FILE NAME: Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR)

DATE: 1961 Nov 6

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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Letter to Wittenoom Manager from Mines Dept Stating the Dust Conditions there are a Serious Health Hazard to Workers & Aren't being Addressed

6th November, 1961.

The Manager,

Australian Blue Asbestos Pty. Ltd.,

WITTENOOM.

Dear Sir,

Inspections and tests made at your mine have proved that dust, prevalent in your Mining and Milling Sections threatens or tends to the bodily injury of persons in or about your mine.

This dust menace is also aggravated by dust arising from areas built up from Mill tailings.

Medical examinations of workers who either are employed or have been employed on your properties at Wittenoom have shown that a dangerous dust menace is present.

As you are aware, a party comprising myself, the District Inspector of Mines for Ventilation, and the District Inspector and the Workmen's Inspector of Mines for the West Pilbarra Goldfield have now between us completed inspections and examinations of your mine workings.

This party was brought by me to Wittenoom to examine the progress of your dust control projects; to obtain information of the present overall position, and to impress on you as Registered Manager and Senior Representative of Australian Blue Asbestos Pty. Ltd. at Wittenoom, the extremely serious and dangerous position which is present.

I have noted the work carried out by you and your departmental officers and appreciate that you have with apparently limited resources continued to attempt to control the dust menace.

Our examinations have shown that, notwithstanding your continuous work the dust menace has not declined, and therefore I must confirm my verbal requests as follows:

1. By virtue of Section 22 of the Mines Regulation Act No. 54 of 1946, I request that immediate and complete work and methods be undertaken and continued to eradicate the dust menace on and in your Mining Tenements in the Hamersley Ranges.

I must also refer you to Section 49 of the said Act which includes ".....he shall not use anything or work in a place that is unsafe or apparently unsafe".

If the request is not immediately and satisfactorily attended I will have no alternative other than to declare the mine and mill as unsafe.

2. The requirement of Regulation 150 of the Mines Regulation Act and Regulations must be fulfilled in it's entirety.

Referring to Sub-section 2 of this Regulation I now inform you that:

(a) Whilst the present method of underground Mining continues, air-water jets must be used at all times at all places where dust is generated. These places include all faces

(b) Similar jets must also be installed and used in the Milling Sections at all places where dust is escaping into the air and where the installation of same will not interfere with treatment.

Dust arising from tailings at the tailings bin, tailings dump, and all areas built up with mill tailings is a nuisance to persons employed on them and in their vicinity and detrimental to their health and such places must be constantly sprayed or sealed to effectively lay the dust.

3. Much dust is still escaping from the Mill sections and also from the Mill Dust control unit exhausts. This dust is polluting the atmosphere, re-entering the Mill buildings and entering the mine workings. It is apparent that the present operation of your dust control unit is inefficient or insufficient.

If work is not put in hand immediately to prevent all dust escaping into the atmosphere, I will be reluntantly compelled to take the necessary action to prevent men being exposed to unhealthy conditions.

I reiterate my offer of assistance in overcoming this dust menace and whilst refusing to become entangled in domestic matters, I must advise you that in my opinion the menace will not be eliminated whilst your present method of underground mining continues and until a completely new method of dust control and prevention is undertaken in the milling sections.

I will be maintaining close contact with the position and will not hesitate to take the necessary drastic action if progress is not quick and continuous.

Yours faithfully,

SENIOR INSPECTOR OF MINES.