APOLGY FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF VICTORIA

GARDS is extremely pleased with the Premiers response to its efforts to obtain an apology for the power workers & their families of Latrobe Valley, who were exposed to asbestos as a result of working in the state, owned power stations. The sitting of parliament in Gippsland on the 15th of October at Monash University, Churchill will be forever remembered by GARDS members and all those who have been touched by asbestos disease in Gippsland. Asbestos sufferers and their families were finally recognised by the Victorian State Government, for the pain and suffering that they have endured through their exposure from the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV). The apology is long overdue and a welcome recognition to the men, women and their children who have given so much to make Victoria what it is today. Vicki Hamilton, Secretary of GARDS, stated that the apology at this time would help to give a deeply meaningful cleansing of hurt and betrayal **cont. P. 2.**

Premier Brumby met with some 40 members of GARDS at a private morning tea when parliament recessed for the morning break. Pictured here are from left seated Ivy Fanning, Premier John Brumby, Vicki Hamilton and Dorothy Roberts standing.
that has been felt by thousands here who diligently and honestly went about their work, not knowing that many of them and their families would die of a work related disease, which could have been prevented. The Premier has shown a sense of justice and compassion and will be forever remembered.

We have included the apology made by Premier John Brumby for your interest.

ADDRESS BY PREMIER

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) -- At the outset today I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand -- the Gunai Kurnai people -- and pay my respects to their elders, past and present. I thank Mr Wayne Thorpe for the welcome to his country today. I also acknowledge the mayor of Latrobe City Council, Cr Bruce Lougheed; the vice-chancellor of Monash University, Richard Larkins, who is with us today; and the pro vice-chancellor of the university's Churchill campus, Helen Bartlett.

At the outset I also want to thank Monash University for the use of this magnificent facility. I also thank the people of Churchill, the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland for the hospitality they have extended to us for this regional sitting.

The Latrobe Valley is literally the powerhouse of the Victorian economy. Sir John Monash -- the engineer and Anzac general after whom this university is named -- was a great Victorian and was once described as 'a man with petrol in his veins and a computer in his head'; he pioneered the Latrobe Valley's brown coal power stations.

The SECV (State Electricity Commission of Victoria) was formed in 1919. It transmitted its first electricity to Melbourne in 1924 and by the 1950s was powering most of the state. To quote the eminent historian, Professor Geoffrey Blainey:

The Latrobe Valley and its chain of growing towns became the pride of Victoria.

The electricity generated in the region drove the rapid expansion of manufacturing between the two world wars and the population boom of the post-war years. I think it is true to say that without the area's cheap and plentiful supply of electricity, Victoria would not be as competitive as it is nor would we be as prosperous as we are.

The resources of the Latrobe Valley and the resourcefulness of its people have for 84 years powered Victoria's success. Besides producing 85 per cent of Victoria's electricity, this part of Victoria has large dairy and cattle industries, paper pulp and manufacturing mills, a world-class university -- in this campus alone I think there are more than 2500 students -- and great wineries like Narkoojee and Coalville Vineyard, which we have grown to love over the years, as well as the region having a vibrant sporting and cultural life.

It is in every sense of the word a region with real energy, a competitive business environment and a strong sense of community.

Just last Sunday, Traralgon for the first time hosted the start of the oldest professional cycling stage race -- the Jayco Herald Sun Tour.

Tonight the council will host a reception for Parliament in the Latrobe Regional Gallery -- a magnificent gallery and one which our government redeveloped in partnership with the Latrobe City Council.
I can remember, though, very different times in the Latrobe Valley. A decade ago -- before our government was first elected -- the Latrobe Valley was doing it tough. The former SECV had been broken up, job losses were significant, and the local community had received little assistance from federal or state governments.

I can remember coming to this campus for a major business forum in 2000, which was attended by hundreds of business and community leaders throughout the region. Local community leaders urged our then new government to set up a task force to identify the best ways to restore confidence, investment and jobs in this region. In 2001 the then Premier, Steve Bracks, responded to the community by establishing the Latrobe Valley ministerial task force, which I chaired. We spent several months listening to the local community. We made 50 recommendations, which totalled well over $100 million of new government investment, and I am pleased to say that every recommendation was implemented.

