Summer 2018 NEWSLETTER

adss
Asbestos Disease Support Society

Asbestos Disease Support Society
16 Campbell Street, Bowen Hills, QLD 4006
PO Box 280, Spring Hill, QLD 4004
Phone: 1800 776 412

Date Claimers

Gold Coast Forum

Thursday 14 February 2019 – Nerang RSL 10am

ADSS Morning Tea Events

Maroochydore – Tuesday 5 March 2019
More morning teas to follow – Invitations will be forwarded

2019 Social Support Groups

Sunnybank Social Support Group – Sunnybank Hills Library from 9.30am
Second Friday of the Month (March – November)

- 22 February (Fourth Friday in Feb)
- 8 March
- 12 April
- 10 May
- 14 June
- 12 July
- 9 August
- 13 September
- 11 October
- 8 November (Xmas Lunch)

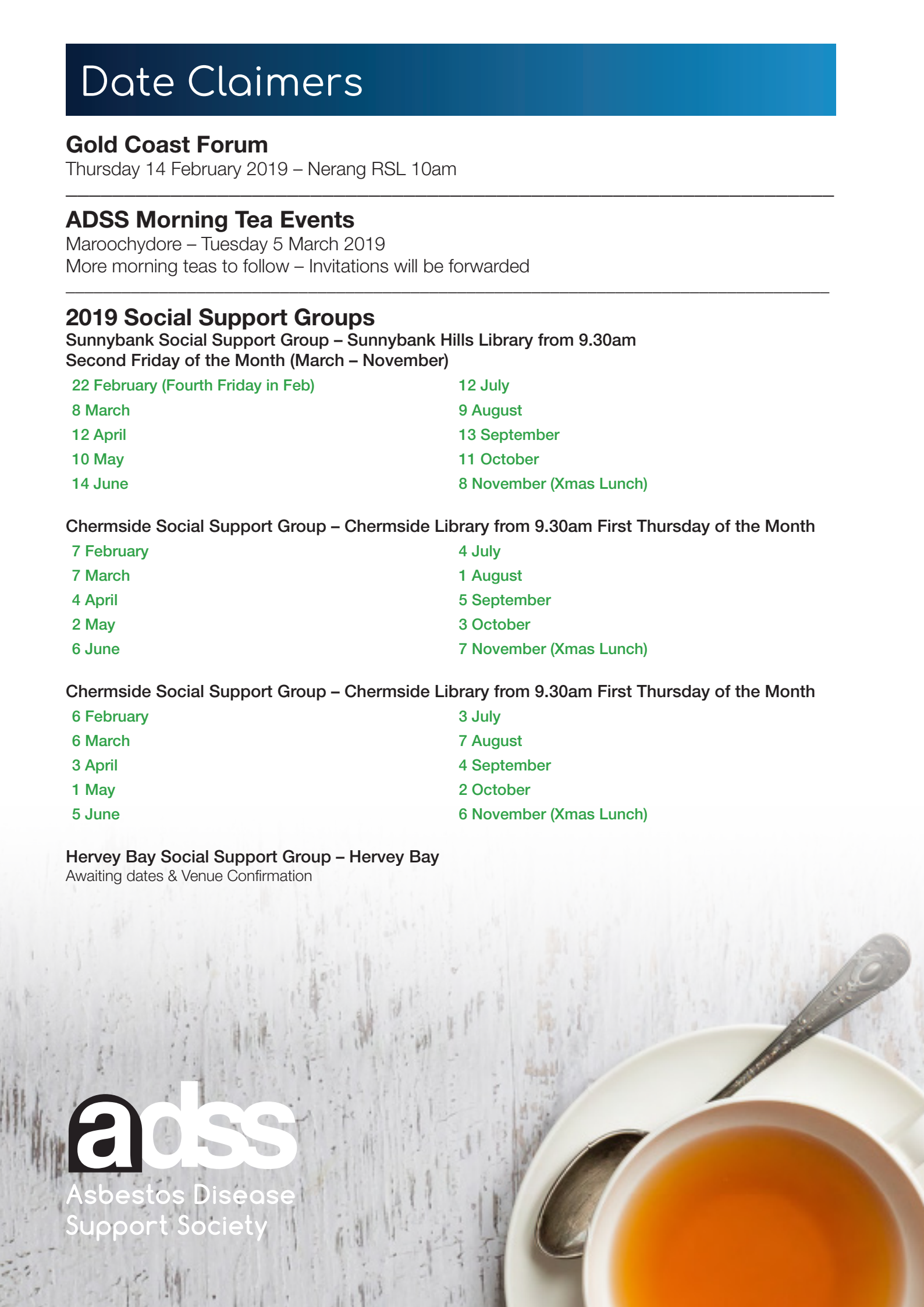
Chermside Social Support Group – Chermside Library from 9.30am First Thursday of the Month

- 7 February
- 7 March
- 4 April
- 2 May
- 6 June
- 4 July
- 1 August
- 5 September
- 3 October
- 7 November (Xmas Lunch)

Chermside Social Support Group – Chermside Library from 9.30am First Thursday of the Month

- 6 February
- 6 March
- 3 April
- 1 May
- 5 June
- 3 July
- 7 August
- 4 September
- 2 October
- 6 November (Xmas Lunch)

Hervey Bay Social Support Group – Hervey Bay
Awaiting dates & Venue Confirmation



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Asbestos Disease Support Society

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Christmas Closure

Our office will be closed from 12pm Friday 21st December 2018 and reopen from 9am Monday 7 January 2019.

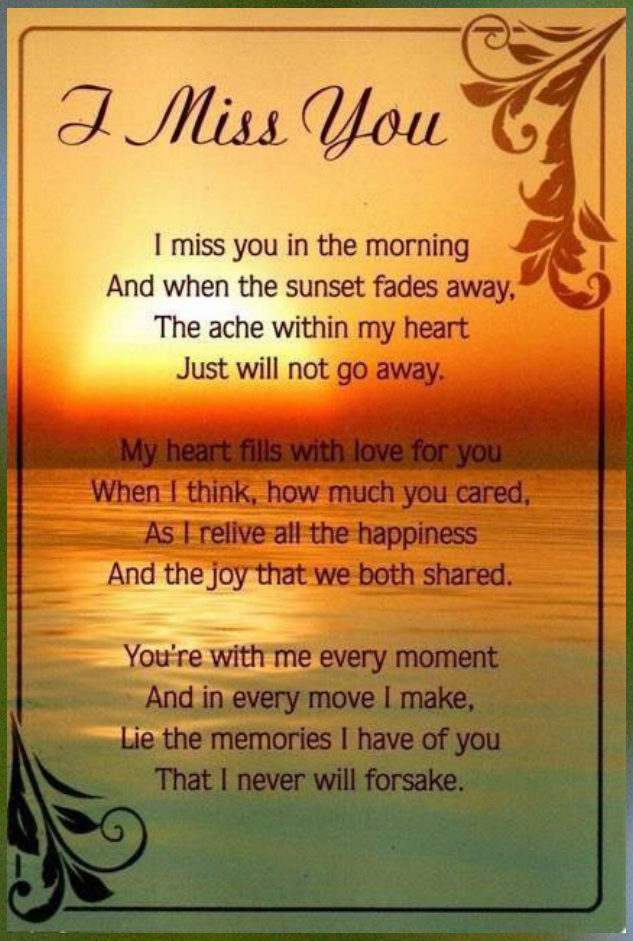
A staff member will be on call for new referrals and urgent matters on **0427 785 873.**

Did you know that the Society has a facebook page?

