



THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

Telephone: 380 1122 Ex. 2578

Medical School Building,
The Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre,
Nedlands, W.A., 6009.

UNIT OF CLINICAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

21st November, 1980

Dr. D. J. O'Connor,
Environment and Occupational Health Division,
CSR Limited,
Box 483, G.P.O.
SYDNEY N.S.W. 2001

Dear Dr. O'Connor,

Thank you for your letter of 17th November. Dr. Armstrong and I were pleased to have the chance of meeting with you and Dr. Douglas last week.

With regard to the points raised in your letter, I understand Dr. Armstrong has already written to you with a suggested Research Assistant for the Cottesloe records. We will initially also send our own staff down to give some guidance of what would be of importance from the point of view of future research. Dr. Armstrong will also be writing to you shortly (he will be in the Eastern States for the next fortnight) with a specific proposal for the projection of future mortality.

We will start work on the listing of previous ABA and CSR employees and should be able to let you have this in the desired format in two to three weeks.

With regard to further work, we would, as we indicated, be greatly assisted by further short term support to enable our present Research Officer, whose funds will expire at the end of December, to complete and document certain aspects of the follow-up study.

To the present CSR has provided us with a total sum of \$60,000 spread over the years 1974 to 1980. The work achieved with this support is as follows:

1. The creation of a computer based record for all known ABA and CSR staff believed to have worked at Wittenoom, containing dates of employment, total period of employment, occupation at Wittenoom as stated on the ABA registration cards, date of birth and country of birth. This has been compiled by abstraction of data from several sources -
 - the ABA employment cards
 - CSR employment records

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- State Government Insurance Office and Pneumoconiosis Board records
- Hospital records

Our discovery of the Mine Workers' Relief Fund records was made only this year, and has provided important information relating to the workforce prior to 1956, adding 791 new records to the 6,793 known from Company and Chest Clinic records.

2. Ascertainment of asbestos related diseases and causes of death in the above by matching the roll against -
 - death registrations in Western Australia, New South Wales and South Australia from each worker's date of discharge to 31st December 1977 (current in Western Australia)
 - the Pneumoconiosis Board of Western Australia and SGIO records
 - hospital records for the main hospitals in Western Australia
 - Cancer Registries in WA, NSW, SA and Victoria.
3. Determination of the vital status and present residence of previous workers by matching the roll against -
 - Commonwealth Electoral Records in all States as at April - June, 1978
 - Motor Vehicle Drivers Licences in WA, NSW and SA.
 - Overseas Arrival and Departure cards from consolidated microfiche and the Citizenship Register in the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (with special Ministerial approval)
 - Medibank records (still in progress)
 - Death registrations as under (2).

From the above we have been able to account for approximately 80% of the workforce as deceased or living in Australia in the recent past. Analysis of data relating to the incidence of mesothelioma to 30th June 1979 and the incidence of other respiratory cancer and mortality to 31st December 1977 has been documented in the paper prepared for the Conference on Biological Effects of Mineral and Man-made Fibres held by IARC in September 1979, currently in press. At an appropriate interval we intend to re-analyse the experience of the cohort in relation to the above. The cut-off date for this will be decided on the basis of the experience of the Western Australian residents and when we have information about the proposed Mesothelioma and National Death Registries. When this has been decided we will need to seek support for searches of the various Registries in other States. In the meantime we are continuing to monitor the known Western Australian residents as part of the NH & MRC study of the interaction of smoking and asbestos exposure.

C 3789

At present however, our immediate requirement is for support to enable our present research officer to complete, document and update the computer roll with the new information from the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, to resolve uncertainties about the identity of some men

have not yet been able to positively link with these, and to bring up to date information relating to non-respiratory cancers. He would in addition provide guidance and supervision for the archiving of Company records at Cottesloe. It is estimated that this could be achieved in six months. The salary requirement for this would be \$7,500.

I would be grateful if CSR Limited would provide the further support. If you think this likely, it would be extremely helpful if we could know the answer shortly, as the present funds will be exhausted by 31st December, and the staff member concerned will obviously be seeking further employment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Hobbs".

MICHAEL HOBBS,
Associate Professor,
Social and Preventive Medicine.