



## “The Victim is our Priority”

Patron:

His Excellency

The Honourable Hieu Van Le AC

Governor of South Australia



### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - Winter 2019

The Doorways2Construction [D2C] training program on asbestos awareness for construction apprentices continues to be in demand, with our trainers travelling widely to deliver the training.

Recently ADSSA also provided a training session on asbestos awareness for several interested people, including the Greek Consul-General, George Psiachas (pictured) as well as the ADSSA Committee and partners, Jim and Dora Koutrokois and SBS radio presenter, Norma Henessy. Those who attended found the information enlightening and thorough.



ADSSA has been invited to the Asbestos Support Group Network (ASGN) Media Forum organised by ASEA on 8 August.

**The ADSSA Memorial Day** for 2019 to commemorate victims of asbestos diseases will be held on Friday **November 29 at 7.30am** at the Jack Watkins Memorial Reserve, 414 Churchill Rd, Kilburn - (bus stop 19).

Remember, a special memorial paver can be engraved for your loved one, to be placed in the Memorial Walkway. For information visit the ADSSA website at [www.adssa.org.au](http://www.adssa.org.au), where there is a link to the Memorial Pavers. Or call us on 1800 157 540.

### Peter Photakis – President

#### From the Social Worker

It is Friday 12.7.19 as I sit here on my lap-top writing this segment, looking out onto the most miserable day. It is not overly inspiring. I loathe winter with a passion, but my farming roots on Yorke Peninsula always remind me that we need the rain. Why can't it rain at night?!

I was inspired recently by the TV show Anh's Brush with Fame. Anh interviewed a Professor Gordian Fulde, who is an Australian emergency medicine specialist. He was the emergency department director at Sydney's St Vincent Hospital for more than 30 years before retiring last year. At the end of the interview when Anh asked him about what was really important to him, he had a simple, poignant message which I am paraphrasing slightly - “be kind and compassionate to one another - say hello and please and thank you to your fellow man”.

‘Social workers are active in caring about, caring for, and caring with the world in which they live and work. Given the ubiquity of concepts of care, in some form, in every area of human interaction, this is a complex and contested but critical area of social work endeavour’ (Working Across Borders: Care and Caring in a Complex World from the Guest Editorial in The Journal of the Australian Association of Social Workers July 2019, Pam Joseph, Sydney School of Education and Social Work).

In this newsletter I want to write about some of the clients I have seen in the last week, to give you ‘a window’ into the richness and diversity of the ADSSA’s cohort and how the concept of care underpins the social worker’s role at ADSSA.

- I have spent an intense amount of time in the past 2 months with an 83-year-old man who had mesothelioma. He was a colourful character and ‘danced to his own tune’. He died on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July. He spent the last month of his life in hospital. For the first 2 weeks he put up ‘the good fight’. One night he asked me to bring him a slab of beer! I don’t think security at the hospital would have approved! He became reconciled to death in his final 2 weeks. In the time I knew him, I liaised with friends, family, neighbours, community services and staff at the hospital, praying he would not be moved from the hospital, when it became obvious, he was terminal. I visited him 2 nights before he died. He knew me. I will remember him fondly.
- On Tuesday I met a 65-year-old lady who has mesothelioma, who had flown in from a regional centre for her Oncology appointment. She does ‘not want to poke a bear with a stick’(her words) and commence any chemotherapy at this stage, but is willing to keep her options open. She is planning a ‘road trip’ soon, in her mobile home on her own! Her daughter, who accompanied her on this occasion, said she will make sure Mum is in range! My client spent quite a lot of time talking about the lack of care she received in her family when she was growing up, and how IMPORTANT it is for her now, to create a strong sense of family with her daughter and grandchildren, with whom she lives. She has chosen only to tell the eldest grandchild about her diagnosis at this stage. This client is strong willed and will do things in her own way. We mainly communicate by text, which suits her. I will hopefully see her again in November.
- On Thursday I saw a client who I have visited regularly for 13 years. Her husband died of asbestosis in 2006. She has NO family in this country, English is her 2<sup>nd</sup> language, she has not had children. She is lonely and isolated. This morning I have written her support letter for the Department of Home Affairs, which she requires for the application process, in order to have her sister visit her in Australia for an extended length of time. We all know how critical family support is for our health, psychological well-being and our quality of life. It is quite simply a ‘lifeline’ for my client, when the approval is granted. My client is the eldest of 10 children and I know she won’t mind me saying, her mother is 100. The care factor is literally palpable when you hear her talk about her siblings. I am keeping my fingers crossed that Home Affairs will look upon the application favourably, as they have done in the past.
- Tomorrow I drive to Pt Pirie to visit a 71-year client who has mesothelioma. I have known this lady for several years, but have not visited her for 14 months. She is always bright and positive when I speak to her on the phone. I KNOW she has the undivided support and care of her husband, children and grandchildren, not to mention extended family, and no doubt friends. It is important that our regional clients do not miss out on an occasional home visit.

It remains absolutely bleak outside, as I wrap up this newsletter. I am about to apply some self-care: make a cup of tea, light my beloved wood-fire and organise some foreign currency for my O/S trip in mid- August to Croatia. Now I think that is a healthy dollop of self-care!

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