Since then, over the last eight years, we have also rebuilt, renovated or extended 40 local schools; we have brought back the Latrobe Regional Hospital and added a new cancer care ward; we have invested in water projects like the Gippsland Water Factory; we have rolled out natural gas connections to Korumburra, Leongatha, Bairnsdale, Paynesville, Inverloch and Wonthaggi; we have returned train services to Bairnsdale; we have delivered 78 extra train services a week to Warragul, Moe, Morwell, Drouin and Traralgon; we have supported the region's dairy farmers by funding around 150 dairy cattle underpasses; and of course we have attracted major significant new investment to the area, like Australian Paper's $350 million upgrade of its Maryvale mill. We have worked hard to make Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley a great place to live, work, invest and raise a family.

That is why since 1999 unemployment in this area has been halved, population growth has more than doubled, and the value of building approvals has almost tripled. It is a very different Latrobe Valley to that of the 1990s. That is why we want to drive new investment and jobs in this region to secure its sustainability and prosperity. We want to do that by establishing Clean Coal Victoria in the valley, by investing $125 million in carbon capture and storage technologies, and by partnering with the Clinton Climate Initiative to see further investment in this region. That is why, during this parliamentary session, this Assembly will debate legislation vital to the future of the valley -- such as the Greenhouse Gas Geological Sequestration Bill -- and this afternoon we will also, in partnership with the Minister for Energy and Resources, deliver a ministerial statement on energy.

It is also why during this session we will pass the Asbestos Diseases Compensation Bill.

Victims of asbestos exposure deserve the right to provisional damages and they deserve an apology. With that in mind I want to take this opportunity today to acknowledge an injury that has been ignored for too long. On behalf of the Victorian government and the community I want to say sorry and to express our regret for the pain and the suffering felt by some former power industry workers and their families where that was caused by asbestos exposure at the former SECV. Some workers and families have endured intolerable suffering, including the slow and painful effects of lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma. The government sincerely apologises to these workers and their families for the injuries caused by the exposure at the SECV.

Victoria banned the use of asbestos in 2003, but we understand that some former workers and their families, through going about their daily work, are still suffering the impact of asbestos exposure.
It is unacceptable that any person, through the course of their work, is exposed to what we now know is a deadly substance. I hope this apology goes some way to bringing closure and resolution for families who are suffering from asbestos-related diseases.

I know that members of the Gippsland Asbestos Related Diseases Support (GARDs) group are in the public gallery today. These are Victorians who know all too well the meaning of the words pain and suffering. GARDs has provided me with numerous case studies that are truly heartbreaking and they underscore the human cost of asbestos-related diseases. Today I just wanted to bring to the attention of the house from the many cases that have been presented to me one example of the hardship which has been caused and why this apology is so appropriate. This is the case of a 41-year-old man -- married, with two children aged 18 and 12 -- who was diagnosed with mesothelioma. This man had never worked at the power station.

He was exposed to asbestos as a child when his father would come home from work at the power station with asbestos on his clothes and give his child a cuddle, as you do when you come home from work. Once he was diagnosed, he underwent photodynamic surgery to gain a few more months of life and was in constant pain. This man's father, who had unwittingly exposed his son to asbestos, had to watch him suffer and die at the age of 44.

There are many more case studies like this of people who have mesothelioma, asbestos-related lung cancer, and asbestosis. As GARDs has noted:

The untold damage that has been done to the families of these sufferers is just too painful to express in words. There are so many families who have lost their fathers, mothers and even their children to this deadly material.
The social and emotional distress that is felt in our community will linger for decades to come.

I want to thank GARDs for the wonderful work it does with people suffering from asbestos-related diseases, and for the assistance that it has given in the preparation of today's apology. I also want to thank two of the members for the Eastern Victoria Region in the Legislative Council, Johan Scheffer and Matt Viney, for the work they have done on this issue, for raising this matter with me and for suggesting that an apology would be appropriate.

In conclusion, I want to once again thank the people of Churchill for hosting the Legislative Assembly today. It is a wonderful thing to bring Parliament to the people. We do this only once each session of Parliament, and I remember the last time we met in Geelong. I think it was a great opportunity and a great gathering in Geelong, and this gathering will be no different.