Follow us now to keep up to date with all our activities and asbestos issues.
facebook.com/asbestossupport

In Loving Memory

Robert Brooks
Stephen Cresswell
Adrian Paul Bowker
Geoffrey David Arnott
Ekaterina (Kathy) Chipizubov
Max Homan
James Dale
Ian Raymond Stanley
Murray Thompson
Roger David Bell
Roderick Graham Adams
Keith Ian Redenbach
Graham Mattingly
Ronald Martin
Clifford Ernest Field



General Managers Report

TREVOR TORRENS

As I gathered my thoughts for this article, I reflected on my time with the Society since commencing in April. I remembered my first support group meeting, when I met one of our members who had just been diagnosed with mesothelioma – he said to me "he didn't understand how he got the disease, he didn't choose to get the disease." At the time, I thought to myself that no one chooses to get a disease. Upon reflection on his comments, I contemplated that choices define our lives. We make all manner of choices – some good, some bad. These are choices that often determine our life journey. However, in relation to asbestos disease, choices were made by others, through what can only be described as deceitful conduct, that has had a profound and lasting effect on Australian society. In cases of asbestos disease, people just went to work to support their families or went about their daily lives – nothing more, nothing less - choices were made for them.

At the Society's 26th Ecumenical Service held at the Cathedral of St Stephens on 23 November, we came together to remember and honour those who have succumbed to a disease they did not "choose" and give thanks to all those people who do their utmost in supporting the Society and supporting asbestos sufferers - 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 and, for that, we are very appreciative.

As the year draws to a close it is also time to reflect on the activities of the Society during the past year.

Over the 2017/18 financial year, the Society's largest activity has been the morning teas – with 23 held across Queensland, the Northern Territory and Northern NSW with over 800 attendees. These morning teas are great opportunity to get up-to-date information asbestos related issues and to network with other members.

The Society also involved in:

- Awareness Stalls for Health and Safety Month
- Workers Memorial Day
- Asbestos Safety Eradication Agency National Conference
- Presented at the seminar on illegally imported asbestos products
- Launch of the Queensland Workers Memorial Honour Roll
- The Affected Families Committee who have lost loved ones through workplace accidents
- Ecumenical Service at St Stephens Cathedral
- Labour Day BBQ
- Made submissions to various Federal and State government agencies on asbestos related issues.
- Radio 4BC Awareness campaign
- Annual Charity Race Day Event
- Advertised in the RACQ Road Ahead magazine and various other journals
- Donated world class beds and humidifiers to the palliative care units of the Robina and Logan Public Hospitals
- Attended a number of TAFE colleges to promote awareness of the risks of exposure to asbestos during Asbestos Awareness week.

and importantly, provided care and support services to those members in need.

Symposium

The ADSS Symposium "Asbestos Related Disease - What you need to know", (in partnership with Turner Freeman Lawyers), was held at the Hotel Jen on 17 October. Over 150 people attended to listen to medical specialists (Doctors Horwood, McConaghy and Slaughter) on asbestos disease diagnosis, treatment, pain management and current research.
An edited video presentation of the Symposium can be found on the Society's web page at: **https://www.adss.org.au/articles/events/symposium-2018/** or, If you would like a copy of the presentations on a USB memory card sent you, please contact the Society.

Annual General Meeting

The Society's Annual General meeting was held on 17 October 2018. In accordance with the Society's Constitution, nominations were called for four Director positions. The "retiring" Directors all renominated and were subsequently endorsed, without the need for a ballot.

The returning Directors were:

- Andrew Ramsay
- Trish Ramsay
- Pat Cini
- Garry Rogers

Additionally, the Society's Chair and Deputy Chair, Andrew Ramsay and Peter Close chose not to seek re-election. As a result, directors elected Phil Blair and Bianca Neve as Chair and Deputy Chair, respectively.

Andrew and Peter will still serve on the Board and I would like to thank both of them for their leadership and devotion to the asbestos cause.

The full Board and short biographies are on the Society's website at: **https://www.adss.org.au/about/board-of-directors/**

Dust Related Diseases

At the AGM, members also approved a number of changes to the Society's constitution. While many of the changes were administrative in nature, one major change will result in the Society expanding its services to assist sufferers of "dust related lung disease", such as silicosis and coal workers' pneumoconiosis (CWP). A "Silicosis Overview" article can be found in this newsletter.

Finances

The Society's 2017/18 Audited Financial Statements were presented at the AGM. The auditor noted no qualification or reservations in the audit of the Society's accounts.

The majority of the Society's income (approx. 73%) comes from fund raising activities and donations. While revenue was slightly down (by 3%), this was offset by a decrease in expenditure of approximately 10%. We continue to receive a grant from Queensland Health which also accounts for approximately 20 per cent of our income.

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

The Society's 2017/18 Audited Financial Statements can be found at **https://www.adss.org.au/about/annual-reports/** or if you would like a copy sent to you, please contact the Society.

Trevor Gillmeister AKA "Gilly"

Thanks for your support Gilly.

Gilly is not only a rugby league legend (and more importantly a Maroon great), he is also the Society's Ambassador. Trevor gives feely of his time to the Society and was the voice of our 4BC awareness campaign. Like many in Australia and indeed the world, he lost his father, Ron, to mesothelioma contracted from his work as boiler maker.

Asbestos Related Issues

Illegally imported asbestos products continue to be a big issue and the Society is working with support groups in other states and the national Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency to lobby government to stop these products coming into Australia.

The Society also wrote to the Federal Health Minister regarding the inclusion of Keytruda on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to provide financial relief for our members who have been prescribed this drug.

The Society continues to lobby the Queensland Government on poor asbestos related policy. Written submissions have been made to Government requesting:

- Low density asbestos board (LDB) be classified as "friable" which provides for a higher level of safety when worked with or removed; and
- The abolition from legislation an exemption that allows home owners and workers to remove up to 10 square metres of bonded asbestos. The Society's stance is that any asbestos work should only be undertaken by licensed professionals.

You can be assured the Society will continue to lobby vigorously on these issues.

Member Services

The following support services are available to members:

- Access to the ADSS Social Worker;
- Telephone and home visit support;
- Free occupational therapy assessment;
- Dietetics and nutrition advice
- Free consultation with ADSS lawyer;
- Morning teas in the local community;
- Invitation to the ADSS Biennial Symposium;
- Invitation to the annual Ecumenical Service

Please contact the Society if you require assistance.

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.

Don Harris
CFMEU – QLD/NT Branch
X Vend
Turner Freeman Lawyers
Souths Acacia Ladies Bowling Club

I would like to thank the Society' staff - Kerrie, Kay and Natalie - our wonderful volunteers and the dedicated Board of Directors for all of their hard work and assistance throughout the year.

In my address at the recent Ecumenical service, I stated, "No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks"- and for the support that the Society and our members receive from the many - I thank you.

Merry Christmas, joyful holidays and a happy and safe New Year.

