on the first and second Wednesday of the month for meetings between the hours of ten thirty and two thirty (approx.) and a desire to become involved in a humane and benevolent organisation catering for the needs of those unfortunate enough to be stricken with an Asbestos Related Disease.

If you would like to join us at our next meeting or to find out ways in which you can help, please contact **Jean at ADFA on 02 9637 8759.**

The Asbestos Narratives Research Project: an update for ADFA members

Dear ADFA Members,

I am writing to you all on behalf of my research team colleagues at Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour. This year, as many of you will already know, we have been lucky enough to work with ADFA on a research project funded by Comcare through the Asbestos Innovation Fund. The project has been designed to investigate and document the social and psychological impact of an asbestos-related diagnosis on the lives of people diagnosed and their carers. We would like to take this opportunity to thank both the ADFA Management Committee for their ongoing support and encouragement as well as the many ADFA members have given their time and shared their experiences with us. This Project would not be possible without your collaboration.

Much has happened since our last Project update in June. We are very pleased to be able to announce that the project's virtual community, the *Dusted Community* is now up and running. The website was opened to the first intake of members in August. These members, many of whom are also ADFA members, were asked to assist us with the first "testing phase" of the Community. Their advice and feedback has been invaluable. We are now fine tuning the website in line with the members' suggestions and will be seeking new community members in the very near future. The website has been designed to create a virtual community for anyone affected by an asbestos-related diagnosis, including carers, both past and present. If you are interested in learning more about the Dusted Community please contact Desiree Kozlowski on 02 66593655 or via email at desiree.kozlowski@scu.edu.au

We have also spoken with a number of ADFA members, both men and women, about the reality of living with an asbestos-related diagnosis. Many important themes are beginning to emerge from these conversations. Not surprisingly many people spoke about the importance of family as well as strong support networks. In this context, ADFA's Central Coast support group, and in particular the commitment of support group co-ordinator, Marie Stokes received special mention.

Finally we continue to receive project questionnaires completed by ADFA members. The picture which is emerging is of a group of people facing their considerable challenges with strength and determination; indeed, the vast majority respondents reported that they try to see the humorous side of things when faced with problems and a similar percentage believe that they can achieve their goals, even if there are obstacles. We will continue to collect this information until the end of 2013 and would love to hear from anyone with an asbestos-related diagnosis, from people exposed but not diagnosed and from carers. The more information we receive the better our understanding of the true impact of a diagnosis becomes. If you haven't yet completed a questionnaire and would like to do so please contact Steve Provost at steve.provost@scu.edu.au or phone me on 02 6659 3393 and we will send you a copy in the post. If you would like to complete the questionnaire online then please log into the ADFA website www.adfa.org.au where you will find an electronic link to the questionnaire.

Thank you once again to all our Project participants.

Kind regards.

Julie Tucker
RISIR Project Team
Coffs Harbour Campus
Southern Cross University

I once thought that my first exposure to asbestos was when I first went to work for James Hardie back in the early fifties. How wrong I was! Growing up in the shadow of their giant asbestos factory in Brisbane I, along with many other unsuspecting residents, were in contact with potentially deadly asbestos on a daily basis over a period of many years. The detrimental effects of asbestos upon health and especially lungs was emphasised by the amount of information flooding in from overseas. Research was being carried out and attempts made to educate people as to the inherent danger associated with its use.



James Hardie was fully aware at the time that more and more victims were presenting with Asbestos Related Disease yet chose to ignore the fact and indeed tried covertly to oppose the damning evidence and operate in a state of total denial. Employees of the company were particularly at risk along with those who handled the material after it left the factory and nobody was beyond the reach of the invisible shards of asbestos that lodged in the wall of the lung and may lie dormant for many years.

Housewives and family members were known to have contracted Mesothelioma through the simple act of washing the clothes of those who worked with it.

My duties as an employee of Hardies entailed manual labour such as sweeping floors which were always covered in dust sometimes inches deep, repairing palettes and unloading rail wagons that brought in the raw material ready for processing. Hardies at the time had an outside fixing staff who worked on building sites and I formed a part of a gang engaged in that occupation. We were given no information in respect to the dangers associated with asbestos. The most important item in our tool kit was a jar of Vaseline which we foolishly thought would help prevent us from inhaling asbestos dust which flew off our power saw in huge clouds when cutting roofing sheets and wall cladding.

