

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

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DID YOU KNOW?

- "Indirect, marginal & not an objective of the program" is how the SECV assessed the health benefits of the SECV Lung Screening Program in 1984.
- The most commonly used brake shoes/disc pads are 45% asbestos.
- Mesothelioma Work. Comp. claims average \$183,396. Meso. Pub. Liability claims average \$61,415

PROFESSOR HARRY GLASBEEK — SUCCESS

On Wednesday 15th of May our very special guest Professor Harry gave an all inspiring in depth look into corporate social responsibilities and corporate criminality with a reference to the SECV, Risk, and the Insurance Industry.

Professor Harry told the audience that they were not alone in their plight for social justice and fair compensation for all. These issues are happening in other countries around the world.

He spoke at length about the neglect of the blue collar worker and the failure to protect those workers in industry. The Professor said "Asbestos was one of those silent killers that had been ignored by management long after they knew of its deadly effects with no regard to the consequences for workers".

Professor Harry spends 6 months of the year here in Australia and 6 months in Canada. He said he would be honored to come back again sometime and touch base with our members.

The meeting was attended by about 30 interested people and radio media.

Professor Harry told those in attendance that the work of GARDS was an **HONORABLE** and **JUST** cause to fight and to keep up the good work that the organization has been doing. He also told those in attendance that the people who supported GARDS and worked in the organization were **NOBLE** people.

Professor Harry's speech was taped on the night and is available for borrowing for interested people who could not attend the meeting. If you would like to listen to this speech you can contact Dorothy Roberts on 51274174.



ALP STATE CONFERENCE

The Labor Party's STATE CONFERENCE held little joy for the people of the La-trobe Valley.

A concerted effort by both GARDS executives and good people within the Labor party tried to have our plight heard at state conference so that the party members themselves could discuss and debate the issue.

On Saturday our Federal member seemed to be very interested on the asbestos issue BUT by Sunday that interest had waned.

The member for Morwell was absent on the day the motion was to be heard at State Conference.

Continued on page 2.

GARDS SPEAKING PUBLICLY

GARDS was very privileged in the last 3 weeks to have been asked to come along and speak to two organisations.

Our first engagement was at Hazelwood Rotary where we were made to feel most welcome. Vicki Hamilton spoke on the good work that GARDS does in the community and what GARDS is all about. Lyle Seear spoke about asbestos issues and working with and around asbestos in the work place.

Lots of questions were asked from the floor and the Rotarians found a new understanding of the issues.

Our other venue was at the Co-operating Church in Churchill.

We were given a lovely breakfast, after which Vicki Hamilton and Lyle Seear proceeded to inform a new group of interested people about the asbestos issues.

GARDS welcomes the opportunity to speak to community organiza-

tions—if you are a member of another organization who wants to know more contact Vicki Hamilton or Lyle Seear to organize a speaker.



AIR-GARDS: East Brunswick demolition

On Wednesday May 22nd GARDS Inc. co-hosted a community meeting with Coburg-Brunswick Community Legal Centre for residents in the Arnold-Linden Street area of East Brunswick. Around 6 weeks ago, an illegal demolition in this densely populated residential area resulted in asbestos emissions for two days. After local resident action, WorkSafe officers attended the site. Workers on the site ran to their cars and drove away as quickly as they could. WorkSafe is

now investigating the matter. At the meeting, there were reports from Alan Beacom, WorkSafe Regional Manager (Construction), Mark Higginbotham, Councillor, Moreland City Council, Gaye Trevan, Maurice Blackburn Cashman, and Cheryl Wragg GARDS/AIR-GARDS.

Moreland City Council is very concerned about the apparent lack of co-ordination between various levels of government and across government departments. (Continued p 3)

Moreland City Councillors have committed to meeting with Government Ministers and advocating an all-of-government approach to the identification, safe removal, and disposal of asbestos.

ALP STATE CONFERENCE from page 1

The very vocal member for Narracan and defender of the Latrobe Valley was there on the day BUT, on our issues, seemed to have lost his voice.

We were encouraged by many good people within the Labor Party who approached offering support and congratulations to GARDS on our wonder-

ful campaign to *Get the asbestos issues out there and talked about.*

But it was very disappointing to see such a lack of support for a very major issue for the Valley from our local elected representatives.

A copy of the motion is included in this newsletter.



WHERE WERE YOU ???

AIR- GARDS: EAST BRUNSWICK cont. from 2

Moreland City Councillors Mark Higginbotham and Fraser Brindley undertook to approach the State government seeking co-ordination inside government to improve the situation. Cheryl Wragg said: "When there is an asbestos problem in your neighborhood or even your backyard, people don't want to be given the bureaucratic run-around. There are too many examples of this occurring in the Valley, Melbourne and elsewhere in the State. The State Government needs to identify and sort out dysfunction inside government that allows bad demolitions to continue."



