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# ASBESTOS NEWS

ASBESTOS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (ACV) AND  
GIPPSLAND ASBESTOS RELATED DISEASES SUPPORT INC (GARDS)  
GARDS is endorsed as a charity. Donations of \$2.00 & over are tax deductible.

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## Australia Day Award 2014 Order of Australia Medal for Vicki



Photo courtesy of: Vicki Jones Photography [www.vjp.com.au](http://www.vjp.com.au)

## DID YOU KNOW?

You can make an online donation to our group at our home page [www.gards.org](http://www.gards.org)

Make a Donation



Using the secure engine of GiveNow.com.au



You can find our link on the home page of the GARDS website or at [facebook.com/GARDSInc](http://facebook.com/GARDSInc)

**Thank you to everyone who has supported ACV/GARDS over the years, those of you who had faith in what we are trying to achieve in the community - by supporting and advocating for asbestos sufferers and their families.**

The award that I received for service to the community through support for people with asbestos related

disease would not have been possible if it were not for all those who have helped ACV/GARDS become the organisation it is today. I am very humbled and proud to have received this award but it is really on behalf of all our asbestos sufferers and their families - they are the real heroes and deserve all the recognition, it is their quiet dignity and stoic resolve that has inspired myself and others in ACV/GARDS to carry on the fight to make life a little easier for those suffering and those yet to come. You are all my heroes - Thanks so much.

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of ACV/GARDS

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## PHOTOS FROM OAM AFTERNOON TEA FRIDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH, 2014



# Vicki's OAM afternoon tea speech

Thank you for coming today. I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land the Gunai Kurnai people and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

I warmly welcome you all here this afternoon to our place we call home, Newborough, and for those of you outside the area I welcome you to Gippsland & Latrobe Valley -

I want to give a special welcome to our members of parliament, Johan Scheffer MP Upper House Member for Eastern Victoria & Russell Northe MP Member for Morwell,

## Special mention to:

**Paul Buckley** Chief Executive Officer of Bass Coast Shire Council,

**Matthew Peake** - Executive Officer - Gippsland Regional Waste Management Group,

Luke van der Meulen CFMEU, Mining Division President,

**Councillor Kellie O'Callaghan** from Latrobe City and Chair of the Latrobe Regional Hospital board,

**Dieter Melzer** - General Manager Gippsland EPA,

**Antony McMullen** - Director of Creative Ministries Network,

**Kate Harding** - Cancer Support Group Coordinator - Cancer Council Victoria,

**Prof Margaret Simmons** from Monash University,

**Val Prokopiv** - President of the Gippsland Trades & Labour Council

**Gino Andrieri** - Principal - Maurice Blackburn - Traralgon

I want to acknowledge those who have travelled some distance to be with us this afternoon, it is wonderful that you have come from NSW and Melb/Geelong area to be with us.

Mick Chopping, Lyall Watts, Doug and Les Hamilton, Sally Weir and Victoria Keays from Maurice Blackburn, Peter Clark, Bob and Val Cornelis, Paul Addison, Antony McMullen.

Over the past 2 months we have been totally surprised/overwhelmed with congratulations and good wishes from our supporters from all over Australia and it gives me the greatest pleasure this afternoon, on behalf of my Committee of Management,

to personally thank you and thank everyone who has helped ACV/GARDS to become the organisation that it is today.

As most of you know we have an office, which operates 5 days a week, a 24/7 support and info phone line to the community, meeting rooms, the largest bank of medical equipment in Australia,

in fact, probably the only one dedicated to asbestos sufferers, which includes such items as oxygen concentrators, conserving devices, wheel chairs, shower & toilet chairs etc.

We have since 2011 become the proud owners of a multipurpose van that takes our medical equipment to our sufferers that we support and transports our committee and ACV/GARDS members, we own 3 marquees which we use for our events each year.

Infrastructure such as our library of books for tutorials and videos is in constant use throughout the year with our tutorials to 1st year medical students, nursing students, TAFE students and multiple organisations that call on us to educate and inform. All of these things allow us to provide support to asbestos sufferers and educate the community in so many ways. None of this would have been possible without the help of you and many more who could not be here today.

