



ASBESTOS VICTIMS ASSOCIATION (SA) INC
Established 2000

Newsletter

July - September 2019

There for our Members whenever or however they need us

Record asbestos compensation welcomed: Advocates urge warnings for home renovators

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Asbestos advocates welcomed a record \$3,077,187 compensation payment for an Adelaide man who developed an aggressive and incurable cancer as a result of his exposure to James Hardie building products during home renovations. The South Australian Employment Tribunal decision was significant not only for the record size of the compensation, but because of its strong message about the need for improved public awareness of the risks of asbestos products still found in many homes and workplaces.

Mathew Werfel, a 42-year-old father of three from Adelaide's northern suburbs, was diagnosed with a rare form of the aggressive and terminal cancer mesothelioma as a result of exposure to asbestos during home renovations and when working for a fencing contractor as a teenager.

Judge Leonie Farrell imposed significant exemplary damages as punishment for James Hardie's failure to properly warn the public about the risk posed by its asbestos products, saying it did so "purely for commercial gain". She also highlighted that the lack of community education and awareness was an ongoing issue, with James Hardie failing to adequately warn the general public about the ongoing dangers posed by their deadly products which remain in thousands of homes.

Mathew Werfel's case is tragic, not only because a man at the prime of his life with three young children is now facing a terminal cancer, but because it highlights how easily people can unknowingly be exposed to asbestos around the house or at work. So many young Australians have done exactly what Mr Werfel did, buying a basic home that they've then renovated themselves.

What many don't realise is that there are still huge numbers of properties containing asbestos products, which often have no labels or warnings on them. Simple actions like sanding walls or drilling holes releases the asbestos fibres, which can then be inhaled and result in deadly diseases from even the smallest of exposures.

It is not good enough to pay compensation to people after they are diagnosed with an incurable disease; James Hardie should be doing everything possible to prevent people from being exposed in the first place. Without serious action, Mr Werfel will be just one of many more people in the growing third wave of asbestos victims who are exposed to asbestos in their homes and workplaces.

Executive Committee:

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Maxine Williams

Office Manager/

Treasurer

Pam Sandys

Committee members

Gloria Hinks

Doreen Ryan

Lesley Shears

NEWS FROM THE AVA OFFICE - RELOCATION

PLEASE NOTE we will be relocating on 17 October 2019. You can still find us at 60 Waymouth Street Adelaide but on level 9 not level 3. The move will give us a brand new office space and our own kitchen — all the better to share time with our members. Hopefully this will all go smoothly — if there are any interruptions to telephones or email, please get in touch by phoning us on **0455 120 588**.

Local Councils and Asbestos

Can you help us? Have you contacted your local council about any asbestos issues? We would like to know how your enquiry was dealt with and what the outcome was. Please email: ava-sa@bigpond.net.au or phone 0455 120 588.



Probuc Talk

Committee member Doreen Ryan gave her first public talk in September. This is her account:

"On Tuesday Sep 24th I gave a 10-minute talk to about 80 members of the Payneham Probuc Club on Asbestos Awareness. Although I was very nervous, the talk was well received and I also handed out some brochures on where to find asbestos around the home. I had great feedback from the group. Men and women came up to me afterwards to talk about their exposure to asbestos over their working life. One lady spoke to me about her father who died after working on the Snowy Mountain Scheme. Another lady knew of people who have recently been diagnosed with mesothelioma. It continues to take the lives of our loved ones."

We are proud of our volunteers and the efforts they make to spread the word about the dangers of asbestos. If you want to book an information session, please telephone the AVA office.

MBA Building & Home Improvements Show

AVA had a stand at the MBA Building & Home Improvements Show at Wayville Showgrounds in July. This is a popular Home Show with many different exhibitors. It's also a good opportunity for AVA to talk to tradies and DIYers about asbestos awareness. The asbestos sample display often sparks interest as people realise they may have had the products in their own homes. Quite a few wanted to talk about asbestos disease and we heard stories of family members who had been affected.