Asbestos cement sheeting removed badly causes dust emissions

As with Balfour Hall, issues inside government like the contracting out of building permit processes, continue to produce an information void inside local council and between eg. Council and WorkSafe.

GARDS has written to Latrobe Shire seeking their assistance and a meeting about these matters. At time of publication, we were still waiting for a response from Latrobe Shire.

Meanwhile, GARDS has received complaints about a bad renovation involving asbestos in Sinclair Ave, Morwell and an asbestos contamination problem in Wells St., Morwell.

Review of Asbestos Regulations

On Friday, 17th May GARDS representatives participated in a public briefing in Melbourne about the new asbestos regulations. Lyle Seear, Graeme Hamilton, Trevor Callow, Fay Needham, and Lesley Daley attended.

GARDS representatives advocated that regulations need to be backed up with proper compliance, that government needs to sort out lack of co-ordination between departments, authorities and agencies, and that

asbestos is being used in the automotive industry with increasingly lax attitudes toward employees and public safety.

Lesley Daley spoke about the need to increase the amount of years records about asbestos exposure are held up to 60 years.

GARDS members are now preparing a written submission to WorkSafe Victoria about the new regulations.

A copy of the draft regulations are available at the GARDS office. Anyone wishing to make input should contact GARDS asap.

The deadline for public comment on the draft regulations is 30th May, 2002.

If you wish to make comment direct, send your submission to Gary Radley, Legislation branch, WorkSafe Victoria, GPO Box 4306, MELBOURNE, Vic. 3001

GARDS News Round-Up

Recently, GARDS received another set of FOI documents, this time from the SECV. These documents are about the SECV lung screening program established in 1980-81. Some of these have been sent to specialist doctors for their comment. In addition to the comments from the documents cited in the 'Did You Know'

column on page 1, the documents also say that the lung screening program was subject to complaints from employees, recordkeeping was bad but overall 'it achieved the industrial relations priorities'!

Did you notice that the last GARDS newsletter had the wrong edition

number. Instead of reading Issue 3, it should have read Issue 4.

A big hello to long time GARDS member Arnold Needham who has been in hospital (Melbourne) and GARDS Executive Member, Fay Needham, who has recently been unwell but is now feeling better.

Urgency Motion: Asbestos - Care and Compensation (Amended version)

Documents recently obtained through FOI from the State government's insurance authority, the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA), reported that more than 100,000 SECV employees (Latrobe Valley) were comprehensively exposed to asbestos until the early 1980s. This number does not include family members exposed daily through 'take-home' exposure.

The documents also show that, over the last fifteen years, more than 400 people have made successful compensation claims for asbestos-related injury incurred from the SECV.

In their reports to the State government, actuaries Trowbridge Consulting, and Taylor Fry, warn repeatedly that the total claim numbers must be treated as conservative relative to the actual incidence of asbestos disease in the community. For example, a 1996 analysis of claim numbers by asbestos-disease type shows that only 0.3% of people exposed for *up to ten years* who develop asbestos-related lung cancer ever appear on the books. Of people exposed for *more than ten years* who develop asbestos-related lung cancer, only 41% ever appear on the books.

When the FOI documents came under recent media and public scrutiny, the State government responded with another set of numbers not previously revealed: Minister Lender's office acknowledged concern about 6,000 ex-SECV employees whom they consider at high risk of developing asbestos-related illness.

That concern, however, did not result in any measures from the State government to help these people.

The Latrobe Valley community has been demanding a comprehensive public health response to a comprehensive industrial disease epidemic in their midst. They want and need an occupational medicine clinic with specialist diagnostic facilities, and medical research facilities. They want and need more hospital beds, as well as a twenty-five bed palliative care hospice, and a thirty-bed respite care facility.

The 6000 people identified by the State government need and deserve targeted health programs designed to improve their health outcomes; as well as counseling and family support services; and information about compensation entitlements.

Yet, to-date, the State government has committed to a \$200,000 'mortality count', also known as a 'lung function review project', designed to check the dead/alive status of 3,600 ex-SECV employees.

The mortality count will not help people whose lives have been, are being and will be maimed and destroyed by asbestos disease, nor reduce the distress carried by their families. However, the mortality count, funded by the VMIA, *will* help the State government to assess more accurately its compensation liability inherited from the SECV. To-date, the Finance Minister has not revealed what he believes to be an acceptable level of liability before committing to a comprehensive program of assistance for anxious, sick and dying workers, and their families.

Hundreds of industrially exposed, injured and terminally ill *public sector workers*, and their families, who cannot access necessary health and support services during the peak of an asbestos epidemic, have been told to 'wait and see' until after the VMIA does the 'numbers'.

