

FILE NAME: Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR)

DATE: 1961

DOC#: CSR079

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Medical Correspondence between Drs. King, Rennie, Letham, McNulty & the Mines Dept

(93)

DDL/CT

20th September, 1961.

Dr. Alan King,
Director,
Tuberculosis Branch,
Department of Health,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

Dear Alan,

Asbestosis - Wittenoom Caused

Here is a copy of a letter which I have written to Dr. Rennie. This has followed a communication which Dr. Bruce Hunt sent to Dr. Rennie as Consultant Physician to the Colonial Sugar Refinery. Dr. Hunt indicated concern at the number of cases of pneumoconiosis coming out of Wittenoom. Dr. Rennie replied that much money had been spent in the last few years on ventilation, and indeed this is true.

As you will see from the copy of my letter to Dr. Rennie, I consider this is not the essential point but that the Company should now atone for the neglect of the past by seeing that everything possible is done to prevent asbestosis from occurring in the future.

It would be much appreciated if you would put your point of view forward if and when you communicate with him, as you yourself had some experience with the problem before you left this State.

As you will see from the figures quoted to Dr. Rennie, the numbers are increasing and may continue to do so. I reiterate that the Company has a prime responsibility to prevent this increase.

Yours faithfully,

(D.D. Letham)
PHYSICIAN
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SECTION.

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT

103450

PRODID-Bayama, N. J.

H. MAYNARD RENNIE
F.R.C.P. (LOND.) F.R.A.C.P.
TELEPHONE: BW 7711
(AFTER 4 P.M.) XL 2540

MACQUARIE CHAMBERS.
183 MACQUARIE STREET.
SYDNEY

29th September, 1961.

Dr. D.O. Letham.
Department of Public Health
57 Murray Street,
PERTH. W.A.

Dear Dr. Letham,

Asbestosis - Wittenoom.

Thank you very much for your letter of the 20th September concerning the problems of the Wittenoom Asbestosis works.

I am sure that the Company is aware of the need to control the dust hazard and in their opinion the changes that they have made some 2 or 3 years ago have led to a distinct improvement in the obvious dust. I would agree entirely with your suggestions that the Company should take an active interest in measuring dust levels and I shall take this point up with them. It is up to the official side to indicate what levels are "safe". This can surely be done by reference to appropriate authorities with experience in this field. I have had some preliminary discussions with Dr. Gordon Smith and I shall make other enquiries. I think you may have seen the letter that Dr. McQuitty has sent to me dated 19th September and giving particulars of dust counts. This is all very much to the point.

I am sure that we will get some action before long. With kind regards and many thanks for your letter.

Yours sincerely,

H. Maynard Rennie
H. MAYNARD RENNIE.



(97)

DISTRICT HOSPITAL

KALGOORLIE.

JMcN:FG.

Date 2nd October, 1961.

Mr. H. A. Telfer,
Under Secretary,
Mines Department,
PERTH.

Dear Sir,

I feel that it is imperative that a meeting be held between the Management of Australian Blue Asbestos and representatives of the Mines and Public Health Departments. This could perhaps be arranged, if you are agreeable, for Tuesday, 10th October, when both Mr. Boyland and I will be in your Department. We have both visited Wittenoom and the most recent dust counts show that a serious health hazard exists.

Dr. Bruce Hunt has written me concerning a man dying in Perth Chest Hospital from a disease contracted at Wittenoom. I know the patient and confirm Dr. Hunt's diagnosis. I have many other men seriously affected by silicosis and asbestosis. One man has died of a cancer attributable to 2 years work in the Mill. Mr. Collard, General Secretary, Australian Workers' Union has also consulted me and expressed grave concern over working conditions. He stated that he intended to pursue the matter further.

It would appear that repeated advice and warnings about the health hazard from dust have been ineffective and that stronger action will have to be taken.

Yours faithfully,

J. McNulty
Dr. Letham:
Copy for your information.

J. McNulty
CHEST PHYSICIAN.

*I'd be pleased if you would discuss this
with Mr. Telfer.*
J.

