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H. MAYNARD RENNIE
[illegible]
TELEPHONE: BW 7711
(AFTER 4 P.M.) XL 2840

-1 AUG 1961

MACQUARIE CHAMBERS.
183 MACQUARIE STREET.
SYDNEY

31st July, 1961.

The Staff Manager,
Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd.
1. O'Connell Street,
SYDNEY. N.S.W.

Dear Mr. McAllister,

Further to my conversation with you last week I am now writing to convey to you detailed information concerning the Asbestos Mine at Wittenoom.

Dr. Bruce Hunt of Perth wrote to me on the 25th July, 1961 as follows.

"Concerning the Asbestos mine at Wittenoom. By arrangement Dr. McNulty, the Mines Medical Officer, whom I had never had the pleasure of meeting previously, and Dr. Don Lethem, the industrial disease expert in the public Health Department here, whom I know well and regard very highly, came to see me yesterday and we traversed the whole field. Before I go any further, I must ask you to be very careful about the way in which you utilise the story which I am about to tell you because Dr. McNulty and Dr. Lethem both make it very clear that the optimistic statement which Mr. Allen made to me regarding the incidence of "Dusting" at Wittenoom, which I quoted to you in my letter, does not convey an accurate picture. Lethem and McNulty both regard the working conditions at Wittenoom as very poor and state indeed that they constitute a public menace. They showed me a number of films taken during the routine survey of mine workers and had the clinical history of these men with them; Apparently it is quite possible to be so badly dusted as to be totally and permanently incapacitated within four or five years. Both doctors are of the opinion that very urgent action is required. It would obviously be much better from every point of view if the initiation of better ventilating measures came from within the Company than as the result of external pressure by Mines and Health Departments. As you know, in Western Australia at the present time we are endeavouring to boost our production in every possible way and a public outcry is not going to help to attract Western Australian mining capital to the State. It would also, I am sure, bring about very considerable difficulties for the Company in securing and maintaining an adequate labour force.

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On the other hand from what McNulty and Letham tell me action must definitely be taken. My suggestion would be that, if you can spare the time, the C.S.R. authorities should send you and a consultant ventilation engineer on a tour of inspection. We could make arrangements here so that on the day following your arrival McNulty and Letham, with their films and their case records, could be at your disposal for the day. You could fly to Wittenoom on the following morning, spend two or three days there, fly back to Perth and have another day with the two doctors and be back in Sydney inside a working week.

I do ask you to regard this request very seriously because both McNulty and Letham are competent men of good faith and the records and films which they showed me yesterday, and the figures which they quoted are quite horrifying."

I am enclosing a copy of a letter written to Dr. Bruce Hunt by Dr. J. McNulty dated 14th July, 1961.

I am enclosing also copies of the "recent reports" referred to by Dr. McNulty. These are:-

Memorandum to Dr. A. King, Director, Tuberculosis Control Branch, Perth, dated 13.1.60.

Addendum to Report on the Health of Workers in Wittenoom, 1959, dated 23rd March, 1960 signed by Dr. J. McNulty.

Wittenoom Chest X-Ray Survey of 1960. Signed by Dr. J. McNulty.

Dr. Bruce Hunt has asked for the return of these three documents and I shall be glad to receive them back from you in due course.

When you have perused these reports I shall be glad to discuss the matter further with you.

Kind regards,

Returned for McKOB on 31/8/61

Yours sincerely,

H. [illegible]

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