



ASBESTOS VICTIMS ASSOCIATION (SA) INC
Established 2000

Newsletter

September - October 2020

There for our members whenever and however they need us

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Gloria Hinks

Doreen Ryan

Catherine Wegener



Memorial Service in Pitman Park on Friday 27 November

We are pleased to advise that our Memorial Service will go ahead this year but with some changes due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The service will be held at **10.30 am on Friday 27th November 2020** in Pitman Park, Salisbury. Social distancing of 1.5 metres will be enforced, limited marquee seating will be provided and no food will be served - no barbecue this year. We are required to obtain contact details for those attending. **To assist us, it would be helpful to RSVP by 20 November 2020 to admin@avasa.asn.au or call 8212 6008 or 0455 120 588.**

Relatives and friends are invited to lay flowers in memory of loved ones at the conclusion of the ceremony. If you are unable to attend in person, let us know and AVA volunteers will leave a flower on your behalf.

A video of the service will be available to view on our website from 10.30 am on Saturday 28 November: avasa.asn.au/home/memorial-day

Membership Renewal 2020/21

Membership of AVA is just \$10 a year. Thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership. If you have not yet done so, payment can be made by direct debit **BSB 325-185 a/c 02252614** - please provide your name in the reference box for identification. Payment by **credit card can be made by using PayPal on the AVA website** —follow the membership link from the AVA home page to avasa.asn.au/about-us/membership

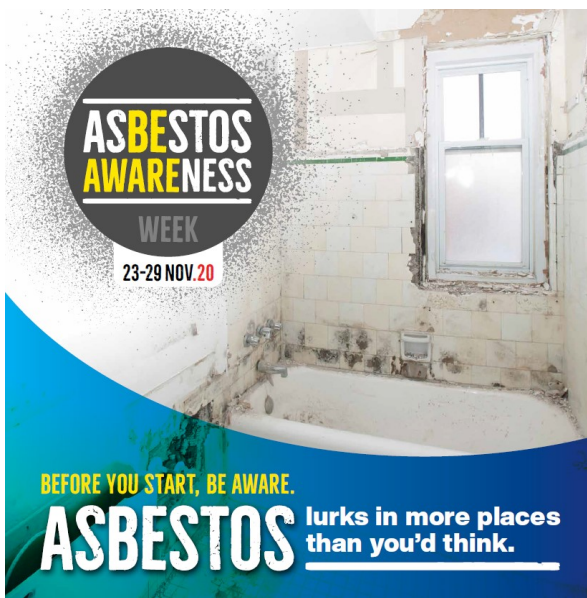
Rex Patrick, Senator for South Australia

We are delighted to advise that Rex Patrick has agreed to be a Patron of AVA.

Mr Patrick has previously supported the asbestos cause by speaking in the Australian Senate during National Asbestos Week in 2019. He related the story of Rex Wegener, whose death was due to mesothelioma. On that occasion Rex Patrick invited Catherine Wegener to visit Canberra and attend in the Senate chamber to hear him speak.



Asbestos Awareness Week 2020: Asbestos lurks in more places than you'd think.



Do you know if your home was built before the 1990s there's a good chance it has some asbestos?

National Asbestos Awareness Week 2020 reminds Australians to be asbestos aware before starting any work around the home - because it lurks in more places than you'd think.

Know the risks.

Don't risk the possible health effects of asbestos exposure. Asbestos becomes dangerous once the fibres are disturbed, become airborne and then inhaled. This can happen if you're sanding, drilling, cutting or sawing asbestos-containing materials.

Asbestos is a known carcinogen and inhaling asbestos fibres can cause a number of life-threatening diseases including pleural disease, asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer.

Asbestos-related diseases cause approximately 4,000 deaths a year – three times the annual road toll.

Many people aren't aware that it is common to find asbestos in older bathrooms (pre-1990). If you're thinking of creating a great new space, make sure you get an asbestos assessor to check for asbestos before you start, to protect both you and your family.

Remember that you have a legal responsibility to not bring harm those around you, including trades people, friends and neighbours.

Be aware of where asbestos might be in your home.

Asbestos was used in hundreds of building materials, commonly found in bathrooms, laundries, and kitchens as well as behind tiles, under flooring or even in the garden.

Call for some advice and help.