SafeWork SA shared the AVA stand for all three days of the show. The Education Team at SafeWork handles all telephone enquiries, including those relating to asbestos. We very much appreciate their support.

Thanks also to Total Asbestos who attended on Friday and could answer a good many practical questions.

Items of Interest:

Men's Shed Gathering at Morphettville

Members of Men's Sheds from around Australia came to Adelaide for the 8th National Men's Shed Gathering. These conferences are held every two years and are very well organised. Delegates could choose to join shed tours around Adelaide as well as having a wide range of topics and speakers during the three-day gathering. Governor Hieu Van Le, AC formally opened the proceedings. Barry Sheridan of the Irish Men's Sheds Association gave a presentation on the development of Sheds in Ireland based on the Australian model.

There are more than 1000 Sheds around the country, making it one of the largest male focussed community service organisations. As well as traditional activities such as wood-turning and metal work, sheds have a strong emphasis on men's health. This was a good opportunity for us to talk about asbestos to the very many who had worked or lived in an asbestos environment. There were also conversations about materials donated to sheds which could be of unknown origin. All in all it was a very worthwhile and interesting few days.



Spreading the word in Bali

At a meeting of the Parliamentary Group on Asbestos Related Diseases, which Lesley and I attended in Canberra last year, we heard a presentation by a speaker from Union Aid Abroad (APHEDA).

APHEDA is the global justice organisation of the Australian union movement.



She talked about their work in the Asia Pacific Region, and some African countries, as a part of the Australian Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency's **National Strategic Plan**, and one of its strategies which encourages Australia to play a leading role in the global campaign for a worldwide ban on asbestos.

APHEDA has produced booklets and information in the languages of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia, and has developed training modules relating to asbestos safety and effective management which they present in those countries. This creates increased awareness, and provides evidence of the dangers of asbestos, in countries where lobby groups continue to support its use.

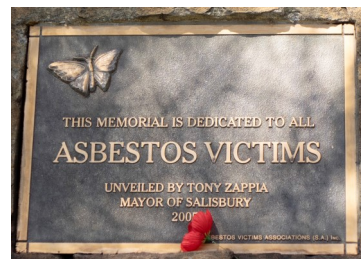
APHEDA also works in conjunction with the World Health Organisation to create an awareness of the need for medical capacity to recognise, acknowledge, treat and prevent asbestos related disease. We were told Indonesia officially recognised its first victim of asbestos related disease in 2016. Indonesia, Laos and Vietnam are currently working towards banning asbestos by 2020.

I was so impressed with the extent of work undertaken overseas by APHEDA and its volunteers, that I took some brochures, written in Indonesian, on my

recent trip to Bali, which helped to initiate discussions about asbestos with some of the staff in places I visited. As in Australia, we need to continue spreading the word.

Diary dates

Asbestos Victims Memorial Day
DATE: Friday 29 November 2019
VENUE: Pitman Park SALISBURY



AVA will be represented at the following events:

Murray Bridge Show 28 & 29 September 2019 – Bunyip Trail.

National Seniors 8 October 2019

Port Elliott Show 12 & 13 October 2019

ASEA National Asbestos Safety Conference (Perth) 11-13 November 2019

National Asbestos Week 25—29 November 2019

Asbestos Victims Memorial Day 29 November 2019



700 Australians died from Mesothelioma in 2018

At least 699 people died during 2018 from the aggressive cancer mesothelioma, which is predominantly caused by asbestos exposure, according to a new report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, *Mesothelioma in Australia 2018*, also reveals that 662 new diagnoses of mesothelioma have been recorded for 2018, with the age of the people diagnosed ranging from 22 to 101 years.

This is why we continue to hold National Asbestos Week every year.

**Your social mornings -
remember you are not alone.**



All members are welcome to share a cuppa with us on the second Wednesday of each month from 10 am onwards. Call in and see our new premises.

2019 Dates: 9 October, 13 November, 11 December

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