



## “The Victim is our Priority”



### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Spring 2021

In the last few months, through ADSSA, we have continued to educate and instruct in Asbestos Awareness and Silicosis Awareness. In 2022, we will introduce Hazardous Chemicals Awareness to Vet Doorways 2 Construction (D2C) students through the education system. Covid has had an effect on many schools, which in turn has impacted the D2C programs. Many of the country schools have students wanting to attend training and D2C programs will restart in 2022 if all goes well.

I met with the CEO of CITB, Andrew Fullgrabe, to discuss the future of the D2C programs for 2022, and there may be a few changes, depending on the State Election. I feel confident that the D2C Education and Training programs will continue, and we are fortunate to have Derek Mart, as our ADSSA education trainer and board member. Derek and I have also attended the CITB conference for RTOs and GTOs on 14 October and we had the opportunity to provide input into the 2022 short programs.

I have continued to work from home and go to the ADSSA office when required. The ADSSA board meets every month at Cowandilla Primary school, and I would like to thank the school, through Tina, for allowing us the use of the meeting room.

I have requested to the Council of Port Adelaide and Enfield to build a shelter at Jack Watkins Park to make a permanent under cover venue. It will make it easy and safe for us to hold our Memorial Days and BBQ days at the park, in future. This year, as a Board, we will be at the Jack Watkins Park on 26 November at 10.30 am for a short visit to remember the Asbestos Victims and their families. The last week in November is Asbestos Awareness Week, which the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (ASEA) is supporting. ADSSA has a very strong relationship with Cr Carol Martin OAM JP, and we are very grateful for her support of a display about Asbestos Awareness in the Port Adelaide Enfield Council Library.

At the last ADSSA board meeting, our social worker, Penny Jacomos organised Sue Hollitt as a guest speaker to share her husband Warren's story. Warren was only 62 when he died on 7 January with mesothelioma, close to 2 years ago. It was very moving to hear from Sue about the experience of caring for and living with a spouse with mesothelioma. We were very thankful to Sue for coming to the meeting and to Penny for providing wonderful support to our ADSSA clients, who become part of the ADSSA family. We have sadly lost many Asbestos victims this year and would like to remind the wider community that we are here to offer support.

We wish everyone, especially our ADSSA supporters, a wonderful rest of the year and please stay safe.

Many thanks

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Sue Hollitt, Peter Photakis, Penny Jacomos

## From the Social Worker

It feels strange writing my final newsletter in the middle of October, but as it is a seasonal newsletter, that's how it goes! I can't bear to talk about Covid, so I won't! I prefer to talk about my clients, which keeps the issue of asbestos related diseases alive and the impact it has on the family. Firstly, I want to thank Sue Hollitt for being a guest speaker at our September Board meeting, sharing with us what it was like caring for her husband Warren. Warren was only 62 when he died on January 7<sup>th</sup> with mesothelioma, 2 years ago this January. There is nothing more powerful than hearing real life stories. As I have always said, "I have always learnt more from my clients, than they will ever learn from me".

On September 9<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, I visited 41-year-old client who has peritoneal mesothelioma. Amanda was diagnosed 6 years ago. Amanda was born with a physical and intellectual disability and has always been cared for by her parents. Recently, she has taken a dive with her health, and spent weeks in FMC and at VITA (2months all up)- a rehabilitation centre on the grounds of the Repat. One of the first things Amanda's mother said to me that night was, "Why don't you write something about Amanda in the next newsletter"! Now, I know this family very well and Vivien will throttle me if I don't write about Amanda in this newsletter! I have shown my segment to Vivien and her husband, to check that they were happy with what I have written.

Amanda has just entered the 7<sup>th</sup> year of her diagnosis. As I said, Amanda has a physical and intellectual disability, and probably lost count of the number of procedures and hospital admissions she has had over her lifetime. I certainly have. Her mother tells me she spent the first 5 years of her life in the W&CH. Her parents describe her as their "miracle child". Amanda is loved by all her health professionals. She lives in constant pain. At present, following this recent acute admission to FMC, she has become more debilitated and dependent. The amazing thing about Amanda, is that she NEVER complains. She is always bright, and

the first thing she always says to me is, "How are you"? She then makes me a cup of tea which is always perfect. Sweet biscuits are now banned in this household!!

It has not been easy for Amanda's parents over the years - they have endured possibly more than the average family re: housing/financial/family/illness stress - far too much to write about in this newsletter- but their SOLE purpose is to care for Amanda at home - no matter what.

This recent admission has really set Amanda back, but no doubt her parents Vivien and Alex, will rise to the occasion, like they have a thousand times before. I don't know how they do it. Vivien will not mind me saying she is always stressed, and Alex is always as 'cool as a cucumber'! I visited them Saturday afternoon, 9.10.21, to find Amanda sitting up in the lounge, forever bright and uncomplaining, keen to tell me about her trip with her carer to the Pancake Kitchen at Morphett Vale, in an Access Cab, in her new electric wheelchair. Amanda needs carers most days of the week now. Amanda loves an outing. We can all be inspired by this girl. It is a struggle....

I wonder what 2022 has in store for us all? Not good to get too far ahead of ourselves, in these uncertain, challenging times. It is too early to be sending out festive messages, so I will wrap up as I normally do with something inspirational - this time from Ernest Shackleton, the great polar explorer from 1914. I read his book several years ago and saw a documentary a few nights ago. "Optimism is true moral courage". "By endurance we conquer".

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

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