



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Makin Electorate: Asbestos

SPEECH

Monday, 22 November 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Zappia, Tony, MP

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Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (10.38 am)—On Friday, 26 November, I will be attending the annual memorial service for victims of asbestos related disease. It is held each year at Pitman Park in Salisbury, where the Asbestos Victims Association of South Australia has established a permanent memorial to asbestos victims. The Asbestos Victims Association of South Australia is a voluntary, not-for-profit advocacy group established to provide any kind of assistance it can to individuals and families who have become in some way victims of asbestos related illness. A white wooden cross for each asbestos victim known to the association is placed adjacent to the memorial on the day. Sadly, each year the number of crosses increases.

Public recognition of the extent and seriousness of asbestos related issues and the obligations of those who knew of its dangers reached a peak when the late Bernie Banton became the face and voice of the national asbestos campaign. I met Bernie when he attended and addressed the Salisbury service—I believe in 2006. He was an inspiration to all asbestos victims around Australia and a tireless campaigner for asbestos victims. Since Bernie's passing, the campaign for justice and support for asbestos victims has continued. Only three weeks ago I attended the Pooraka Neighbourhood Watch monthly meeting. Terry Miller, president of the AVA in South Australia, was the guest speaker on the night and provided an excellent presentation on the topic of asbestos.

I note that last week a motion was moved in this place by the member for Reid on this very issue, and I congratulate him for that. I also note that asbestosis and mesothelioma are insidious diseases for which there is no cure. The authorities and those who produced asbestos were warned of its health risk over 100 years ago yet continued using the product for decades with no concern for human life. Not only should they be paying compensation, but those responsible should have been charged with industrial manslaughter.

It is expected that, even though the use of asbestos products has been banned for some time, we can expect to see the number of asbestos victims continue to rise. It is estimated that by 2020 around 54,000 Australians will be affected by an asbestos related illness. Sadly, the number of deaths related to the September 11 terrorist attack on the twin towers continues to grow because the clouds of dust caused by the destruction of the buildings were full of asbestos dust which subsequently infected many of the rescuers or others in the vicinity.

The campaign related to asbestos being run by the Asbestos Victims Association and its counterparts around Australia highlights more than just asbestos issues; it is a salutary reminder that human life can be of so little value to those driven by greed, and that mindset is still widespread in the world today. I commend the team led by Terry Miller, Kat Burge, Pam Sandys and Tony Henstridge for the work that they are doing in South Australia in trying to change the laws relating to asbestos.