Thinking about a summer renovation? Make sure you're

aware of

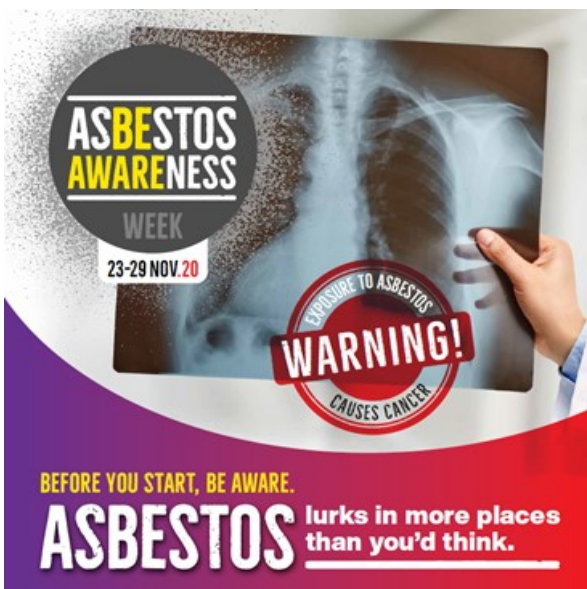
where asbestos might be found so you know how to stay safe.

Asbestos can be found in many places around homes – including bathrooms, under flooring and even in the fuse box. Just like plumbing and electrical work, asbestos removal – or jobs around the home that might uncover asbestos - are jobs best left to the experts.

Investigate before you renovate.

This Asbestos Awareness Week we are encouraging Australians to be aware of the health risk, be aware of where asbestos might be found before starting work, and call a professional for advice and help.

Further information about where asbestos might be found is available on the SafeWork SA website.



Continued focus for SafeWork SA on asbestos compliance.

SafeWork SA will be maintaining a strong focus on compliance with asbestos regulations across the

State in response to yet another asbestos licence holder being suspended. SafeWork SA has commenced a proactive compliance campaign to be conducted over the coming months to ensure that asbestos removal regulations are followed.

Martyn Campbell, Executive Director SafeWork SA said, “I have asked our inspectors to monitor a cross-section of the construction industry to ensure that all asbestos licence holders are fulfilling their responsibilities in complying with asbestos regulations”. “The focus for our inspectors will be ensuring that asbestos is identified and removed prior to commencing refurbishment or demolition.”

As a building owner engaging a contractor to undertake refurbishment, or demolition work, you have a duty to ensure the Asbestos Register is reviewed and if necessary, revised to ensure all asbestos is identified and removed.

On Saturday 5 September 2020, SafeWork SA suspended a class B asbestos removal licence holder due to a history of non-compliance. Most recently, they failed to remove all asbestos from a residential premise, and did not decontaminate the area where asbestos had been removed. The business failed to comply with Section 19 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (SA) to take reasonable care of their workers’ health and safety and to ensure that they do not adversely affect the health and safety of others.

“This is the fifth suspension of an asbestos licence holder in less than a year and I will not tolerate this continued disregard for asbestos regulations,” said Mr Campbell. “Licence holders that continually fail to meet their obligations will be sent a clear message that SafeWork SA will take enforcement action against poor performance in regards to unsafe asbestos removal practices”.

SafeWork SA reminds all duty holders involved with removal of asbestos of their responsibilities in complying with asbestos regulations.



SA Asbestos Coalition

The SA Asbestos Coalition supports the recommendation of the Asbestos Safety & Eradication Agency (ASEA) that the National Strategic Plan for asbestos management should be adopted Australia wide.

ASEA has developed an NSP implementation plan for each jurisdiction, including a guide on how to measure national targets. There are nine targets, and templates for reporting. It puts the onus back on jurisdictions in states & territories to collect data and report back to the Agency.

Federal Minister Christian Porter wrote to all health & safety ministers, including Rob Lucas MLC, to encourage adoption of the NSP. ASEA is developing packs & strategies for different jurisdictions to develop their own asbestos action plan as well as conferring with groups across the country for consistency nationwide. To date Queensland and Tasmania are in the process of implementing the National Strategic Plan and Queensland has a draft action plan. NSW and Victoria are updating their State Strategic Plans. Victoria is working through the VSEA to set up an asbestos forum as a coordination group. WA has a cross agency asbestos group.

A delegation from the SA Asbestos Coalition recently met with Mr Lucas to discuss the implementation of the NSP in South Australia. Mr Lucas has visited AVA in the past and has been a regular at our Memorial Day services, and we appreciate his interest.



Bequest for Asbestos Disease Research

Professor Doug Henderson AO
Research Fund

Emeritus Professor
Doug Henderson AO

Photo: *The Advertiser*

A bequest to researchers at Flinders University honours the life and contribution of Emeritus Professor Doug Henderson AO, and continues the legacy of the world-renowned authority in pathology and his research into asbestos-related diseases.

