

G.A.R.D.S INC. NEWSLETTER

THANKS VALLEY POWER, HELLO LATROBE BUSINESS CENTRE !

Wonderful news for all GARDS members. In the last fortnight GARDS learned that our submission to Valley Power Community Fund was successful and on Friday, 8th of February GARDS delegation collected a \$10,000 cheque. We send another **BIG** thanks to all the people at VALLEY PEAKER POWER PROJECT.

After learning about this Trevor Calow, Fay Needham and Vicki Hamilton did an exhaustive search around the Valley to find the right place for the right price. *We finally found ourselves a place to call home.* GARDS is now situated at Latrobe Business Centre, formerly known as the LEAD Centre, in Newborough (before that this building was occupied by Yalourn Medical Society).



WHAT A WONDERFUL PLACE ...LATROBE BUSINESS CENTRE, NEWBOROUGH

Our new address is 36-38 Darlirnurla Avenue, Newborough. Telephone No. 51 281218.

The facilities include a meeting room, board room and lots of space to display information and sit down and have a chat and a cuppa. GARDS also has its own office space, just follow the signs. People who use public transport should note that the bus stops right near our building.

We will be organising an Open Day

in the very near future to celebrate our good fortune. We will talk about this at our first afternoon support group meeting and evening advocacy meeting on the 26th of February. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank those who have stood by us and particularly MOE LIONS CLUB HOTEL, CMFEU (Luke Van Der Muelen and Dave Pillar) who gave us shelter during the storm.

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DID YOU KNOW...

- The previous head of the Australian Mesothelioma registry, Dr. Jim Leigh said that the majority of future Asbestos injuries will be caused by poor demolition practises.
- The Federal US government spent \$12 million AUS on a health screening project for the asbestos-affected community of Libby, Montana (6,000 people)
- The Victorian State government proposed asbestos health review - \$200,000 AUS for the Latrobe Valley Community (70,000 people)

GARDS ACTS ON BALFOUR HALL DEMOLITION

Following concerns raised by Moe residents in the *Latrobe Valley Express* (28/01), GARDS has organised a *Community Information meeting, 7.30pm Tuesday the 19th February at Latrobe Business Centre, Newborough.* We have invited WorkSafe Victoria representatives to report on the demolition, action they have taken (and will take) about poor demolition practises on this site. Maurice Blackburn and Cashman will also be represented to take questions on legal issues. All concerned residents are invited to attend.

Although we don't know who brought this to public attention, GARDS sends 'Moe resident' a big WELL DONE!. The only way to stop poor demolition practises in our community is to **tell shonky operators - "It's not on".**

REVIEW THIS MINISTER KOSKY *et...* MINISTER LENDERS

At the time of writing this newsletter GARDS was awaiting the decision of the joint DHS-Royal Melbourne Hospital Ethics Panel on the proposed 'Lung Function Review' project. Our opposition to this project comes from the intended exclusion of contractor employees (including the construction work force) and families exposed through take home exposure. Further we believe the involvement of the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA), the workers compensation and public liability insurer for the SECV, in the project poses a major conflict of interest. Last but not least GARDS has major concerns about the secretive way the government cooked up the proposed project, excluding GARDS, unions and the wider Latrobe Valley community during the project's development.

The proposed project will not :

- Evaluate the operation of the Lung Function Testing Program
- Assess Lung Function Test results of people on the program
- Provide meaningful information that can be used to assess contractor employees and families exposed through take home asbestos contamination.



KEPT SECRET TILL THE LAST...

GARDS believes the proposed project is designed to check whether we and unions are telling the truth about the size of the asbestos problems in our region. While the government procrastinates, families of the Latrobe Valley are still waiting for proper medical and health support.