The people of this region, the people of Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley, are resilient. They are diverse and have a very strong sense of community. That is why they were able to fight back from economic adversity in the 1990s. That is why they fought back from floods, drought and bushfires in recent years; and that is why they fought for recognition of the affects of asbestos-related diseases. That resilience and community spirit -- that resourcefulness -- is what makes this resource-rich region so strong.

Last night, with the Minister for Energy and Resources and the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, I met with key representatives of the energy industry in the Latrobe Valley. We discussed the challenges that face our energy sector and the key role that the Latrobe Valley can play in helping to meet the energy needs of both our state and Australia. We discussed the importance of clean coal technology, carbon capture and storage as well as the significant investment opportunities, which arise from further development in this region. We considered the range of partnerships between government and the private sector which will be required to bring these investments to fruition.
Our government looks forward to listening to and working with the people of the Latrobe Valley in the days, weeks, months and years ahead. We look forward to building a better future for every community and every family. Speaking as Premier and the former chair of the Latrobe Valley ministerial task force, it is a genuine pleasure to be back in Churchill for this regional sitting.

**ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK**
**24th OF NOV – 29th OF NOV 2008**

**Annual Asbestos Awareness Day Ceremony**

Venue: Rose Garden in Morwell  
Date: Friday 28th of November  
Time: 11.00am

The event highlights and raises the awareness of asbestos and its effects on families and the community.

There will be an ecumenical service to remember those who are suffering and those who have succumb to asbestos disease, Minister Russell Jones of the Uniting Church Moe/Newborough will conduct this. There will be a time set in our ceremony where families will be able to lay flowers and pay tribute to their loved ones.

Guest speakers will be:

- Johan Scheffer – Member for Eastern Victoria  
- John Parker Secretary of the Gippsland Trades & Labour Council  
- Vicki Hamilton Secretary of GARDS  
- Graeme York Chief Executive Officer for International Power Hazelwood, will speak on behalf of the power generators in Latrobe Valley.

GARDS this year will have vocalist/musician Paddy O’Dowd and the Newborough Primary School choir will be singing.

At the conclusion of the ceremony there will be a **free** BBQ lunch with the compliments of Gippsland Trades & Labour Council and all those in the community are most welcome to attend.

For further information contact Vicki Hamilton 0407274173 or the GARDS office: 5127 7744

Asbestos Awareness Day badges with our feather symbol will be on sale for a cost of $2 for those wishing to support us. If you would like to purchase one before the day they can be purchased at mecu Credit Unions in Moe, Morwell and Traralgon or at the GARDS office.

**A VERY GENEROUS DONATION FROM A FAMILY THAT CARES**

GARDS would like to acknowledge the generous donation made by the Gore family of Yallourn North and Morwell of a pre-loved mobility scooter, which was owned by Roberta Gore. The donation was made in memory of their mother Roberta and we thank the families very much. It will be a welcome addition to our equipment bank.
THANK YOU ABB AUSTRALIA

Once again we would like to say thank you to this terrific company for thinking of us. As ABB Australia were moving on from Yallourn Power station they decided to donate a second hand computer to the GARDS organisation. We will surely find a use for such a great gift. GARDS recently received a very nice letter from one of the executives of ABB Australia telling us how much they admired what we did in the community. We could not do this good work without such wonderful support from companies like ABB Australia. We have made, we think, some really great friends and it has been a privilege to get to know some of the employees of this community minded company. Thank you from all at GARDS

SEASONS GREETINGS

We would like to wish all our supporters a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. If you are heading off for holidays over the festive season please take care and drive carefully.

Well we have had another very busy year again at GARDS and again we have made some significant strides forward with asbestos issues, but we still have a long way to go.

We wish to say thank you for all the support we have received from individuals and organisations alike. We could not do this without the support and encouragement we receive from you, the community. We will endeavour to continue to strive to bring continued support and education in the coming year 2009 and to increase the awareness to the community on asbestos and its dangers.