Proving Asbestos Exposure

THADY BLUNDELL – SOCIETY LEGAL ADVISER

One of the questions that is often asked by those suffering from asbestos disease and who are considering compensation is, "How do I prove where I was exposed?"

Many people are concerned that they will not be able to prove where their exposure occurred and therefore are reluctant to investigate compensation entitlements.

The reality is much different. By definition, asbestos disease obviously arises from asbestos exposure. For compensation purposes, in many situations it is not necessary to prove the sole cause of a condition, such as mesothelioma for instance, but establish that a particular asbestos exposure significantly contributed to it.

Asbestos exposure can occur through work – occupational, or outside of work – non-occupational, such as home renovation or exposure from the clothes of a family member who worked occupationally with asbestos.

If a person was exposed to asbestos through their occupation/work, the nature of the work often will disclose how the exposure occurred. If a person develops asbestos disease and served in the Royal Australian Navy, for example, it has been established which Naval ships contained asbestos, at what time, and where in the ships. If a person worked in the building trade, they almost inevitably would have come in contact with asbestos cement fibro sheeting and possibly other asbestos containing materials, depending upon the time period that they worked. Fibro sheeting was still manufactured with asbestos in Queensland up until about 1983.

Asbestos exposure can initially be overlooked. It is not unusual for a person when first told that they have an asbestos condition to not recall the source of the asbestos exposure. It is actually quite common to see medical reports where at time of initial diagnosis, the treating doctor notes that the source of the exposure cannot be recalled. It also very common for that exposure to be discovered and recalled as investigations take place.

What is required is a detailed work and lifetime history be taken. It is best to start at date of birth and proceed right up to the present to seek to uncover any potential asbestos exposure that may have occurred.

It may also be the case that a person worked at a workplace where it was well-known that asbestos was present and in respect of which previous claims have been made. This type of evidence is very helpful in proving asbestos exposure.

It is also important to note that compensation claims are dealt with "on balance of probabilities". In terms of asbestos exposure the test is whether it is more likely than not that a person had asbestos exposure in the way alleged.

Whilst it can appear daunting, and indeed in some cases impossible, to determine and prove the source of asbestos exposure, the reality is with proper investigation in almost all cases the source of an asbestos exposure can be determined and proved and compensation recovered.

If you have any questions regarding proving asbestos exposure or anything relevant to this, please contact the Society.

Society Social Worker

NATALIE BARBER

With Christmas just around the corner, I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every member and their families a Merry Christmas. I hope the holiday period allows the opportunity for many members to spend time with their loved ones and rejoice in the spirit of the holiday season.

I would also like to acknowledge that for many members this year will be the first time they are navigating a new way of celebrating Christmas without their loved ones. Whilst there are many ways to honour those who have passed at Christmas, I would like to share with you a couple of ways that staff in our office continue to keep the spirit of their loved ones alive. Kerrie lights a candle each year, Natalie places an ornament on her tree, Kay also lights a candle and Trevor makes a toast to family and friends. As this can be an exceptionally difficult time of year, I would like to encourage you all to reach out to one another and offer companionship, warmth and friendship.

This year, I have had the pleasure of joining the society and have been lucky enough to meet and support many incredible members either through telephone support services or face to face. By attending the support groups and other ADSS events, I have not only established networks but also made some wonderful society friends. In the past few months, I have been pleased to see many members connecting with each other to learn about different treatments, experiences and offering emotional support to each other. Whilst Asbestos Disease is a tragedy, it is lovely to see members coming together as a society family to be there for each other.

I am looking forward to continuing to deliver social work services next year and meeting many more members across Queensland and Northern NSW during morning teas.

Have a lovely Christmas everyone and see you next year. **- Natalie**

Society Support Groups

Social groups play a big role within the Society and were set up with the aim of bringing people together who are affected by asbestos related diseases. It is a space for people to share experiences in a safe environment. Four successful support groups are currently held each month (February – November) across different locations in Queensland including Sunnybank, Chermside, Hervey Bay and Bundaberg. Next year, we are seeking to expand support group locations to include the Gold Coast and Ipswich regions.

Some of the benefits of attending a social group:

- It can help you feel less lonely or isolated, as you make connections with others facing similar challenges. You realise you are not alone, and this can be a huge relief to the person.
- Members can offer one another emotional comfort and mutual support and the opportunity to talk openly and honestly to others.
- Members can share practical advice, information, resources and tips to help cope with your situation.
- It can expand your social network and help you make new friends, which can improve your overall sense of wellbeing.
- You will also help other group members with your friendship and caring manner and bring a sense of comfort in giving back to the community.

The following comments were offered from members about how much they enjoy the support groups.

"I enjoy the company and that everyone can talk about their problems".

"Don't break for too long over Christmas, I'll miss our mornings"

"Wonderful"

If anyone would like any further information on the social groups, please contact Kerrie at the Society on **1800 776 412.**

Bundaberg Support Group Christmas Lunch

On The National Front

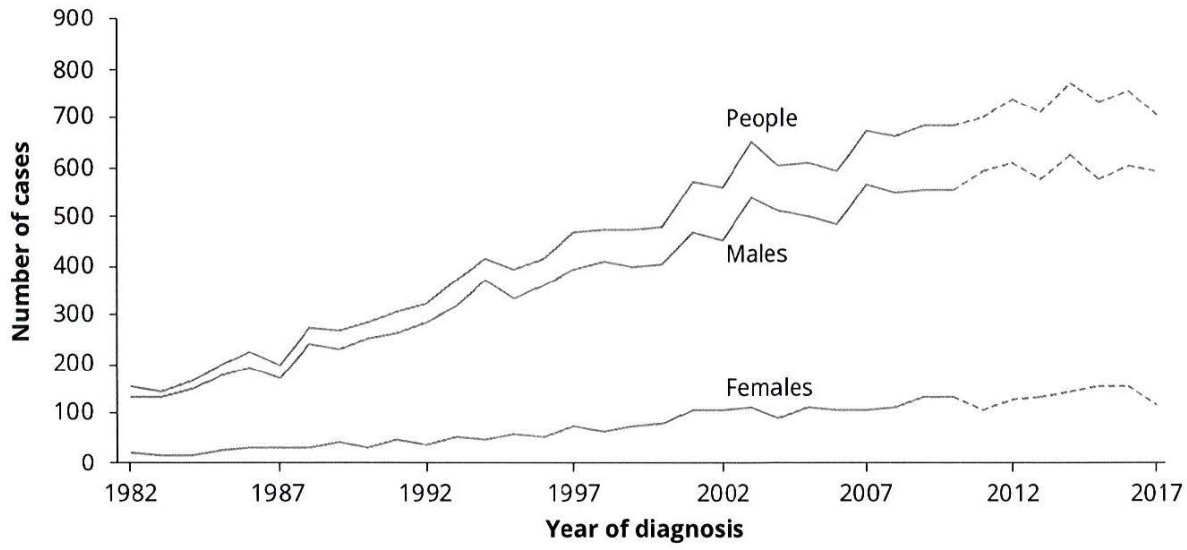
Report - Mesothelioma In Australia

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's report "Mesothelioma in Australia" was published in November 2018. In total, 710 new cases of mesothelioma were reported to the Australian Mesothelioma Register during 2017. (because not all cases are reported in the same year in which they are diagnosed, the number of cases can be expected to rise as more notifications are received).