For those of you who do not know where my passion comes from - Many years ago in the eighties my father, Alan, was diagnosed with asbestosis - my mother and I really didn't know at the time what that was going to mean for our family and the impact it would have on all of us.

Dad was retired from the SECV on disability at the age of 54 - a year less than myself now and spent the next 13 years of his life struggling to do the activities that others of his age managed with no effort.

My mother and myself watched as Dad's health declined over those years - not able to mow his own lawns, take his boat out fishing or go caravanning around the country side, or trotting off to have BBQ's or building and making things, all activities that he loved and enjoyed, he was a vital man and very physical.

This was soul destroying for him and also for us to watch him and not be able to do much about it other than to be there and care for him.

In the last 5 months of my father's life he was diagnosed with asbestos related lung cancer - he was 67 years old. It was then that I started to seek help and support from somewhere - to get information on how best we could look after my father, not only his physical needs but his very being. Everywhere I went there was no support and understanding of what was happening to my father or our family.

It was a most distressing time for us and one that I will never forget - because it was a blank void with no friendly face to guide us - just endless medical jargon, tests and treatments - I tried to seek help from where ever I thought we could get it but there was just nothing in this space. We muddled through as best we could with family and friends but I have got to say we felt so alone.

No one told me about GARDS until quite a few months after my father had passed away. We went along to GARDS because I was concerned about water pipes that were breaking in our street and these pipes were asbestos cement - I was concerned the drinking water was being contaminated with asbestos fibres when the repairs were going on and I wanted to get the water tested.



I went to our litigation lawyer who had handled Dad's case and asked if there was any where I might get help and he suggested a group that might be able to help out with this.

Thus become my involvement with GARDS as it was known then.

When I went along to GARDS I saw many other good families who were in the same position as us - some had been newly diagnosed and some families had already suffered loss through this terrible thing called asbestos.

My mind was horrified to think that there were others who had gone through this like us and nothing was being done in this space. When I truly learnt the nature of just how bad the situation was and how many families just in our area had been touched I made a promise to my mother and my father's memory that I would not let anyone else suffer what we had gone through - having that feeling of being alone and no one caring what happened to these people. Over the time I have spent with ACV/GARDS there have been many wonderful people that I have met who have helped the organisation and myself, they have inspired me to continue to advocate and support asbestos sufferers and their families wherever they are and without their support and encouragement we just could not have helped the hundreds if not thousands of people we have touched over the time. Without the encouragement of countless numbers of you this group here in Gippsland could not have had the impact it had - by being a part of

- making change several times to legislation in Victoria for asbestos sufferers rights over the past decade or more,
- the James Hardie campaign to keep James Hardie paying its liabilities,

*Continued on next page...*



- drove the campaign to secure the Cancer Care Centre at Latrobe Regional Hospital ,
- to receive an apology from the then Premier of the Victorian State Parliament, John Brumby.
- and many other issues over the past 14 years too numerous to mention.

Around 2004/5 we worked on an asbestos kit for home renovators to do a small renovation job at home of less than 10 square metres - this was conceived and launched by not just ACV/GARDS but Gippsland Trades & Labour Council, Latrobe City, WorkSafe Vic, EPA, DoH, G & J Crosby contractors and many more who had a not hand in it.

I am proud to say this kit has now been taken up by the 3 government depts WorkSafe Vic, EPA and DoH and is about to be trialled in at this moment 10 councils across Victoria with the hopes that it will go interstate.

The facility to take domestic asbestos is still yet to be funded for trial - this unit was a concept from GTLC and ACV/GARDS with the help of Event Studios who donated over a million dollars in schematic drawings - we would like to see this concept take root and become an accepted way to hold domestic asbestos wherever it was being collected until it can be transported safely from the holding site to the closest tip that takes asbestos. We will still be pushing for this to happen.