A YEAR SINCE FOUR CORNERS CAME TO THE VALLEY

As we approach the first anniversary of the broadcast of ABC-TV's "Power Without Glory" now seems a good time to reflect on our situation and whether things have changed over the last twelve months, for better or worse, on asbestos issues. Unquestionably, *Four Corners* gave the Valley asbestos situation a media profile we had only dreamed of previously. While interest in Melbourne continued for a while afterwards, Gippsland regional media including TV, radio and print have maintained their interest and commitment to the issue. This has proved a very much-welcomed source of support to GARDS and up-to-date information to the regional community. In contrast, the response of the State government has been disappointing, except the efforts of WorkSafe Victoria who seem committed to building better processes and communication with the Valley community. The same could not be said of government departments with responsibility for the health and compensation dimensions of the asbestos issue. Twelve

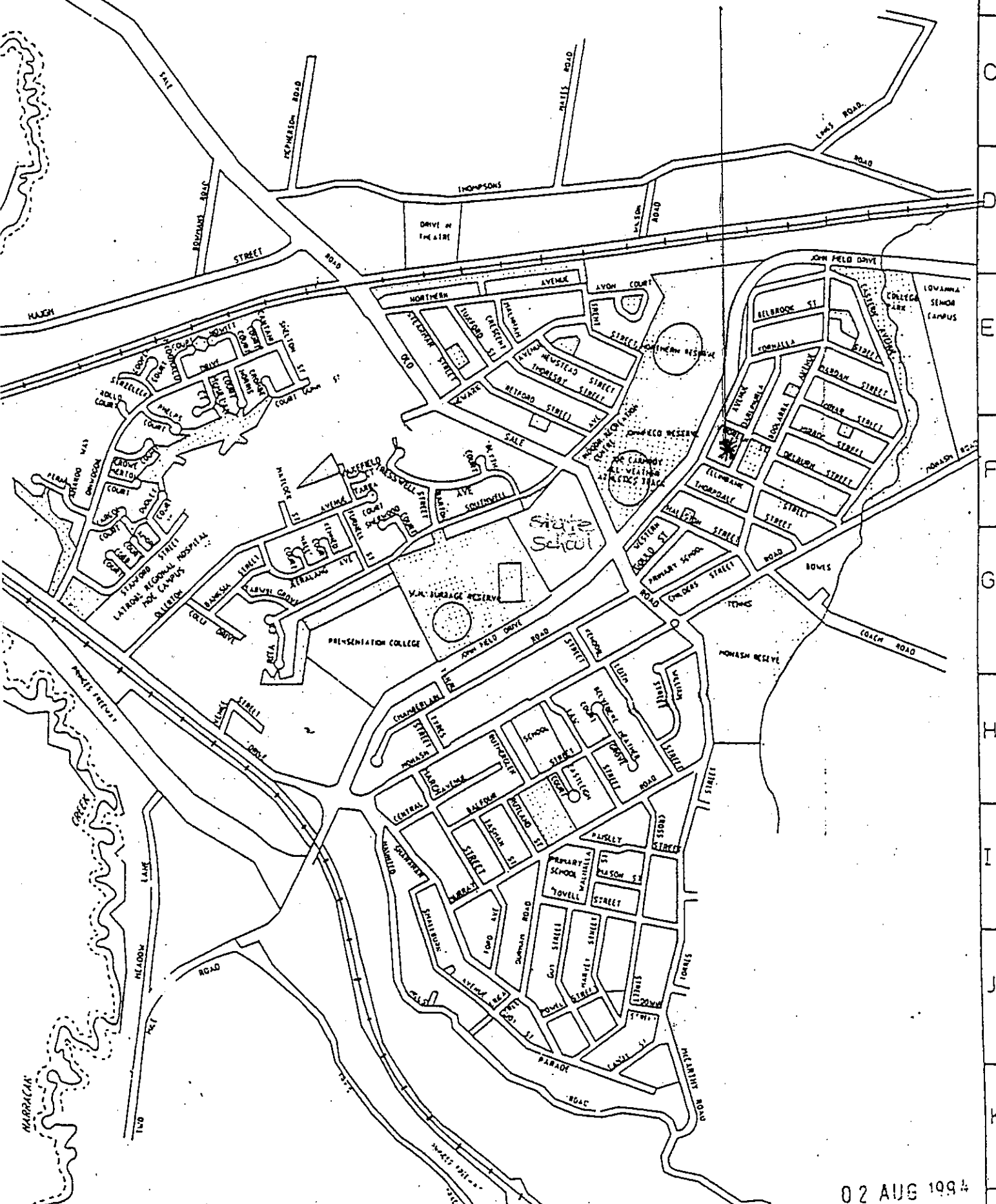
months ago, we were not blaming the current State government for neglecting the problems but, instead, reminding them they had inherited responsibility for the failure of previous administrations. Today, we can now say that this State Labor government is to blame for actively neglecting the asbestos problem, and trying to silence our criticisms. Further, local members Keith Hamilton, Ian Maxfield and Christian Zahra give every appearance of turning their backs on the Valley community and the crisis asbestos illness is bringing to so many families. Let's hope that new Minister John Lenders, who replaces Minister Lynne Kosky as the responsible Minister, will take a new and better approach by acknowledging the problems, and properly resourcing the many areas of need in our midst. Perhaps he could take the lead set by the construction workforce at the Valley Peaker Power resources. When community, workers and government come together real change is possible. Let's hope we can get government to the table in 2002.

