

FILE NAME: Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR)

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Addressing Medical Health Hazards of Asbestos at Wittenoom with
Specific Cases

DISTRICT HOSPITAL

KALGOORLIE.

JMcH:FG.

Date 25th October, 1961.

Dr. H. Maynard Rennie,
F.R.C.P. (Lond.) F.R.A.C.P.,
Macquarie Chambers,
183 Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY, N.S.W.

Dear Dr. Rennie,

Many thanks for your letter and for your interest in the health of workers employed by Australian Blue Asbestos. At a meeting in Perth recently, between representatives of the Company, and Mines and Public Health Department, we discussed the situation and it is to be hoped, that there is now a better appreciation of the seriousness of the consequences of dust in the mine and mill.

I was able to supply details of 34 men, seriously afflicted by a mixture of asbestosis and silicosis, whose disease could reasonably be attributed to Wittenoom. One of them is dead already and at least 3 are dying. There are also 22 men in whom there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that they are developing disease.

The man who died was aged 48 and worked about 2 years in the mill. Post mortem showed gross asbestosis and silicosis and a malignant cancer of the pleura directly attributable to his work in Wittenoom. I am seriously concerned that these cancers of the pleura which are being reported in large numbers from South Africa, are due to an individual susceptibility and minimal exposure to blue asbestos (Crocidolite). Crocidolite appears to cause lung cancers.

13 had less than 5 years mining.

3 " " " 6 " "

5 " " " 7 " "

2 " " " 8 " "

11 " about 10 or more years mining.

11	started mining in	1950
4	"	" " 1951
4	"	" " 1952
5	"	" " 1953
5	"	" " 1954
3	"	" " 1955
1	"	" " 1957

6 are aged less than 35 years.

11 men are aged less than 40

23 are less than 50 years of age.

14 were U/ground miners.

20 " Surface workers.

It might be argued that these are a product of the bad old days, but I would counter that by saying that these men represent the grossest of exposure to dust and that the real health hazards will not be realized for another 10 years, particularly the cancers.

These men are also the majority of workers who remained at Pittsboro for more than 5 years. A survey last year showed that over 70% of workers had been less than 2 1/2 years in the employment of the company.

The Company may resent my interference, but only moral pressure is being exerted and it is my wish that the situation be improved and controlled without adverse publicity.

Yours faithfully,

J. McAuliffe
CHIEF PHYSICIAN.