

FILE NAME: Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR)

DATE: 1958 April 19

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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Govt Memo RE Dust Nuisance - Australian Blue Asbestos Ltd

The Senior Inspector of Mines,
KALGOORLIE.

Cue, 19th. April 1958.

re:- Dust Nuisance - Australian Blue Asbestos Ltd.

I have just returned from the northern mining areas and have read your letter of April 11th concerning the above matter.

It was apparent that you had misinterpreted the intended meaning of some of my comments made in my letter of April 3rd and after having re-read my earlier report, I can quite understand your attitude.

Firstly, with regard to my booking under another name I asked the agent if it was necessary for my name to appear. He said it was but that he could obtain a passage in my his name and then advise the aircrew of the alteration when I boarded. This was done and my name did appear on the manifest. My action in seeking this security was purely to satisfy the complainant that no prior knowledge of my visit should have been supplied through the airline-company agency.

Reference to the unsavoury aspect was prompted by the fact that the investigation required me to adopt somewhat of a C.I.B. attitude if I were to establish anything concrete. Past experience has convinced me that there was a lot of truth in the complaint that conditions were specially prepared when an investigation was pending. As you well know the persons in charge at Wittenoom are pleasant company but their actions, or lack of action, can only lead one to assume that by cordial discussions I will achieve nothing. Until the Roto-clone system was installed I could do nothing to achieve satisfactory mill conditions without drastically curtailing the rate of production. I now feel that because I did not hammer them about the plant previously - solely for the reason that I knew nothing worthwhile could be done - they have accepted me as easy meat.

When you are faced with the prospect that, despite the affable manner of the person who is guiding you through the plant, you can't be certain that he hasn't depatched a deputy to stage a pre-arranged hold-up, for the purpose of temporarily decreasing the mill throughput then the task is unsavoury. On each visit to the mill some of the unit were not operating. For each there was a plausible excuse for the hold up, but it didn't quite allay my fears that I was being given the three card trick. Reliable persons assured me that I did not see true conditions but it is difficult to accuse the management of purposely trying to mis-lead me. For that reason I adopted the line that, if they had window dressed the mill for my benefit, then I would turn the joke on them by insisting that they maintained the standard I saw.

When I first wrote to you it was not with the intention of trying to dodge the investigation. Reen requested in his letter to Inspector Hunt that his Union would appreciate an inspection by the Chief Inspector. I was not sure whether or not he meant Senior Inspector and as Inspector Faichney had been in attendance for the Board of Reference I decided to find out what you wanted done. All my mention to the management that I was carrying out an investigation on your instruction was not done with the idea of dumping the onus of responsibility.

The management at A.B.A. Ltd, are first class diplomats but am quite confident that I can handle anything which comes within my particular sphere of authority. On the occasion of my preliminary discussion I made it clear that a complaint had been lodged and that I had forwarded it to you in case you wished Inspector Faichney to handle the matter. As Inspector Faichney was on leave you instructed me to carry on with the investigation and I informed the manager that I intended to hear all sides of the story and endeavour to settle the problem with justice to all parties. There was no evidence of unpleasantness and I was quite open in all of my inquiries. I left Wittenoom with a feeling that some good would arise from my visit, however, when I revisited the mill last Tuesday, April 15th, I revised this opinion.

During the three weeks which had elapsed practically nothing had been attempted. The manager was quick to say that they had sent my suggestions to the Roto-clons manufacturers and had just received a reply to the effect that the ideas were sound and the modifications should be done. He said that work would commence immediately. When asked why a copy of my report was not posted he countered that they had posted a copy of my general report on the Colonial Mine but did not think it necessary to post the report on the mill. Instructions were issued while I was there to have the other report posted. It has been the custom to use the Wittenoom mine Record Book for matters relating to the mill and although the Wittenoom mine is closed I made the mill report in that book.

Without being challenged on the matter the manager gave me to understand that they had no intention of stalling me, but so far everything points that way. Personally, I am most annoyed about the lack of intelligent interest shown in the dust collection unit by the mill supervisors. They should be sufficiently interested and experienced to have done something about the matters raised by me without having an outsider come and stir them into action. The position now, is that I expect to visit the Wittenoom mine on or about May 13th and the management are committed to some definite action which should help to remedy matters before then. I do not forecast perfect conditions because the dust collection unit is incapable of removing all of the dust drawn into it; consequently, a lot of dust is discharged to the atmosphere and can return to the mill interior.

DISTRICT INSPECTOR OF MINES, CUE.