From all of the GARDS committee have a wonderful Christmas and we will see you in the New Year.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: Saturday 7th February 2009.
Time: 3.00pm
Venue: Newborough/Yallourn RSL
Cnr Ellinbank & Darlimurla Ave, Newborough

Election of Positions falling vacant:
Vice President
Secretary
Ordinary Committee Member

Election of Auditor for 2009/10

Returning Officer: Graeme Hamilton
Nomination forms can be collected from the GARDS office or forwarded by post on request to GARDS Secretary.

ONE CAREER ENDING AND A LIFE OF HAPPINESS TO COME

An update on our beloved namesake GARDS Goose. GARDS Goose had too many injuries to keep running, so the decision to retire him was made. The good news is that our lovely dog has such a wonderful temperament that it was decided to put him into the adoption program and be re-educated as a family pet. Families have advised us that grey hounds make wonderful pets and are sort after, so we are very happy that GARDS Goose will retire to become a family’s beloved dog. From all at GARDS we wish him well in his new life. He has taught us so much about racing and the spirit to keep going against the odds. Good luck GARDS Goose you deserve a great life with a loving family!!

Pictured here are: Two representatives of ABB Australia – Kaye and Warren
GARDS XMAS LUNCH

Well it is that time of the year again where we all get together for a bit of merriment and mirth. This year’s Annual Xmas party and lunch will take place at Silks Restaurant, Moe (it is situated behind Michaels Golden Hen). The menu this year will be 2 roast meats and all the trimmings with plum pudding and custard/cream or Fruit Salad if you so desire. The lunch is free to financial members and those wishing to bring a partner who is not a member will have to pay $16.50. Santa will be in attendance to see who has been naughty or nice and we will have a GARDS Xmas raffle on the day and lucky door prizes to give away.

We hope to see all of our members on this special day so that we can share the joy of Xmas together. If you would like to join us, here are all the details:

Venue: Silks Restaurant – situated behind Michaels Golden Hen, George Street, Moe
Date: 6th December 2008
Time: 12.30pm
Free to Financial Members of GARDS
Non members $16.50 per person
The restaurant is BYO.

For catering purposes please contact Vicki or the GARDS office RSVP by the 1st of December 2008.

WORKSAFE AWARDS DINNER 2008

Crown Palladium was again the venue for this year’s WorkSafe Annual Awards Dinner on Thursday 30th of October. The dinner is held in WorkSafe Week and attracts just on 1000 people. They come together from all walks of life to celebrate the achievements being gained in good work practices. This year’s event was no exception with many bright and innovative ideas coming out of practical experience. It is always special to hear about someone or something that is inspired through personal experience and we certainly saw some very talented individuals and teams display their creativity to address dangers to people’s health and safety.

GARDS were lucky enough to be invited to the dinner where we had a great time and met some very interesting people. Steve was one of the people who sat at our table and we enjoyed some great conversations over dinner. It is always nice to meet people who have like minds on keeping workers safe.

Pictured from above are: Marie Smith, Dorothy Roberts, Pam Nicholson and standing at rear Vicki Hamilton & WorkSafe Manager – Steve Baltas
The GARDS organisation wish to say a big thank you to the following individuals & organisations who support us with donations:

Gerald Coulson,
2 x G & J Crosby’s Contractors,
Stan & Ivy Brown,
Mr & Mrs L Hall,
Morwell CWA,
Maurice Blackburn law firm for their generous donation to our organisation; we appreciate this support very much.

A special thank you to Andrew Dimsey for making this happen.

Ritchies stores,
May Flanagan
Neil Thompson
Shirley & Jim Connaghan
Marion Harris
Joan Leister
International Power Hazelwood
Shirley Fletcher

What a privilege it was to again visit the Gippsland Water Factory and this time it was for a wonderful donation from a great bunch of workers and their company. GARDS was honoured to be the recipient of a cheque that has enabled us to buy an oxygen concentrator, 30 bed poles, an oxygen-conserving device and an oxygen bottle carrier. The equipment that has been bought with the money will allow us to support and make asbestos related disease sufferers more comfortable in their homes and help keep them with their families.

