



“The Victim is our Priority”

Patron:
His Excellency
The Honourable Hieu Van Le AC
Governor of South Australia



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT – Autumn 2021

The last few months have been interesting, with many proposed Asbestos related events either being postponed or cancelled due to COVID. This was further compounded by much of the funding that was available for asbestos related activities being reduced or cancelled.

Fortunately, we still have organisations like the CITB (Construction Industry Training Board), supporting the delivery of asbestos related programs so we would like to take the time to say a big thank you to all of our current supporters.

The Media has also kept me busy by requesting interviews regarding the state of sponsorships and grants for asbestos related support, which includes Asbestos training for High School VET students entering the Construction Industry. The Advertiser published an article about the current availability of grants and two of the local Radio Stations, ABC Radio (891) and FIVEaa, interviewed myself and Penny Jacomos (ADSSA's social worker) regarding this matter. A big focus was on how ADSSA was going to be able to maintain the ability to keep helping South Australians with Asbestos related services. We shared that we would be discussing this further with the ADSSA Board and exploring all avenues. Blair Boyer was also asked for his comments on the situation.

Since the media alerted the public to our plight, it has been pleasing to receive many phone calls supporting ADSSA for future possible sponsorship. We also acknowledge that we are not the only group in the community that have had their grants and funding cut.

There are over 500 schools in South Australia that have been identified with major asbestos materials in their buildings. I have had talks with the Australian Education Union (SA Branch) regarding the removal of asbestos in schools, and the union is taking up the matter with the Government to begin removing asbestos for the safety of the teachers and students who are at risk. Schools built before 1990 have asbestos in their buildings.

We at ADSSA, believe educating and training teachers and students in schools about Asbestos Awareness, (not to be confused with Doorways 2 Construction), is also extremely important. We would like to keep our Asbestos Awareness and Silicosis training programs happening in the education system in the future, but there is a great deal of uncertainty because the SA Department for Education is no longer funding ADSSA, which is very disappointing.

ADSSA's fully qualified Social Worker, Penny Jacomos and I have received many phone calls regarding asbestos related issues. Penny has extensive experience in supporting people dealing with asbestos related diseases and she writes about her work in her reports, which are included in every ADSSA newsletter. ADSSA will continue supporting Asbestos Victims and their families and we firmly stand by our mission statement that, “The Victim Is Our Priority”.

Penny and I attended the annual International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD) on Wednesday 28 April. We are also invited to attend the funerals of Asbestos Victims across the State, which is our honour, and we will continue to support our families in this way.

I wish to acknowledge the dedication and hard work that Penny does. I'd also like to acknowledge my very supportive and dedicated ADSSA Board who are always ready to help and volunteer their support whenever the need arises.

We at ADSSA, are still working from home in the current climate but I go to the office at least once a week, to check the ADSSA office and to tend to tasks.

While I am the President of ADSSA, I will ensure that I lead ADSSA through these challenging times. I am sending my sincerest thanks to everyone who has supported ADSSA thus far and we will endeavour to keep it going in the future. I believe that ADSSA is very much an important part of South Australia and the community. If anyone in the community has any contacts that ADSSA can approach for sponsorship, please contact me.

Many thanks

Peter M Photakis

President of ADSSA

Mobile phone: 0408020633

Email: photakis@internode.on.net



Maddie, Pandora and Ryan at the International Workers Memorial Day 2021

From the Social Worker

I attended the International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD) in the city at Pilgrim Uniting Church on Wednesday 28.4.21. It takes place annually around the world on April 28th, an international day of remembrance and action for workers, killed, disabled, injured, or made unwell by their work. Four of my clients sent a photo of their loved one, to have a candle made and lit, as well as their name and photo to go on the video roll- call screen. It is always a sobering, beautiful service, convened by Andrea Madeley and her band of helpers. We agreed at the luncheon afterwards that we need to be in touch with one another months before the service in 2022, to prevent the usual 'mad dash' of contacting clients, who wish to be acknowledged on the day, with candles and photo.