Another project that we are passionate about is to obtain a significant memorial here in the Latrobe Valley to

recognise the workers lives that have been lost to asbestos and the families that have been devastated by that loss. Thousands have lost their lives here and we believe that the sacrifice made by the workers and their families in order to make

this area the power hub of Victoria should be recognised with an appropriate memorial.

I am very proud to think that a group in country Victoria has been able to make a difference nationally by having a voice in many issues around the eradication of asbestos, the setting up of the Safety Eradication Agency and laws that change the face of asbestos and what is not acceptable anymore and in research projects to try and find a cure or better quality of life for sufferers. We have even had a seat at the table in overseeing The Asbestos innovation Fund from Comcare of some 1.5 million in funds towards innovative ideas and research and many more things that we have fought for to make the lives of our sufferers and their families and the community a little bit better.

Internationally with friends in places like England - a distant campaign we helped with in its infancy was the **Save Spodden Valley campaign - the town of Rochdale where 650 homes and a children's nursery were going to be built on the ex-site of** the world's largest asbestos textile factory - Asbestos was processed on the former Turner Brothers (T&N) site for over 100 years. With 300 tonnes of asbestos dust a year being dumped on that site. We are proud to say we helped in our distant small way to stop this project going forward on this heavily contaminated land. The Save Spodden Valley group still are very active around that site making sure no one builds on it.

In Glasgow where we have friends - we helped in our small way by making individual private donations from our committee and members to the Clydebank Asbestos Group to get their memorial dream started to mark the lives lost of those who had succumbed to asbestos disease in the building of ships in the shipyards at Glasgow. By a cruel twist of fate when some of these workers immigrated to Australia in the 50s, 60s & 70s they have now become members of ACV/GARDS seeking help and support.

None of this would be possible without the support we received from all of you, and I am very humbled and overwhelmed to think that I was considered worthy of an



Order of Australia award, because without all of you and my wonderful family, who I love and adore - this would not have happened - the award is just as much yours as it is mine and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all those sufferers and their families you have helped by helping me and ACV/GARDS. Our sponsors at this present time who we are ever grateful to for having faith in us are:

## Sponsors

- WorkSafe Victoria
- Turner Freeman Law Firm
- Slater & Gordon Law Firm
- Maurice Blackburn Law Firm
- G & J Crosby Contractors P/L
- Latrobe Valley Funeral Services
- Massaro Motors
- Valley Signs
- Latrobe City
- Mairin OHS&E
- Yokogawa
- Energy Australia - Yallourn -
- Centre Link Staff Traralgon
- Margaret Cook
- Gippsland Trades & Labour Council
- Home Taste Chinese Restaurant
- Workers from the Power Stations & Mines of Loy Yang & Hazelwood



## Congratulations to Vicki Hamilton OAM

It is a great pleasure to commend Vicki Hamilton, CEO of the Asbestos Council of Victoria and Gippsland Asbestos Related Disease Support Inc on her Medal of the Order of Australia.

Ms Hamilton's OAM has been awarded for her leadership of ACV/GARDS and for her unflinching advocacy of the need for governments, employers, unions and our medical and legal systems, to do everything possible to prevent the spread of asbestos-related diseases.

For more than two decades Ms Hamilton and ACV/GARDS have provided support for countless people suffering from an asbestos-

related disease, their families and carers, both in Gippsland and across Victoria.

Distinguished awards such as those announced as part of the Australia Day honours are of course conferred on individuals, but I guess in almost every case the award recipient is closely connected to an organisation or collective that has worked to achieve success.

Ms Hamilton would be the first to acknowledge that her award is in many respects an award for everyone who has put their shoulder to the wheel to support ACV/GARDS and its objectives, and those affected by asbestos-related diseases.

We must acknowledge that while much has been achieved, the incidence of these diseases will not peak for decades to come. Awareness will reduce exposure to asbestos, particularly in the area of home renovation.

This is a fantastic honour for Ms Hamilton, and I was delighted when the announcement was made.