Known for his kind and patient manner, Flinders University researcher Professor Henderson was an internationally recognised pathologist with a focus on the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of asbestos-related diseases.

He was the world expert on the deadly cancer mesothelioma – an aggressive cancer of the cells that line the lungs and the chest wall cavity, often caused by asbestos exposure.

Professor Henderson was regularly called on to provide his professional opinion in legal cases, including High Court cases, helping thousands of victims as they struggled to come to terms with their diagnosis.

A surgical pathologist at Flinders Medical Centre, Professor Henderson's expertise on diseases of the pleura and asbestos-related disorders led to him advising a range of international bodies, including the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC), as well as the International Mesothelioma Panel.

He was the world expert on the deadly cancer mesothelioma...regularly called on to provide his professional opinion in legal cases...

In 1999 and 2000, Professor Henderson was called upon by the World Trade Organisation Disputes Resolution Panel for the dispute between Canada and the European Communities on the importation of chrysotile asbestos. He also contributed to the Asbestosis Committee convened by the College of American Pathologists and the Pulmonary Pathology Society.

In 2006, he was awarded a Distinguished Fellow Award by The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. In 2010, he was awarded the Distinguished Pathologist Medal of the Australasian Division of the International Academy of Pathology. Professor Henderson was awarded an Officer in the Order of Australia (AO) in 2015 for his services to medicine, especially in the field of asbestos-related disorders.

Aged 76, Professor Henderson passed away in 2018 leaving a bequest in his Will to support lung cancer and mesothelioma research at Flinders University. To continue the legacy of his incredible life's work, the Professor Doug Henderson AO Research Fund was established.

The fund supports the work of Associate Professor Sonja Klebe (PhD(Med) '01) whose clinical trial of localised therapy for mesothelioma is the first of its kind in the world.

With a special focus on lung disorders, Associate Professor Klebe worked with Professor Henderson for 18 years.

The fund has also supported the creation of a new research role – the Prof Doug Henderson AO Postdoctoral Research Associate in Asbestos Associated Disease – in Flinders University's College of Medicine and Public Health.

Taking up the role in November 2019, Dr Ashleigh Hocking (PhD(Med) '19) is continuing the work of Professor Henderson through her research on malignant mesothelioma.

'He was a great man who made a profound difference to the lives of the hundreds of asbestos victims he treated...'

'My research is focused on a sub-population of immortal cells within mesotheliomas that can "fuel" tumour growth and withstand standard treatment regimens such as chemotherapy,' says Dr Hocking. 'Through this research, I hope to expand our knowledge of these cells so we can create more effective treatments for patients.'

She says, 'I'm very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the field of research that I feel passionate about, and that Professor Henderson himself dedicated so much of his life towards.'

The Asbestos Victims Association of South Australia says Professor Henderson made a significant difference to the lives of hundreds of local asbestos victims, particularly those with the aggressive and currently incurable lung cancer mesothelioma.

'Doug was passionate about so much more than just diagnosis and treatment. He focused a huge amount of time and effort on ground-breaking research into how to better treat and eventually cure these terrible diseases,' says Kat Burge, President of the Asbestos Victims Association.

'He was a great man who made a profound difference to the lives of the hundreds of asbestos victims he treated, and countless more people around the world who benefited from his research efforts.'

The late Emeritus Professor Doug Henderson AO is survived by his children Axel and Alida, and his partner Associate Professor Sonja Klebe, who is committed to continuing his research legacy and finding effective treatments for asbestos-related diseases.

Support Research and Education in your Will

Bequests play an incredibly important role in shaping the future for students and researchers at Flinders University. When you leave a donation in your Will you are making an enduring contribution to creating positive change in our community. If you would like to leave a legacy to research or education at Flinders University please contact Bequest Coordinator Georgie Clark, +61 8 8201 2511, giving@flinders.edu.au

flinders.edu.au/bequest

PHILANTHROPY

The above article from Flinders University's *Encounter* magazine .

AVA has made a donation to the Doug Henderson Research Fund on behalf of our members and in remembrance of lives lost.

A sad reminder of the dangers of asbestos

Mesothelioma patients are living longer after diagnosis, despite a rising death rate.

Mesothelioma is a rare, aggressive type of cancer for which no curative treatment is available. The latest data from the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (AIHW) shows that whilst the death rate is increasing, survival times are improving. Statistics show that 55% of patients survive for at least one year after diagnosis.