Number of people diagnosed with mesothelioma by year and sex, 2011 to 2017.

Year of Diagnosis	Males	Females	Total
2011	596	106	702
2012	610	129	739
2013	576	135	711
2014	625	145	770
2015	576	158	734
2016	604	153	757
2017	592	118	710

Figure 1: New cases of mesothelioma in Australia, by year and sex, 1982 to 2017



Sources: 1982–2010 (solid graphed line): AIHW 2018b; 2011–2017 (dotted graphed line): AMR data at September 2018.

Number and Rate (per 100,000 population) by state and territory of diagnosis and sex 2017

State/territory	Males		Females		Total	
	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate
NSW	175	4.5	3.2	0.8	207	2.6
QLD	137	5.6	29	1.2	166	3.3
VIC	125	4.0	29	0.9	154	2.4
WA	109	8.4	18	1.4	127	4.9
SA	31	3.6	8	0.9	39	2.3
ACT	8	3.9	1	0.5	9	2.2
TAS	7	2.7	1	0.4	8	1.5
NT	0	-	0	-	0	-

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency National Conference

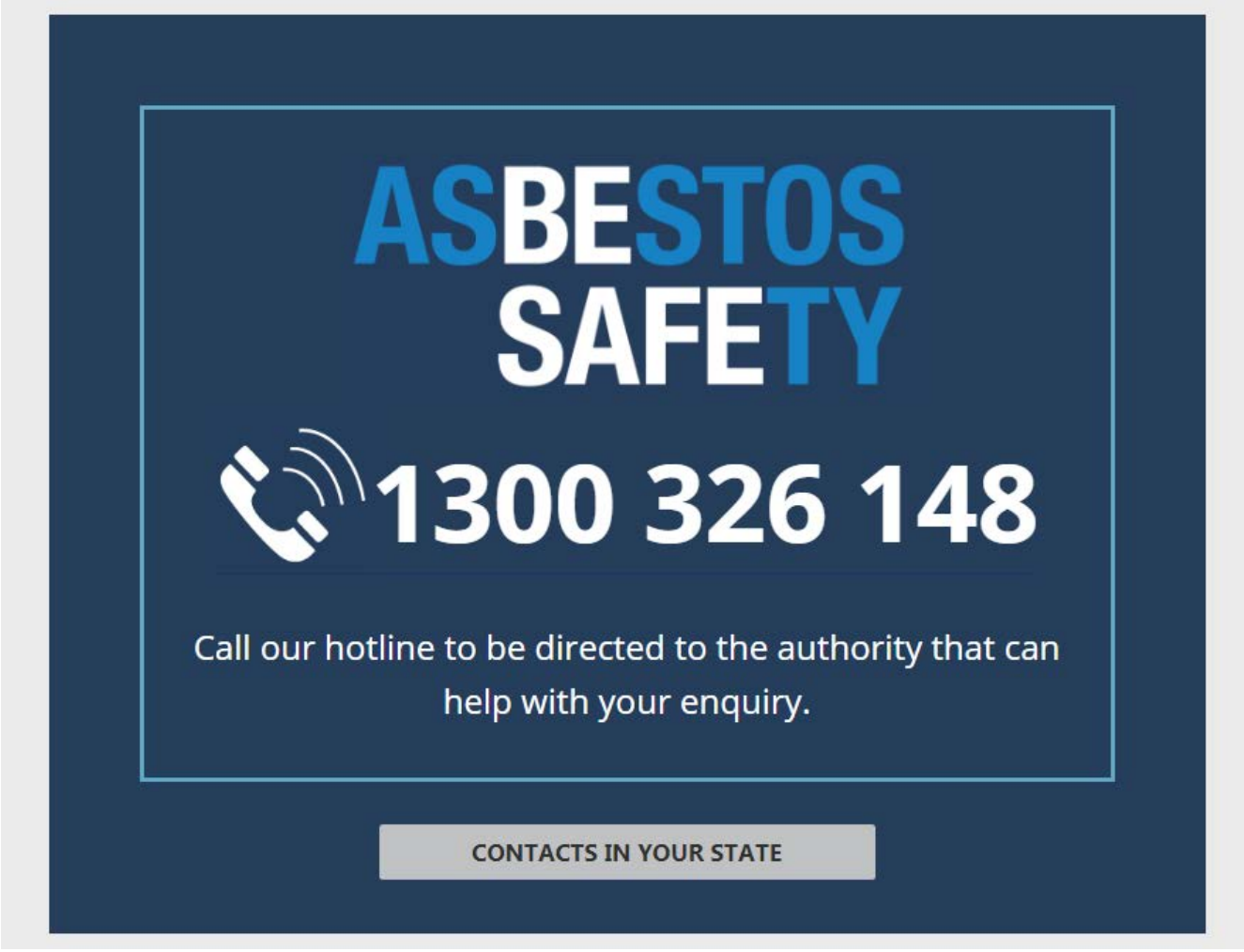
The Society was represented at the recent Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency's National Conference. This Federal Government agency was established in 2013 to provide a national coordination and focus on asbestos issues. The conference saw asbestos disease support groups, industry, unions employers, researchers and health professionals come to together to obtain information and participate in discussions on a wide range of asbestos related topics - including:

- Awareness strategies
- Phase 2 of the National Strategic Plan
- Natural Disaster planning,
- International updates and developments on asbestos bans,
- The illegal importation of asbestos contaminated products and
- Research directions – to name a few.

And of course, a "Commemoration of the lives lost" was also held.

I am pleased to report that progress is being made on asbestos related issues, but a lot more work needs to be done, particularly in relation to the illegal importation of asbestos contaminated products and the DYI home renovation scene.

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency "Asbestos Safety Hotline"



The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (ASEA) has launched their **"Asbestos Safety Hotline".**
People can call the 1300 number to get referral advice on dealing with asbestos around their homes, workplace or the environment for any State or Territory. Further information on the hotline, including relevant State contacts, can be found at: **https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/**

Around The World

United Kingdom

Mesothelioma, contracted through past exposure to asbestos and one of the few work-related diseases where deaths can be counted directly, killed 2,595 in Great Britain in 2016. The current figures are largely a consequence of occupational asbestos exposures that occurred before 1980. Annual deaths are expected to remain broadly at current levels for the rest of the decade before beginning to decline.

Canada bans asbestos – finally

Wed, Oct 17, 2018
Asbestos
Kathleen Ruff, RightOnCanada.ca

The Government of Canada today released regulations that prohibit asbestos and products containing asbestos. The regulations will come into effect in 90 days.

This is a great day in the struggle to ban the use of asbestos everywhere. It is not a perfect day, however. The regulations exempt the 800 million tonnes of mining residues in Quebec, which contain up to 40% asbestos, and projects to make commercial use of the residues by, for example, extracting magnesium.

The government states that risks of exposure from asbestos mining residues are already addressed through provincial occupational and health legislation. This is simply untrue. As Quebec's own health authorities have strongly stated, and as Prime Minister Trudeau himself has stated, Quebec's occupational exposure standards are defective and need to be changed, as they currently permit workers to be exposed to high levels of asbestos that would be illegal anywhere else in Canada or the western world.

