

ADVERTISING FEATURE



ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK



Combating asbestos-related diseases

The site of much historical asbestos mining, Western Australia has been recognised as having the highest number of asbestos-related diseases per capita in Australia and, indeed, the world.

Further to this, there is no data to suggest WA will not maintain or continue to produce higher numbers of mesothelioma and other asbestos-related diseases in the foreseeable future.

WAs mining of blue asbestos began in the North West in the 1930s, with the import of white or brown asbestos from overseas further contributing to what turned out to be a rise in asbestos-related diseases.

It wasn't until the mid-1970s that it became apparent asbestos exposure would create crippling disabilities in workers who were employed in asbestos mining and associated industries.

The main user of raw asbestos, mostly from Wittenoom, was James Hardie Industries, with factories at Rivervale and Welshpool involved in manufacturing materials which contained asbestos fibres to bolster their strength and durability.

As a result of this once-booming industry, WA has experienced the development of deadly asbestos diseases such as asbestosis, pleural disease, lung cancer and the newly coined malignant mesothelioma, which can only be diagnosed by a specifically trained pathologist.

In 1979, the Asbestos Diseases Society was formed and, in 1983, was registered as the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia Incorporated (ADSA) – a non-profit and charitable organisation that offers a range of services with the aim of the following:

- Providing counselling and support services to those who develop asbestos-related diseases, and their families.
- Providing economic assistance to those who suffer hardship or social disadvantage as a result of contracting asbestos-related illness.
- Political lobbying and advocacy in asbestos-related matters. i.e. amendments to archaic laws which have precluded asbestos victims from seeking justice.
- Fundraising for medical research and support services for asbestos diseases victims and their families.
- Raising community awareness of the dangers associated with asbestos in the community and providing information thereon as requested by the public.
- Funding a PhD Clinician/Scientist Mesothelioma Research Scholarship at The University of Western Australia.

Towards the end of 1984, due to the enormous demand for independent advice, assistance and the complexity created by asbestos-related diseases sufferers and their families, the ADSA Committee decided to incorporate the Asbestos Diseases Advisory Service (ADAS). The ADAS provides the following assistance:

- Medico/legal matters (i.e. workers compensation, registered agents)
- Industrial and environmental hygiene
- Collation and distribution of global medical and scientific research information on asbestos-related issues.

For more information, call ADSA on 9344 4077 or visit www.asbestosdiseases.org.au.

Fighting for justice

Originally faced with a legal system geared against asbestos disease victims and asbestos companies refusing to accept moral and legal responsibility, a number of sufferers of asbestos-related diseases eventually achieved legal victories which paved the way for thousands of sufferers and their families then and into the future.

Seeking justice in one of the early asbestos-related legal struggles in 1986, ADSA member Wally Simpson was unable to convince the judge that he was suffering from asbestosis. Subsequently, an appeal was lodged and Mr Simpson accepted an out of court settlement from the defendant.

This year marks three decades since ADSA members Timothy Barrow, Peter Heys and Klaus Rabenault created history by binding legal precedents upon which many asbestos victims and their families were compensated for their injuries or deaths.

First was the case of Klaus Rabenault in the Supreme Court of Victoria, where the jury awarded punitive damages in addition to regular damages, which appeared to be a first in Australia.

The Heys and Barrow judgement in August 1988 in the Supreme Court of Western Australia found CSR, and its subsidiary Australian Blue Asbestos Ltd which ran the Wittenoom Mine, was liable for disabled workers and residents.

On December 31, 1966, after some 20 years of



blue asbestos mining at the Wittenoom Mine, CSR shut it down. Regrettably, there were still more than 21,000 men, women and children who were exposed to asbestos, and indeed hundreds of visitors who roam the Pilbara area every year. It is believed some 4000 people who worked at the mine or lived in Wittenoom have since died from asbestos-related diseases.

On August 18, 2018, ADSA established a permanent memorial for the victims of the Wittenoom mining and mill operation, which has been acknowledged as Australia's largest industrial disaster. It is situated in Solidarity Park, opposite Parliament House in Perth, Western Australia.



ADSA 23rd Annual Memorial Ecumenical Service Friday November 23 at 9.30am Redemptorist Monastery, Vincent Street, North Perth

At the end of Asbestos Awareness Week each year, ADSA holds an ecumenical memorial service to remember the victims lost to asbestos-related diseases. The theme of this year's service will be Courage and Hope, and to reflect on the 30th anniversary of the Heys and Barrow cases in Perth and the Rabenault case in Melbourne. (Parking available).



19th – 23rd November 2018

Asbestos Awareness Week

This year we commemorate the 30th anniversary of a milestone legal victory against CSR. Our organisation's members Timothy Barrow, Peter Heys and Klaus Rabenault created legal history by challenging CSR's strategy of hiding behind the limited liability of their subsidiary Midalco (ABA), by stripping it of its assets in 1975, leaving only \$337 to fight asbestos diseases cases. This year's 35th Annual Asbestos Awareness Week honours their courage, and determination to leave a lasting legacy of legal precedents protecting the thousands of asbestos disease victims and their families then, now and into the future. The ADSA is grateful to the brave families of these 3 men and many other families that also lost precious time with their loved ones while they were in court fighting for justice for all Australians at risk of developing preventable asbestos caused diseases.

Asbestos related disease doesn't just affect the lives of those who contract it, it affects the lives of their families as well.

That's why for over 35 years, the Asbestos Disease Society of Australia (ADSA) has provided sufferers and their loved ones with assistance, support and much needed advice on how to manage their illness.

ADSA also engages in fundraising for medical research into early diagnosis and treatment of asbestos diseases, dissemination of information about the prevalence and risk associated with asbestos exposure.

If you know someone who needs advice and assistance, or you would like to donate towards medical research to save lives, please contact: ADSA Office.

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THANK YOU to the Australian Community for your generous support to the ADSA in our efforts to save lives. Please donate to www.ADSAWALK.org.au