We at GARDS are very proud that the local workforce has supported local people in this manner. They are truly wonderful Australians who care about the people around them. It makes the job of GARDS so much easier when we know we have people such as these in our corner.
GIPPSLAND ASBESTOS RELATED DISEASES SUPPORT INC

1.30PM – 3.30PM
Meetings are held at Newborough/Yallourn RSL
Cnr Ellinbank Street & Darlimurla Ave, Newborough

Frid 28th Nov 08 Asbestos Awareness Event, Rose Garden, Morwell

6th Dec 2008 Christmas Break-up at Silks Restaurant, Moe – 12.30pm

2009 Meeting dates
Tuesday 24th February – Gippsland Water Factory
Tuesday 31st March – Linda McRae – A Transexual woman with a story
Tues 28th April – Memorial Wreath Laying – Rose Garden, Morwell
Tuesday 26th May
Tuesday 30th June
Tuesday 28th July
Tuesday 25th August
Tuesday 29th September
Tuesday 27th October

Friday 27th Nov – Asbestos Awareness Event, Rose Garden, Morwell

Christmas Break-up to be advised

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G.A.R.D.S. NIGHT MEETINGS FOR 2009
7.30PM – 9.30PM
Meetings are held at Newborough/Yallourn RSL
Cnr Ellinbank Street & Darlimurla Ave, Newborough
Tuesday 17th February
Tuesday 17th March
Tuesday 21st April
Tuesday 19th May
Tuesday 16th June
Tuesday 21st July
Tuesday 18th August
Tuesday 15th September
Tuesday 20th October
Tuesday 17th November

Christmas Break-up to be advised
GARDS Inc. Membership Form

Name………………………………………………………………………………………………
Address………………………………………………………………………………………….
P/Code……………………
Telephone………………………………..Email……………………………
Occupation…………………………………………………………………………………

GARDS NEW MEMBERS Joining Fee $5.00

PLUS

GARDS Annual Subscription 2008
1. Concession (Pensioner/unemployed) $3.00
2. Full Rate (employed) $11.00

Upon my admission as a Member, I agree to be bound by the rules of GARDS Inc.

Signature……………………………………………………..Date…………………………

Please return to GARDS Inc. with payment, PO Box 111, MOE, Vic. 3825

Office Use Only

I………………………………., a Member of the GARDS Inc. nominate the Applicant for Membership of the Association

Signature of Proposer……………………………………………………..Date………………

I………………………………., a member of GARDS Inc., second the nomination of the Applicant for membership of the Association.

Signature of Seconder……………………………………………………..Date………………
G.A.R.D.S. INC. WOULD LIKE TO THANK THESE SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS
GARDS INC. SUPPORT

GARDS provides support and information to asbestos sufferers, their families and carers. This includes home visits by GARDS volunteers, a telephone information/support service 24 hours, 7 days a week. GARDS has an office, which is open for sufferers, their families, carers and the general community to access at the times listed below in the “About GARDS Inc section”.

GARDS INC. Support also conducts a monthly meeting (1.30pm – 3.30pm) on the last Tuesday of the month where guest presenters are invited to provide information about support services of all kinds and any other topics of interest that the members might find of relevance. The meetings also provide a gathering place for experiences; GARDS Support is open to anyone whose lives have been affected by asbestos, their families and the general public.

GARDS loans out free of charge to asbestos sufferers - oxygen bottle regulators, conserving devices, oxygen home concentrators, wheel chairs, oxygen bottle carriers, nebuliser, walking frames & walking sticks. We also have an extensive library of books, DVDs and CDs on asbestos issues, health, social and environmental that we loan free of charge to those wishing to improve their knowledge.

GARDS can provide professional counselling free of charge for those who have been diagnosed with asbestos related disease and also their family members with a qualified psychologist. This support can be face to face or in a group situation, which is conducted in a private room at the GARDS premises, or telephone counselling can be arranged if this is preferred.

GARDS INC. EVENING MEETING

GARDS has an organisational, activities and advocating arm. Interested financial members can come along to evening meetings, which are, conducted 7.30pm – 9.30pm on the third Tuesday of the month.

These meetings provide a focal point for information sharing and problem identification. The aim of this group is to focus on improving health and support services and any other issues deemed relevant to improving overall outcomes to asbestos sufferers, their families and the general public. Thus ensuring asbestos-related issues are kept in the public eye and trying to rid our environment of asbestos products.