Canada agreed to ban asbestos in 2016, after years of pressure from health experts and former workers and their families, but Canada continued to argue it was safe if used with proper precautions.

In 2016, at least 510 Canadians died of mesothelioma, an asbestos-linked lung cancer, but that number doesn't include deaths in Quebec, which stopped reporting its asbestos-related disease rates in 2010.

Russian Asbestos-free Brakes

A new facility has opened in the Altai Territory in western Siberia to produce asbestos-free brake pads. Speaking at the formal ceremony to commission the plant, Viktor Tomenko, Acting Governor of the Altai Territory, recognized the global trend to ban asbestos and the need to produce safer substitute materials. Director of the enterprise Artem Shamkov said: "Initially, the finished products will be destined for the secondary market of asbestos-free brake pads for global manufacturers of trucks and buses, like Mercedes, Volvo and others.

Mesothelioma at the Opera

Second only to Maria Callas, legendary Italian opera singer Edith Martelli has died from mesothelioma due to asbestos exposure at La Scala and other opera houses; she sang in Madrid, New York, Berlin, Salzburg and Tokyo. When she was diagnosed 14 years ago, she was given a prognosis of just 12 months. Commenting on the toxic exposures she received, her son Antonio said that his mother "had unknowingly and systematically" inhaled the invisible asbestos fibres contained in stage equipment, curtains, etc. which were found in the 1980s in theatres, including La Scala.

Key findings from the 2018 National Awareness and Attitudes towards Asbestos survey

The 2018 national benchmark survey of awareness and attitudes towards asbestos has found that there has been an overall positive improvement in awareness and dangers of asbestos, how informed people feel about asbestos, and their ability to identify asbestos in the home.

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (ASEA) has conducted the research every two years since 2014 to track shifts in community awareness about the risks of asbestos. It measures responses from the general public, tradespeople, DIY home renovators, and real estate agents.

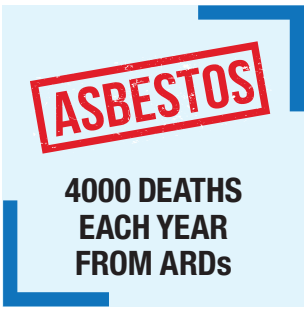
The survey findings strongly indicate that there has been a marked increase across all four categories in perception of being informed about asbestos and its dangers – either returning to the 2014 survey levels or higher.

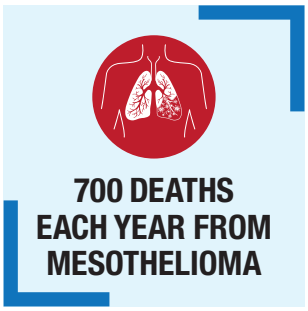
Key findings:

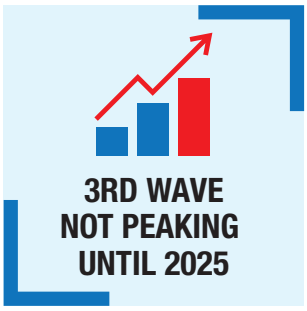
- 84% of the general public felt at least moderately informed about asbestos (up from 76% in 2016)
- the proportion of tradespeople who felt poorly informed or worse about asbestos has halved
- more than 1 in 5 tradespeople indicated a desire for more training on asbestos and its related dangers
- 58% of DIY home renovators felt very informed or informed (up from 49% in 2016)
- females, people aged 18-39, those renting their property and those who speak a language other than English were all observed to have significantly lower levels of feeling informed than other groups
- 59% consider importance of being knowledgeable about asbestos and its related dangers to be 'very important' (up from 52% in 2016 and 43% in 2014)
- where an asbestos assessment was undertaken, 22% of DIY home renovators said they did it themselves
- where asbestos was identified, 20% of home renovators removed it themselves
- of those who removed it themselves, 46% said it was because they knew how to do it, 39% said it was to save money
- 58% of real estate agents/private landlords described knowledge of asbestos as very important (up from 39% in 2016) increase in the proportion of real estate agents and private landlords who had formal asbestos training (24% in 2018, up from 20% in 2016 and 19% in 2014. However, 47% of real estate agents and private landlords indicated they felt they needed more training
- self-rated confidence in the ability to identify asbestos containing materials has remained stable over the three surveys

Did You Know

HEALTH







ENVIRONMENT

Silicosis Overview

Silicosis is a group of occupational lung diseases caused by breathing in silica dust. The Society has recently made changes to its constitution and has extended its services to members effected by Silicosis. This decision has been made in response to a worrying resurgence of people who work with engineered stone products (the type of benchtops and tiles might find in your kitchen or bathroom) being affected by Silicosis across both Queensland and New South Wales. In September 2018, Work Cover Queensland had received 26 workers' compensation claims for silicosis, including 22 claims lodged within the past three weeks. Tragically, at least six of the confirmed cases have Progressive Massive Fibrosis (PMF), which is the end stage of the disease.

In September 2018, Industrial Relations Minister Grace Grace issued an urgent safety warning for those working in the engineered stone benchtop manufacturing industry. "Any employer engaging in dry cutting of this product must stop immediately, "Grace said.

"Unlike other dangerous dusts such as asbestos, silica-related illness can begin to show symptoms within a couple of years consequently hitting people as early as their 20s and 30s".

Minister Grace encouraged all health workers in the industry, as well as those who have previously worked in industry, to undergo urgent health screening.

"WorkCover Queensland will fund the immediate health screening for workers, or former workers, who have been exposed to silica from engineered stone over a period of time", the Minister said.

In response to this crisis, the, Queensland government recently banned the dry grinding and cutting of stone bench tops after an audit of 10 engineered stone benchtop manufacturers uncovered disturbing and unsafe work practices – including dry cutting of stone, poor ventilation of work areas and a lack of personal protection equipment.

HISTORY OF SILICOSIS

Silicosis was a common disease in the Australian construction and demolition industry in the 1940's to 1960's when miners and stone cutters were exposed to dust containing crystalline mineral. Silicosis is not a modern disease, having been described by the ancient Greeks. The prevalence of silicosis, however, increased dramatically during the industrial revolution in the late nineteenth century and early part of this century. The increase in silicosis during the past 150 years has been due, at least in part, to the development of tools and processes that generate high concentrations of fine particles (<10 μm in diameter) that are able to penetrate to the deep lung where silica elicits its toxic effects.

In the early part of the twentieth century, silicosis was clearly recognized as a disease associated with the mining industry. For example, in 1913, the US Public Health Service reported that 60% of lead and zinc miners in Missouri had diseases attributable to crystalline silica inhalation (Lanza and Childs 1917).

WHAT IS SILICA DUST?

Silica dust is generated in workplace mechanical processes such as crushing, cutting, drilling, grinding, sawing or polishing of natural stone or man-made products that contain silica. Some dust particles can be so small that they are not visible; these are commonly referred to as respirable particles. Respirable silica dust particles are small enough to penetrate deep into the lungs and can cause irreversible lung damage. The non-crystalline or amorphous forms of silica do not cause this kind of lung damage. Crystalline silica is most dangerous to health when dust is generated, becomes airborne and is then inhaled by a worker.

WHAT CAN SILICA DO?

