FILE NAME: Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR)

DATE: 1961

DOC#: CSR085

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Letter from the Undersecretary for Mines with Summary of Action being Taken and Proposed to be Taken at Wittenoom

(187)

74

THE HON. MINISTER:

As I have recently advised, both our Department and the Health Department have been concerned in regard to the incidence of Asbestosis at Wittenoom Gorge. We recently called a conference of representatives of both Departments and the mining company, and a digest of the proceedings appears in the State Mining Engineer's minute hereunder.

To summarise action being taken and proposed to be taken, I would advise as follows:-

(1) The Company has arranged that the method of dust control in the plant will be examined by Gregory and Co., specialists in dust handling, and that any further chang to be made as a result of this examination will be under taken.

(2) A system of dust records based on konimeter counts will be maintained.

(3) Our ventilation specialists will visit Wittenoom Gorge in order to coach the company's mine ventilation officers in the use of the konimeter. The Company has a ventilation official fully engaged on ventilation work itself.

(4) As you know, we have recently increased our own ventilation staff at Kalgoorlie by the appointment of an Inspector in addition to our Assistant Ventilation Inspectors and this is principally to enable us to concentrate on Wittenoom.

(5) Our Senior Inspector of Mines, with the ventilation officers and District Workmen's Inspector, will visit Wittenoom to set out a programme to enforce the use of secondary ventilating equipment, and in this regard I propose to ask the Health Department that Dr. McNulty might accompany them, as I hope he will frequently do in the future.

(6) The Public Health Department proposes that Dr. McNulty will, within a year, be available as full-time medical officer for mining and thus provide increased medical supervision including clinical investigation at Wittenoom.

(7) As you will note further back in the file, I obtained information from the Department of Mines, South Africa, on its problems in regard to blue asbestos and this has also been studied, although it has not greatly helped us. The two major producing blue asbestos countries are South Africa and Western Australia. In South Africa, of course, the labour is native and is indentured for comparatively short periods. The labour is replaced from time to time.

One of the disturbing features has been that some recent cases have been found after only a limited working period at Wittenoom and in three cases recently cancer of the lung has occurred.

The Company is, like the Government Departments, most concerned about the position and I think everything possible is being done.

From time to time I will report to you of progress made.

UNDER SECRETARY FOR MINES

AHT/JF.
15.10.61.

U.S. for chair.

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT 104420
PENCAD - Bayonne, N.J.