### JOHAN SCHEFFER MP

Member for Eastern Victoria Region

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Authorised by J Scheffer 1/23 James St Pakenham

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

# International Workers' Memorial Day

## Friday 2nd May, 2014

### at 11am at Centenary Rose Garden, Morwell

**The International Workers' Memorial Day event is held nationally and globally to remember the workers who die, are injured or fall ill as a result of their work. People from all over the world will be remembering and supporting workers in their corner of the world.**

The Ceremony will be conducted by Minister Russell Jones so that families in Gippsland might find some closure to the loss of a loved one and for those who are suffering in some way from a work related injury - whether that is a physical or psychological effect from their work.

Speakers at the event include

**Paul Fixter - CFA** - Paul has been a career Fire-fighter since the age of 18. Paul has worked for 20 years across ACT Fire Rescue and CFA in Victoria. Some of the Major fire campaigns that Paul has been a part of are:

- 2003 Canberra fires
- 2009 Black Saturday fires
- 2013 Sussex Inlet NSW fires
- 2013 Aberfeldy – (Gippsland) fire
- 2014 Hazelwood Mine fires

**Howard Williams - Gippsland Trades & Labour Council** - Howard is an Executive member of Gippsland Trades and Labour Council, long time member of the AEU, Retired

Teacher, Executive member of Volley Ball Victoria, Member of Advance Morwell - lived right next door to the Hazelwood Mine Fire.

**Danny Boothman** - singer/musician will be there singing some ballads - he is a part of the Strzelecki String Busters.

Please join us afterwards for a BBQ lunch with the compliments of Gippsland Trades and Labour Council.

**All are welcome from the community and we hope to see you there supporting workers and their families from across Gippsland.**

## John Parker Honoured

**At the Labour Day dinner on the 21st of March John Parker, Secretary of the GTLC, has become the inaugural recipient of the Annual John Parker Award for Community Activism.**

John has been Secretary of the GTLC for over 10 years and his commitment to workers and families has been unwavering. When taking the leadership role with the GTLC he adopted the principle of Community Unionism and has since advocated for social reform on behalf of workers in the Gippsland region. He has campaigned for a

sustainable transition for workers in Gippsland, as the region undergoes an economic restructure, despite continuing changes to the political landscape.

Community is very important to John, as it is impossible to divorce the worker from the community or the family. Allison, John's wife, was also recognised for the support that she has given both to John and to the GTLC.

*'Only when workers and the community stand together in solidarity can we achieve a society that is fair and just for all. Then, and only then, will we be able to live in peace and harmony with each other and the environment.'*



## Federation University Australia, invites Vicki Hamilton from ACV/GARDS as Guest Speaker for 2nd year nursing students: A personal salute.

My first recall of GARDS was in 2004 when I joined Monash University at Churchill as a Lecturer/PhD Candidate. Vicki and I came into conversation at an event to promote GARDS; I was impressed by the passion that Vicki brought to the subject material (Asbestos) as it was very relevant in the Latrobe Valley at the time. Therefore, I invited Vicki Hamilton to be Guest Speaker to some Nursing and Midwifery students in the course that year that I lectured into; furthering the awareness of this silent health killer.

Like most aspects of life, time passes and changes occur, however Vicki has been Guest Speaker to Nursing and Midwifery student's in the course's that I have coordinated over the years and this year was no exception. Last week (25 March 2014) Vicki was again my Guest Speaker to a cohort of Federation University Australian students here at Churchill to enlighten them about the dangers of Asbestosis. Such comments as *'... the talk was great'* and *'... I had no idea that Asbestos was so dangerous'* with additional comments of *'... being aware of home renovations affecting children is something that I will ask as I conduct respiratory assessments on patients'* in the future. These comments were freely expressed by students and were quite unsolicited.

From a personal perspective I was delighted to congratulate Vicki on her Order of Australia Medal on behalf of Federation University Australia, Churchill Campus. Whilst changes in titles and courses may occur to individuals the School of Nursing and Midwifery will continue to value and engage with people who undertake remarkable work that is conducted for the benefit of other who live within the community.

**Dr Sonia Allen**

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