The Lung Foundation

When silica dust lies within the lung tissues, chemical reactions can occur which result in tissue injury followed by the healing response of the lung. This is similar to an injury to the skin, such as a cut, which usually heals leaving a small scar. Thus, damage by quartz in the lung tissue causes a small scar, in the form of a small nodule which can be seen on a chest x-ray. This type of lung damage is called silicosis. Mild silicosis may not cause any symptoms. Symptoms of quartz dust exposure can be a persistent productive cough, which can be due both to the lung's attempt to clear the dust, and to some earlier injury to the airways. A feeling of shortness of breath can also be a symptom of silicosis, which is due to the fibrosis (or scaring) of the lungs. The effect that this damage has on breathing depends upon the amount of quartz dust retained in the lung, the degree of the healing response, and the size and number of nodules) seen on the chest x-ray. Symptoms from silicosis may not be obvious and can initially include shortness of breath, chest pain, or a persistent cough. Silicosis can be severe enough to cause respiratory failure, which may eventually lead to death. This severe response can be seen in a condition known as Progressive Massive Fibrosis (PMF). This condition is caused by a consolidation of the silica nodules which may cause severe disability. Another lung disease associated with silica exposure is carcinoma of the lung. Recent research, including epidemiological studies on data held by the Dust Diseases Board of New South Wales, indicates people with silicosis have an increased risk of lung cancer.

MEDICAL MANAGEMENT OF SILICOSIS

If a worker is exposed to and breathes in silica dust they could develop:

- chronic bronchitis
- emphysema
- acute silicosis - can develop after a short exposure to very high levels of silica dust, within a few weeks or years, and causes severe inflammation and an outpouring of protein into the lung
- accelerated silicosis - can develop after exposures of 3 to 10 years to moderate to high levels of silica dust and causes inflammation, protein in the lung and scarring of the lung (fibrotic nodules)

- chronic silicosis - can develop after long term exposure to lower levels of silica dust and causes fibrotic nodules and shortness of breath and can also include progressive massive fibrosis where the fibrotic nodules in the lung aggregate
- lung cancer
- kidney damage, or scleroderma
- a disease of the connective tissue of the body resulting in the formation of scar tissue in the skin, joints and other organs of the body.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for silicosis, however a team of multidisciplinary health care professionals including lung specialists (experts in lung disease – lung transplants), occupational therapists (breathing techniques and energy conservation), exercise physiologists (strength and fitness), dieticians (weight stability), social workers (entitlements, practical and psychological support) and GPs can assist you in managing your disease. Whilst some people will require medical interventions including steroids or inhalers to relax the airways and decrease sputum production, others may benefit from oxygen based therapy for support with their breathing.

WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

The Chest Foundation states any person who works in industries with exposure to inhaled silica should get regular health check-ups and be monitored for signs and symptoms of lung disease. In addition, if you have a cough, phlegm, or breathing difficulty that is not improving, you should be closely evaluated by your doctor.

Asbestos Disease Sufferers Miss Out On Subsidised Medical Treatment

Date: Wednesday, 31st October 2018

ADSS MEDIA RELEASE

CANCER drug Keytruda must be made available to sufferers of asbestos related cancer, mesothelioma, under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, according to the Asbestos Disease Support Society.

A failure to give mesothelioma sufferers access to this immunotherapy medicine risks creating two classes of patients, ADSS General Manager Trevor Torrens said.

Keytruda was originally listed in the PBS for people diagnosed with melanoma and has now just been made available for patients with advanced lung cancer, but mesothelioma patients have again missed out.

Oncologists are now prescribing Keytruda, an immunotherapy medicine that works with a patient's own immune system to recognise cancer cells and destroy them to mesothelioma sufferers but the cost can be more than $6,000 for each treatment. If listed on the PBS, the cost could be as little as $40 per script.

"Mesothelioma is a devastating disease caused by exposure to asbestos which is still impacting the community," Mr Torrens said.

"Keytruda is providing positive outcomes for many of our members who suffer from this disease, but at sometimes crippling cost.

"Unfortunately, mesothelioma seems to be one of the forgotten cancers. The Society is now calling on the federal government to show some compassion and subsidise Keytruda for sufferers of mesothelioma."

There are close to 700 new cases of mesothelioma diagnosed each year in Australia, with the peak still to be reached. People most likely to have been exposed to asbestos at work include, asbestos cement manufacturing workers, laggers and insulators, builders, plumbers and electricians, automotive industry workers, mechanics, transport workers and textile workers.
Phil Blair, ADSS Chair, said: "Just this year alone, more than 60 of our members have succumbed to an asbestos related disease, predominantly mesothelioma. All they did was turn up to work to earn a living or just went about their daily lives. It's bad enough dealing with the devastating medical and emotional consequences of mesothelioma, but to also have to pay thousands of dollars for treatment is not fair."

Mesothelioma is an incurable and extremely painful malignancy of the outer lining of the lung or the abdominal cavity that forms as a result of exposure and inhalation of asbestos fibres. Asbestos fibres are around 200 times thinner than
a human hair, can be invisible and be inhaled easily. They can become trapped deep in the lungs and cause damage over a long time. Past exposure to asbestos is the only known cause of mesothelioma. It can take many years for
mesothelioma to develop after a person is exposed to asbestos – the latency period, which is commonly 20 to 30 years after exposure.

More information:
Trevor Torrens (ADSS) M 0435 895 928

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.

INVESTIGATE BEFORE YOU RENOVATE

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‘Show Compassion’: Absestos-Related Cancer Sufferers Plead For Govt Help As Costs Mount

MEDIA ARTICLE Alex Bruce-Smith Ten Daily News Reporter 01 Nov 2018 3.36PM

Graham Clarke is dying.

The 71-year-old retiree has a tumour the size of a ping pong ball growing in his lung, and has been given a 10 percent chance of making it to Christmas.

The cancer he’s been diagnosed with -- mesothelioma -- is rare, aggressive, extremely painful, and incurable.

The only known cause of mesothelioma is exposure to asbestos, and more than 60 people have died from the illness this year alone.

Yet the drug Keytruda, which is being touted as a miracle drug for cancer patients, has provided some positive outcomes for fellow mesothelioma sufferers.

The catch? It costs just under $6,000 per treatment. And Graham needs three of them.

Under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Keytruda costs just $40 a pop. It was originally listed for people diagnosed with melanoma, and from November 1 it will be made available for patients with advanced lung cancer -- but not, crucially, for mesothelioma sufferers like Graham.