The report, Mesothelioma in Australia 2019, shows that 659 cases of mesothelioma were reported to the Australian Mesothelioma Registry in 2019 and at least 724 people died from the disease. These figures are largely as a result of past workplace practices but the danger remains that today's home renovations could continue to add to the future death rate.



Main findings



659 cases of mesothelioma diagnosed in 2019 had been reported to the AMR as at 1 April 2020—the **median age at diagnosis was 75**.



Between 1987–1991 and 2012–2016, the age-adjusted **relative survival of people with mesothelioma has increased**, most notably 1-year relative survival.



In 2019, 724 deaths of people with mesothelioma (from any cause of death including mesothelioma) were recorded on the AMR—a **mortality rate of 2.9 deaths per 100,000 population**.



More than **9 in 10** of the exposure assessment participants were assessed as having **possible or probable exposure** to asbestos.

Mesothelioma is caused by exposure to asbestos. Despite the import and use of asbestos being prohibited in Australia, a large amount of asbestos still remains in the built environment. Strict regulatory measures are in place today to prevent exposure to asbestos (including safe management and removal of asbestos) in order to eliminate conditions such as mesothelioma, lung cancer and asbestosis.

Medical Research News

We hear many reports in the media about clinical trials for COVID-19. At the same time, cancer clinical trials are constantly starting and developing through thorough, meticulous processes; a focus of hope for new and improved cancer treatments. At the National Centre for Asbestos Related Disease (NCARD) Professor Anna Nowak and Dr Joost Lesterhuis are two of the researchers whose research work involves clinical trials.

The **DREAM** trial was carried out in hospitals around Australia and involved 54 patients with advanced mesothelioma who were considered unsuitable for cancer surgery. It was the first reported trial to test the combination of an immune checkpoint inhibitor, which blocks proteins from binding together, with chemotherapy drugs in patients with advanced mesothelioma. Almost half the patients had a substantial shrinkage in their tumour and patients lived longer than would be expected for chemotherapy alone. Dr Nowak said the results of the trial demonstrated that the combination of these therapies provided promisingly positive results for patients.

The Thoracic Oncology Group of Australasia will be responsible for the next major trial of immunotherapy for mesothelioma - **DREAM3R**.

Other trials have also shown promising data. **Checkmate-743** is investigating the safety and effectiveness of Opdivo/Yervoy (from Bristol-Myers Squibb) in combination as a first-line therapy in people with newly diagnosed, inoperable mesothelioma. The median survival rate for patients on Opdivo/Yervoy was 18 months, compared to 14 months in the chemotherapy group.

These trials give rise to hope for a brighter outlook for patients diagnosed with mesothelioma and other asbestos-caused cancer.

If you are considering joining a clinical trial, contact the Cancer Council for a copy of their booklet, 'Understanding Clinical Trials and Research'.

News from the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute (ADRI)

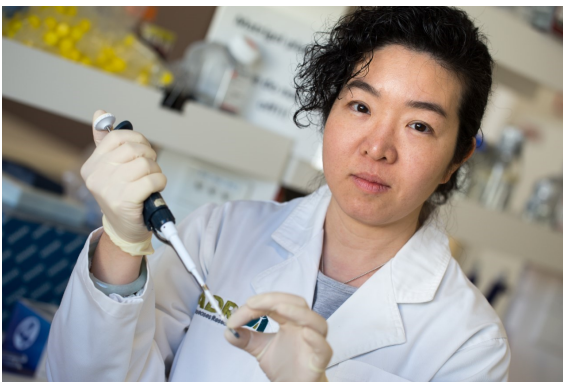
ADRI's dedicated team of researchers has built a formidable record for developing a diagnostic framework for the early detection and improved understanding of mesothelioma as well as ground-breaking treatments to prolong life. They are focusing on **biomedical (preclinical), clinical and public health research** into asbestos-related diseases with findings enabling improved methods of prevention, diagnostic, therapeutic procedures, and treatments.



They have identified a number of **circular RNAs** (circRNAs) that have an increased response in malignant pleural mesothelioma. It is hoped that future development of these biomarkers will enable mesothelioma to be identified through a blood test, which would be much less invasive than a lung biopsy. The outcome of this project will be particularly beneficial for the quality of life of patients who will not have to undergo surgery to obtain a diagnosis and will be able to receive more effective treatment promptly.

Not to be confused with circular RNAs, the discovery of **circulating RNAs**, a genetic marker which can be found in the blood, is also an attractive and innovative option being considered for asbestos-related cancer research because of their stability and substantially in the blood circulation. This will potentially allow for the identification of mesothelioma at an early and potentially treatable stage. In both these projects circRNAs and circulating RNAs researchers are utilising **ADRI's biobank** which is now one of the largest collections of asbestos related cancer biospecimens in Australia.