One of my client's lost her husband in December 2020 to mesothelioma. She is 61. She attended IWMD with one of her sons, and his partner. I was able to introduce this new widow to Tracy (I am sure she won't mind me mentioning her name) who always attends the service. Tracy became a widow when she was 49, 8 years ago! Their daughter was 9 when her father died. I have watched their daughter grow up over this time. She now has her Learners or Ps and is in Year 12!! One of the benefits of staying at the same job for a long time, is that it allows for the creation of strong and long-lasting relationships- with both clients, your colleagues, and others. An 89-year-old widow, who I have known for MANY years, only said to me the other day, "Now don't fall over, but I will be 90 in July!" Again, on the other end of the spectrum, I have 'been there for the ride', with Roma (again, I know she would not mind me using her Christian name).

Today I have written a letter of support to the Housing Trust for a 74-year-old client who has mesothelioma. He needs to be transferred to a ground level dwelling, in proximity to the QEH where he is having his treatment. He is currently sleeping in the downstairs area - dining/kitchen/lounge combined - because he cannot negotiate the stairs. It is just less than ideal. Cooking smells whilst he sleeps is not on! He is in pain, losing weight and becoming frailer. We all need our sacred space - the bedroom - vital to his well-being and privacy, on what will be a difficult 'road' ahead. I have already had 2 responses from the HSA (Housing Trust) late this afternoon, which is very refreshing. Fingers crossed my client will be offered a suitable property ASAP!

Late this afternoon I had a call from the wife, of a recently diagnosed 75-year-old man with mesothelioma. We spoke for 51 minutes. She wanted to give me an update on their situation and just TALK. It is important to let people talk, to tell their story and to never feel dismissed, hurried or feel like a number. Her husband's Oncology appointment was brought forward almost a fortnight, after him feeling unwell. He commences chemotherapy on 11 May. She said that he cannot wait. His wife then went on to talk about her approach to life, and it was all about living in the moment and being grateful. She knows her husband's prognosis is not good. I cannot change this, but I can be on the end of the phone and give her uninterrupted, unhurried time.

Earlier on in the day I had read an article by the wonderful actor Anthony Hopkins who had been recently interviewed about his life and what happiness means to him. Below are just a few snippets from this interview (*Anthony Hopkins Expects Nothing and Accepts Everything. 27 April 2021*). The whole article can be found online.

"You can't live on a high all the time. You have to live with reality: that life is a battle. Life is painful for everyone, because we're born and then we suffer grief and loss and finally we have to say goodbye to it all".

"The irredeemable past—the past we can never access. We can never go back. The sadness of life is that we go on—we're born in this world, and at the end we leave, and you think, 'What was that all about?' My life... at the end of it. You play the game of life upon life itself. But there's finally nothing to win, nothing to prove, nothing to nothing to lose, no sweat, no big deal. And that's my philosophy. Ask nothing, expect nothing and accept everything. That's it".

"I say, just hang on, just keep going. Just do what's in front of you, try to do the best you can".

The interviewer asked Anthony what did happiness feel like?

"Oh, I don't know. Just a sense of contentment. I'm not jumping up down all the time, but I just mosey through the day and do my painting and play piano. And I get peace when I read. Happiness is a kind of misleading word. You know if I ask, you know, 'what is happiness?' Jumping up and down? Well, that's kind of insanity. Nobody's like that. We have degrees of uplift, and degrees of sadness, because your

life is, it's sad and it's also wonderful, because we lose people, we suffer grief. And so, to me, it's just being content with what's right now..."

I finally want to send out a big hello and speedy recovery to four of my clients/widows who have had a fall in the past month. One of the women even sent me a photo of herself with a caption: cement and me don't mix!

Penny Jacomos, B.A.Soc.Wk.,MA(SS), Social Worker

Please feel free to contact me anytime on my mobile: 0412701630 or email me on: pjacomos@hotmail.com

ADSSA is proudly supported by:



Address: 77C Gibson St, Bowden, SA 5007 **Postal:** PO Box 220, Brompton, SA 5007 **ABN:** 84 368 440 949
Telephone: 08 8241 7297 (24/7) **Freecall:** 1800 157 540 **Website:** www.adssa.org.au **Email:** admin@adssa.org.au