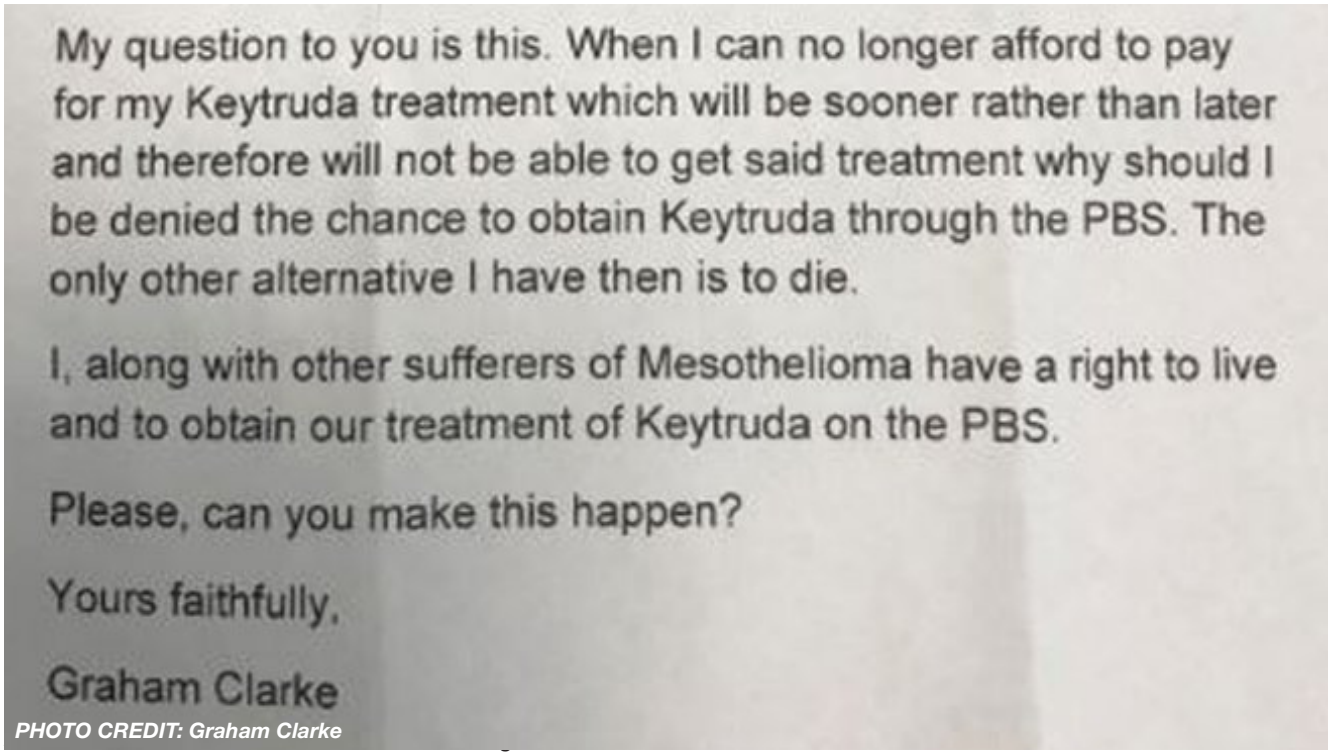
“What gets me is that I was getting calls from family and friends, saying ‘Isn’t this great? You’ll get it on the PBS’!” he told 10 daily.

“But no, you don’t, because it isn’t your typical lung cancer.”

He’s already paid $6,000 for one round of Keytruda, and is about to have his second treatment. Hopefully, he’ll make it to a third round of treatment, which means by the end, he’ll have forked out almost $18,000 for something that would cost just $120 if he had a different type of cancer.

“Once my funds run out, what do I do?” Graham said. “Just curl up and die? Because I can’t afford the treatment?”

He's written a letter to Health Minister Greg Hunt, imploring him to make the subsidy available to mesothelioma sufferers before he runs out of funds, which will be "sooner rather than later".


My question to you is this. When I can no longer afford to pay for my Keytruda treatment which will be sooner rather than later and therefore will not be able to get said treatment why should I be denied the chance to obtain Keytruda through the PBS. The only other alternative I have then is to die.

I, along with other sufferers of Mesothelioma have a right to live and to obtain our treatment of Keytruda on the PBS.

Please, can you make this happen?

Yours faithfully,

Graham Clarke

PHOTO CREDIT: Graham Clarke

According to the Asbestos Disease Support Society, Hunt said there simply wasn't the data to support including mesothelioma on the PBS. 10 daily has reached out to the minister for comment.

That's despite 700 new people being diagnosed with mesothelioma each year, and the ADSS warning that we haven't reached yet reached the peak.

"Unfortunately, mesothelioma seems to be one of the forgotten cancers," said ADSS General Manager Trevor Torrens.

"Keytruda is providing positive outcomes for many of our members who suffer from this disease, but at sometimes crippling costs."

The only known cause is exposure to asbestos, but it can take decades for asbestos fibres -- which are 200 times thinner than a human hair, and can easily be inhaled deep into the lungs -- to cause mesothelioma.

"Just this year alone, more than 60 of our members have succumbed to an asbestos related disease, predominantly mesothelioma," said ADSS chair Phil Blair.

"All they did was turn up to work to earn a living or just went about their daily lives. It's bad enough dealing with the devastating medical and emotional consequences of mesothelioma, but to also have to pay thousands of dollars for treatment is not fair."

The ADSS is calling on Hunt to "show some compassion" and make subsidies available to mesothelioma sufferers . Keytruda isn't a 'miracle drug', and it won't cure mesothelioma. But it can shrink the tumour and stop the cancer spreading to other parts of the body.

"Without treatment, you're going to die," said Graham.

"And I'm okay with that. But I think we should be given the best chance we've got to stop the spread of mesothelioma. That's the idea. We need it on the PBS so we aren't out of pocket, and we can give it our best shot."

‘One word for it – hope’: Hong Kong’s richest man donates $4.5m to Sydney cancer trial

MEDIA ARTICLE Kate Aubusson Sydney Morning Herald 27 November 2018 11:45am

Tony Biddle is a rarity. He is still alive seven years after he was diagnosed with mesothelioma. Just 6 per cent of people with the aggressive cancer survive past five years.

The 68-year-old had radical surgery to remove his right lung and diaphragm, chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

Professor John Rasko and mesothelioma sufferer, Tony Biddle

“They wanted to kill every skerrick of cancer they could find because the thing with mesothelioma is it always comes back,” the retired Mosman local said.

But the thought of the treatment was so confronting, he walked out of hospital the morning he was scheduled for surgery.

“I left a very upset surgeon all scrubbed up in his greens [scrubs] and ready to operate,” Mr Biddle said.

“It turns out it was the only thing they could offer for someone like me other than going home and getting my affairs in order.”

The knowledge that his cancer could return at any time is a constant companion.

“When you’re diagnosed with a cancer like this, you’re in a state of shock. You don’t know what to do or where to turn. It’s a dreadful situation,” he said.

A world-first immunotherapy trial aims to reprogram immune cells to hunt down and destroy deadly tumours in patients with mesothelioma and advanced pancreatic cancer.

The experimental therapy has the potential to treat dozens of cancers types, including lung, ovarian, and some breast cancers by targeting a specific protein on the surface of tumour cells.

The project is spearheaded by gene therapy expert and clinical haematologist Professor John Rasko at the University of Sydney's newly established Li Ka Shing Cell and Gene Therapy Initiative.

The Li Ka Shing Foundation - the philanthropic organisation of Hong-Kong's richest man Li Ka-shing - has donated $4.5 million to the University to expand the trial beyond pancreatic cancer to include patients with other cancers that have the mesothelin marker, predominantly mesothelioma.

The Foundation's donation will also enable the creation of a gene therapy workforce and the infrastructure to propel the development and manufacturing of immunotherapies in Australia.

"There's only one word for it," Mr Biddle said. "Hope."

"If there is hope for a treatment that will possibly cure these kinds of cancers it would be an unbelievable result," he said.