The thinking was that caking the Vaseline around our mouth and nose and eyes the asbestos dust would stick to it rather than be ingested or inhaled. Due to frequent industrial stoppages and strikes, inclement weather and absenteeism, Hardies abandoned the idea of a fixing staff and we were offered contract work whereby they would supply the material and we would supply the labour.

From a gang of some thirteen men engaged in this work, I believe I am the last man alive. I am not suggesting that all of them died as a result of an asbestos related disease or mesothelioma. I am of the opinion however, that some did and the others would have sustained damage to their lungs in the form of Pleural Plaques or asbestosis. After an association of some twenty years, I left the industry and sought other employment.

Asbestos does not affect everyone who may come into contact with it. In fact, very few people actually acquire a disease compared to the number of those exposed to it. When I worked in the industry some sixty years ago, there was no compensation or recourse for those who were afflicted such as we now have in the form of court actions and recompense.

Had Hardies come clean and quit chasing huge profits many would still be alive today. The co-conspirators in this ongoing and dreadful tragedy, such as John Boyd Reid, among others, who was at the helm of the company for 23 years, would have to have been aware of the death toll the product he so vigorously promoted, yet he said nothing and went unpunished.

"There is hardly a place in this country where one can reach out and not touch a product made by James Hardie."

John Boyd Reid

NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

From the US

Most people in this country would not be familiar with the name *Ronald Motley* with perhaps the exception of those in the legal fraternity.

Described as a “giant in the law and arguably the most influential lawyer in America” by the National Law Journal, he came from humble beginnings (his father owned a gas station) and rose to become a legend in the court rooms when his mother died of emphysema and he took up the crusade against the giant tobacco corporations. As a result of favourable decisions by the courts, success came when tobacco companies agreed to pay \$246 Billion over a period of 25 years. The largest civil settlement in US history. It was widely reported that his firm pocketed \$2 Billion from the settlement.

Motley then turned his attention to the asbestos companies and governments that appeared to pay scant attention to serious health issues. Motley began by using a strategy known to legal professionals as “Torts”, whereby a group of complainants, which may number in the hundreds or thousands, come together to form one law case. Similar to “Class Actions” as we know them in this country. Much admired by his peers, he became immensely wealthy and soon took on the trappings of the “rich and famous”. He lived in a mansion and often jetted from state to state in his own plane. His yacht measured 156 feet long. At the same time he was generous to a fault and gave to many charities. His son, who died as a result of a medical error in Florida, is remembered by a Foundation he set up in his name. All up he represented some 200,000 clients and a comment often quoted was, “If you are breathing clean air now because it doesn’t have asbestos, you can thank Ron Motley”. His friends claim that the decline in his health was caused by his flamboyant lifestyle and contributed to his death which occurred in August this year.

From Northern Ireland

Called Health Trusts and run along similar lines to our own health areas in this state, hospitals in Northern Ireland have their own set of problems with their asbestos. It has been found in some 20,000 hospitals controlled by the Trust in that country. Some of the worst affected areas were in maternity wards, children’s wards, staff accommodation and kitchens, to name a few. Administration regulators appear to be unreliable as well when it was found that they failed to inform maintenance workers that the buildings contained asbestos, thereby exposing them to extreme danger. A potentially fatal oversight for which the Trust was fined £10,000 plus costs and in August the Belfast Trust was fined £11,000 for breaches of the health act in respect to asbestos control. What next, schools? Last year the Belfast Telegraph reported how 876 of Northern Ireland schools, around 75%, contain asbestos.

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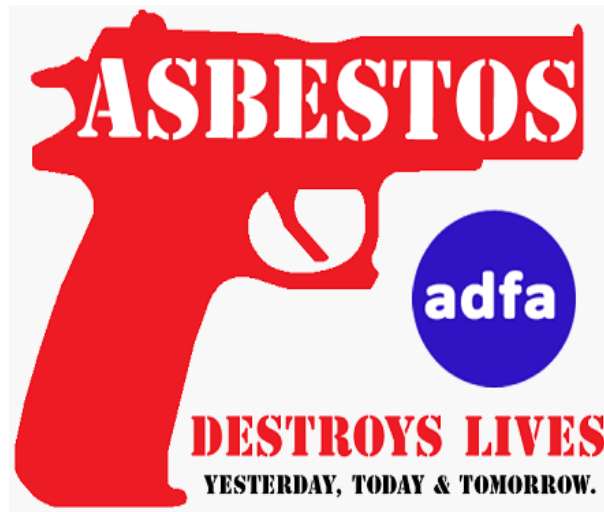
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