FOR THE RECORD...

Recently Latrobe Community Health Service advertised for an Asbestos Community Development Officer. For the record the submission for this position was written by GARDS who was, in turn a member of an asbestos working group. The working group was co-initiated by GARDS and LCHS to identify ways of assisting the Latrobe Valley Community on asbestos related problems. The working group agreed that the first step in helping the community was to get a full time worker for GARDS who could then identify other sources of funding support for the commu-

nity. LCHS agreed to *auspice* the submission for the full time position through government on the basis that, if successful, the resources would be given to GARDS (at this time we were not Incorporated). In September, 2001 GARDS was told by Department of Human Services that the submission was successful. However over the next month it became apparent that LCHS had decided to keep the money and take credit for writing the submission. **GARDS has made asbestos a high profile public issue.**

CARDS IS HERE
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02 AUG 1994

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GARDS: Guarding the Community



ABOUT GARDS

EXECUTIVE

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Assistant Sec./Treasurer:	Vicki Hamilton ph 51 278219
Executive Members:	Dorothy Roberts ph 51 274174 Fay Needham ph. 51 27 2038
GARDS Membership:	\$4.95 Joining Fee
GARDS Annual Fee:	\$11.00 (employed) \$2.75 (pension/conc.)

THE GARDS OFFICE WILL BE OPEN EVERY
MONDAY BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 9.30AM-
2.30PM CALL IN AND HAVE A CHAT & CUPPA.

WHAT GARDS IS ALL ABOUT

GARDS SUPPORT—provides support and information to asbestos sufferers, their families and carers. This includes home visits by GARDS volunteers, a telephone advice service, and drop-in service at GARDS office. GARDS 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 regional support services, and other areas of interest and assistance. The meetings also provide a gathering place for experiences. GARDS Support is open to anyone exposed to asbestos or suffering from asbestos disease.

GARDS ADVOCACY is the organisational, activities and advocating arm of GARDS. GARDS Advocacy meetings are 7.30pm-9.30pm on the third Tuesday evening of the month (except February 2002) providing a focal point for information sharing, problem identification and campaign development. People interested in becoming active in GARDS Advocacy are required to take out GARDS membership. GARDS Advocacy is focused on improving health support services and compensation arrangements to asbestos sufferers, and their families, ensuring asbestos-related issues are kept in the public eye, and ridding our environment of asbestos.

GARDS Support & Advocacy meetings:

GARDS Support: last Tuesday of the month 1.30pm-3.30pm

GARDS Advocacy: Tuesday 26th February, 7.30pm - 9.30pm starting in March (3rd Tues of the month)

Meetings held at GARDS, C/-Latrobe Business Centre, 36-38 Darlimurla Ave., Newborough (old Yallourn Medical Society building, Newborough)

Up-Coming Events

GARDS Support :

February: Latrobe Valley Palliative Care Services

March: Aromatherapy and Bowen Therapy

GARDS Advocacy:

February: Dr. Tony LaMontagne, Monash Uni.

March: Wreath laying Ceremony

GARDS Community Meeting: Balfour Hall demolition, 7.30pm February, 19th