Pancreatic cancer has the lowest survival rate of all major cancers, with 8.7 per cent of patients surviving five years after they are diagnosed. Almost 3000 Australians die of pancreatic cancer every year. It is notoriously hard to detect and is usually only diagnosed once it has spread.
In 2016, 672 Australians died of mesothelioma.

Early immunotherapy drugs aim to "take the brakes off" the body's immune response to cancers by re-energising white blood cells called T-cells. But many patients don't respond to the treatments.

The new trial takes a different tact, focusing on patients with advanced pancreatic cancer and mesothelioma that have a specific marker - a protein on the surface of their cancer cells called mesothelin.

The researchers will extract the T-cells from these patients and genetically reprogram these immune cells to create chimeric antigen receptors on their surface (CAR T-cells) that are attracted to mesothelin.
These reprogrammed immune cells will be injected back into the patients where they multiply, hunt down and destroy the cancer cells, the researchers hypothesise.

"We only have to inject a small amount of [CAR-T] cells; the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen - but those cells are capable of proliferating and growing in the body - like normal immune cells - and are capable of killing tens of thousands of cancer cells sequentially," Professor Rasko said.

"It's terribly, terribly exciting," Professor Rasko said. "It's cutting edge, make no mistake."
CAR-T immunotherapy has been approved as a treatment in Europe for specific types of leukaemia and lymphoma, but this is the first in Australia to target solid tumours.

Mesothelin is found on the surface of up to 85 per cent of pancreatic cancers and up to 90 per cent of mesothelioma.

The protein is also detectable in roughly a dozen other cancers, including lung, ovarian and connective tissue cancers as well as an estimated 10-15 per cent of breast cancers, Professor Rasko said.

"This technique is cancer agnostic," Professor Rasko said.

"The thing that links all these cancers together is they express a particular protein on the tumour surface that we can target with the reprogrammed immune cells."

The Australian researchers will collaborate with investigators in the US, Canada and Sweden.

"We are in a thrilling situation to be able to offer this to patients in the coming year," Professor Rasko said, stressing it was still experimental treatment.

Clues to earlier diagnosis of mesothelioma

MEDIA ARTICLE Date: Monday 5 November 2018

Researchers have found proteins in lung fluid that could hold the key to diagnosing pleural mesothelioma months or even years before a tumour is visible on imaging scans.

Flinders University scientists examined proteins that help give rise to malignant pleural mesothelioma (MPM) and whether they could be used as biomarkers to identify the cancer earlier.

The new study published in the Journal of Proteomics notes that the incidence of mesothelioma is still increasing in many Western countries including Australia even though several of them have instituted asbestos bans.

PHOTO CREDIT: Pixabay

This is largely because of mesothelioma's long latency period which can sometimes be decades after initial asbestos exposure.

One of the reasons that asbestos cancer is so deadly is that it is usually not identified until it is in an advanced stage, making it less likely to respond to treatment. Many newly-diagnosed mesothelioma patients are told they have only months to live.

Although there are few early mesothelioma symptoms, patients often develop fluid around the lungs months or years before a detectable tumour appears. This is true for several other types of cancer, too, including lung cancer.

Proteins act as communication devices in the body, directing a wide range of critical cellular activities, including the processes that tell cancer cells to begin replicating at a higher rate than normal cells.

By examining the "proteome" or protein profile of this fluid in patients with MPM, lung cancer and benign conditions, the Flinders researchers hoped to find a biomarker for early mesothelioma diagnosis.

"We identified several proteins that may be possible targets and warrant further investigation," says lead author Reuben White, from Anatomical Pathology at Flinders University's College of Medicine and Public Health.

Among the key proteins upregulated in the mesothelioma patients were S100 proteins and cytokeratin 5/6.

In addition, the researchers concluded that serum amyloid protein-2 "may have a role in prognosis and diagnosis of mesothelioma."

One of the proteins that got special attention in the study is a signal protein called vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF).

VEGF is known to stimulate the growth of cancer cells and has been found to be up-regulated in the lung fluid of people with mesothelioma.

"Due to the predominance of up-regulated proteins involved in VEGF signalling in MPM, we analysed VEGFA levels in effusions and found a strong correlation between VEGFA levels and survival in MPM," the paper concludes.

In the study, mesothelioma patients whose proteome included elevated levels of this particular protein did not live as long as those with lower levels.

The next step will be to conduct further studies on the proteins identified in the Flinders research in order to confirm their value as potential mesothelioma biomarkers.

'Quantitative mass spectrometry to identify protein markers for diagnosis of malignant pleural mesothelioma,' 2018, by R White, E Pulford, DJ Elliot and LA Thurgood and S Klebe has gone online ahead of print in the Journal of Proteomics (ScienceDirect). - 5 November 2018.

DIY reno shows urged to warn of asbestos risks

MEDIA ARTICLE Rob Harris National politics reporter Herald Sun November 30, 2018 7:30pm

Reality do-it-yourself renovation TV shows have been urged to issue warnings to home handymen over the dangers of asbestos.

Authorities fear the rise in the popularity of home renovation programs shows including The Block, House Rules and Selling Houses Australia could be a factor in driving an increased renovations and older homes likely to contain asbestos.

The Morrison Government has written to TV networks pleading for help to educate audiences to exercise caution around their homes, workplace or the environment.

About 4000 Australians still die from asbestos-related diseases each year despite a national ban on products having been in place since 2003.

The shows have been asked to reflect a more realistic image of the likely presence of asbestos containing materials and the risks associated with handling them during renovation segments.

TV renovation shows have been urged to issue warnings over the dangers of asbestos.

They have also been asked to devote segments to staying safe when renovating and place warnings on segments if demolition is being shown.

A new campaign to educate the community about exposure to deadly asbestos fibres comes amid plans to strengthen customs measures to prevent the illegal import of asbestos.

Industrial Relations Minister Kelly O'Dwyer said in a letter to TV producers that the legacy of asbestos-containing materials was still a major threat.

"They are also not seeking the advice and help of professionals, largely due to cost," Ms O'Dwyer wrote.

"Clearly, this demonstrates how your program can play an important part in community education and information by highlighting how asbestos risks are safely managed and making clear that a professional assessment of property may be necessary prior to commencing renovation work.

It coincides with the launch of the government-funded Asbestos Safety Hotline on 1300 326 148 to get fast and accurate referral advice on dealing with asbestos around their homes, workplace or the environment.

Fundraiser ‘Don’t forget your Toothbrush’

Big Breakfast Event - King George Square

Big Breakfast Event - King George Square

Volunteers helping out with the Spring Newsletter mail out

ADSS Symposium

ADSS Symposium

ADSS Symposium

Chermside Support Group Christmas Lunch

ADSS Ecumenical Service

Sunnybank Support Group Christmas Lunch

Sunnybank Support Group Christmas Lunch

Redcliffe Morning Tea

Acacia Ridge Tafe - Asbestos Forum

Bracken Ridge Tafe - Asbestos Forum

Ministerial Launch - Asbestos Awareness Week

ASEA Conference (The Support Groups)

Ipswich Morning Tea

Chermside Support Group Christmas Lunch

ADSS Ecumenical Service

Ministerial Launch - Asbestos Awareness Week

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