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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
57 MURRAY STREET
PERTH

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ALL INFORMATION TO BE
FORWARDED TO THE
"COMMISSIONER OF
PUBLIC HEALTH"

Mr. J. Boyland,
Senior Inspector of Mines,
Mines Department,
Kalgoorlie,
W.A.

25th October 1965.

Dear Mr. Boyland,

I recently visited Australian Blue Asbestos and was pleasantly surprised at many of the improvements made. However, dust is still obviously a problem and conditions, whilst much better, are still below that achieved in the gold mining industry.

New cases of silicosis and/or asbestosis are still being diagnosed each year, but there is room to hope that the length of exposure is increasing, and that men may work for longer periods with less chance of developing lung disease.

As you know, there has been much criticism of the konimeter as an instrument for dust sampling in the asbestos industry, and its continued use was only justified because counts were so high that more sophisticated instruments were unnecessary. I never really subscribed to this theory.

It is imperative now that more advanced methods of dust sampling be used, and I would be grateful if this could receive some attention. Dust sampling surveys should include:-

- (a) The number of quartz particles of respirable size, i.e. less than 5 microns.
- (b) The number of fibres of respirable size, i.e. less than about 40 microns.
- (c) Allow some estimate to be made of the individual worker's total exposure.

I know that your inspectors (ventilation) are efficient and knowledgeable, and I don't wish to interfere in any way with your duties and responsibilities. However, Dr. Gordon Smith, Director of the Occupational Health Section of the Commonwealth School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, New South Wales, accompanied me to Wittenoom and offered to send his dust sampling inspector, Mr. B. Major, to do a detailed survey of the mine and mill at Wittenoom. I have heard Mr. Major spoken of very highly as an expert in this field. His survey would certainly be of value, and I think it would be a wonderful opportunity for your inspectors to widen their experience and perhaps develop new techniques, even if, in the end, you feel that his methods are impracticable and no improvement on present techniques. The question of cost hasn't been raised, but my impression is that the Commonwealth would finance it. There was no discussion in regard to timing, but a possible time might be April/May 1966.

A good example of the difficulty involved in dust sampling is Stubbs' Comet Mine at Marble Bar. His

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treatment mill was very dusty in places, but it is possible that much of the dust is comparatively harmless because of the absence of quartz and the nature of the ore body.

Your comments on the above would be greatly appreciated. It might be that your ventilation inspectors don't feel that any purpose would be served by Mr. Major's visit. If so, let me know. No arrangements of any kind have been made.

Yours sincerely,


J. McNulty
PHYSICIAN
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

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