In the laboratory, biomedical research continues to concentrate on obtaining a deeper understanding of [malignant pleural mesothelioma](#) (MPM) and exploring



alternative biomarker and therapeutic options for the disease. Dr Yuen Yee Cheng and the research team have developed a **3D model** (scaffold) using porcine (pig) lung to accelerate drug screening for the treatment of MPM. Currently most drug screening systems rely on a 2D culture system where cells are grown as a single layer attached to a plastic surface. One of the major advantages with the 3D model is that it provides biocompatible adhesive architecture for cells to grow. When compared to 2D culture, cells grown in this 3D model exhibited markers and expression levels comparable to that of real tumours. Over the next three years the research team

plans to further characterise the cancer biology and drug responses of this 3D model.

The research team is also investigating the **epigenetic variations in MPM** which are the biological mechanisms that switch genes on and off, they are the key processes of cellular development and carcinogenesis. These modifications are considered to be a hallmark of cancer and have attracted considerable attention over the past decade for developing biomarker detection methods and therapeutic discovery for various malignancies. Epigenetic variations could potentially be used to identify biomarkers in blood samples for cancer due to their accuracy, specificity, and ease of collection, or as targets for therapeutics in the treatment of mesothelioma. Over the coming years we will continue our research in this area as a biomarker for MPM is urgently needed as it will provide an objective, measurable way to characterise the disease. It is important not only for the early detection of the MPM but is also integral in drug development.

With Dr Steven Kao, **clinical research** is looking at promising new therapeutic approaches to improve outcomes for patients diagnosed with asbestos-related disease. In the last few years immunotherapy has become a focus in malignant mesothelioma research, however the results have been disappointing. ADRI is investigating the efficiency of predictive biomarkers to new treatments, including immunotherapeutic agents, to better predict which patients will respond to immunotherapy and to be able to monitor and enhance immunotherapeutic agents in the treatment of malignant mesothelioma.

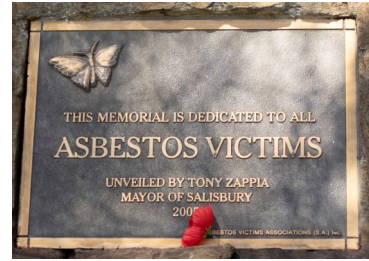
For further information visit the ADRI website www.adri.org.au

Diary dates

Asbestos Victims Memorial Ceremony

DATE: Friday 27 November 2020 at 10.30 am

VENUE: Pitman Park SALISBURY



We will hold our Memorial Ceremony in Salisbury at 10.30 am on 27 November, the last Friday of National Asbestos Week.

The Whyalla AVA Group will also hold their memorial service on that date.

Unfortunately the memorial service which was planned for the Fleurieu Peninsula will not now go ahead due to COVID restrictions.

Regional support groups

Whyalla support group

87 Essington Lewis Avenue, Whyalla SA

Contact John Arthur:

Office – (08) 8645 0555

Mobile - 0416 482 673

The Whyalla Asbestos Victims Support Group is open again as COVID-19 restrictions are eased. Social distancing rules still apply and hand sanitiser is available as you walk in the door.

Port Augusta Support Group

Monthly meetings held on the first Friday of the month at Port Augusta Bowling Club, reopening in August.

Cnr. Marryatt & Jervois Streets,
Port Augusta SA

Contact Geoff Maul:

Home — (08) 8642 2884

Mobile — 0419 822 296

Fleurieu Peninsula Support Group

Contact Catherine Wegener—mobile 0437 805 510

Social mornings in Adelaide

We hold monthly social mornings in the Adelaide office on the second Wednesday of each month. Call in to see us—you are assured of a warm welcome.



AVA THANKS THE FOLLOWING MAJOR SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS

TURNER FREEMAN	ADCO PRINT	TOTAL ASBESTOS SERVICES
RETURN TO WORK SA		SAFEWORK SA

City of Salisbury Council

Shop Distributive & Allied Employees' Association (SDA)
Communications, Electrical & Plumbing Union (CEPU)
Construction, Forestry, Mining, & Energy Union (CFMEU)
Maritime Union of Australia United Voice SA Branch

PATRONS

The Hon. Steven Marshall, Premier of SA
Frances Bedford, Member for Florey
Nick Xenophon, Lawyer and Advocate

Rex Patrick, Senator for SA
Tony Zappia, Federal Member for Makin
Peter Bauer, State Secretary AMWU