There is a growing view across the Latrobe Valley community that this State Labor government is more committed to protecting its surplus than it is in saving workers' lives and helping ease their distress.

The position taken by the State government to-date is not compassionate. It is not morally ethical. It is not financially responsible. Nor is it politically sustainable.

This Urgency Motion asserts that the State government must change its position and adopt a very different approach to asbestos and its legacy of disease and death, human and financial loss. *The mortality count project must be scrapped.*

The Victorian State Labor government has the opportunity to change history by stopping the eighty-year practice of minimizing compensation claim numbers by neglecting the specialist medical and health needs of asbestos victims and their families.

The State government must commit to a comprehensive public health response to asbestos related problems, designed and implemented in concert with the Latrobe Valley community as a matter of urgency.

The Victorian State Labor government has the responsibility to avert a potential crisis in the State's asbestos liability portfolio and the equally important responsibility to deliver just and reasonable financial compensation and economic support to asbestos victims and their families.

The NSW Dust Diseases Tribunal and Board offers a successful model of compensation and integrated health and medical services to asbestos disease victims and their families. It provides just and reasonable compensation, and represents a significant move away from individual litigation to a more financially stable State-based 'universal' dust diseases injury and care scheme.

The State government must commit to establishing a new set of asbestos injury compensation and insurance arrangements as a matter of priority.

Motion

This State Conference calls on the State Government to honor its responsibilities to care for workers and their families, employed by the SECV and other State instrumentalities who were exposed to asbestos and are now suffering from asbestos-related injury and death.

1. State Conference calls on the State government to scrap its mortality count of ex-SECV workers.
2. State Conference calls on the State government to commit to a comprehensive public health response to asbestos-related problems in the Latrobe Valley region.
3. State Conference calls on the State government to institute new arrangements for handling compensation claims modeled on the NSW Dust Diseases Tribunal and Board.

Moved:

Seconded:

GIPPSLAND ASBESTOS RELATED DISEASES SUPPORT INC.

36-38 Darlimurra Avenue
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Moe
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Email: gards@datafast.net.au

GUARDING THE COMMUNITY

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

GIPPSLAND ASBESTOS RELATED DISEASES SUPPORT INC.

GARDS Inc. SUPPORT

Provides support & information to asbestos sufferers, their families & carers. This includes home visits by GARDS volunteers, a telephone advice service, & drop-in service at GARDS office. 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 regional support services, and other areas of interest & 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 Inc. ADVOCACY

Is the organizational, activities & advocating arm of GARDS Inc. GARDS Advocacy meetings are 7.30pm-9.30pm on the third Tuesday evening of the month providing a focal point for information sharing, problem identification & campaign development. People interested in becoming active in GARDS Inc. ADVOCACY & have voting rights are required to take out GARDS membership & annual subscription. GARDS Inc. ADVOCACY is focused on improving health support services & compensation arrangements to asbestos sufferers, & their families, ensuring asbestos-related issues are kept in the public eye, & ridding our environment of asbestos.

ABOUT G.A.R.D.S. INC.

EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT:

Lyle Seear Ph. 51671376

VICE PRESIDENT:

Trevor Callow Ph. 51342208

SECRETARY:

Cheryl Wragg Ph. 51273790

ASSISTANT SECRETARY/ TREASURER:

Vicki Hamilton Ph. 51278219

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:

Dorothy Roberts Ph. 51274174

Fay Needham Ph. 51272038

GARDS MEMBERSHIP FEE:

\$4.98

GARDS ANNUAL FEE:

\$11.00 (EMPLOYED)

\$2.75 (PENSION/CONG.)

THE GARDS OFFICE IS OPEN

MONDAY: 9.30AM-2.30PM

TUESDAY: 1.00PM-3.00PM

THURSDAY: 12 NOON-3.00PM

FRIDAY: BY APPOINTMENT

Call in for a chat and cuppa

GARDS SUPPORT MEETINGS:

Last Tuesday of the month, 1.30pm-3.30pm

GARDS ADVOCACY MEETINGS:

3rd Tuesday evening of the month, 7.30pm-9.30pm

UP AND COMING EVENTS

GARDS SUPPORT:

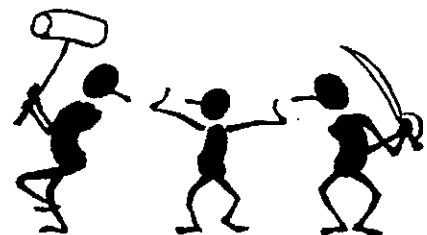
May: Peter Arbour, CentreLink

June: Financial & Investment Advisors

GARDS ADVOCACY:

June: David Pargeter, Director of Social Justice Unit, Uniting Church

July: Dr. Tony LaMontagne, Monash (Pahran)



ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL