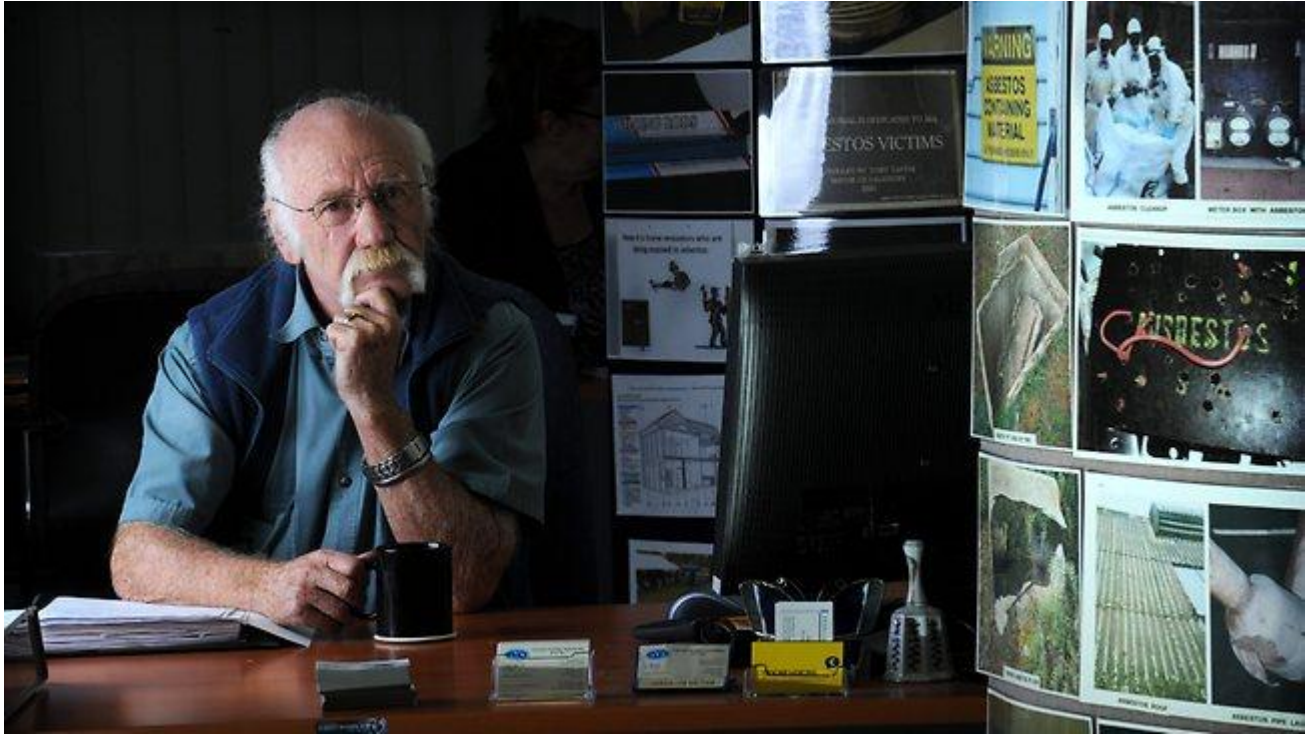


Enthusiasts warned over health dangers of asbestos



Asbestos Victims Association president Terry Miller wants young homeowners to play it safe. Picture: MARK BRAKE *Source: The Advertiser*

THE next wave of asbestos victims will be homeowners doing their own renovations, a support group say.

Asbestos Victims Association president and asbestosis sufferer, Terry Miller, said many homeowners embarking on DIY renovations may not realise they have asbestos in their homes.

"A lot of them don't know about asbestos or they think it won't happen to them, but it might," he said.

"It's not so much the fibres you can see, it's the fibres you can't see that you are breathing in."

Housing Industry Association SA executive director Robert Harding said all homeowners should check for asbestos before embarking on home improvements.

"A lot of people aren't aware of the dangers of asbestos, or the fact that it can have a devastating effect on whoever is in the vicinity, whether it be workers or family or neighbours," Mr Harding said.

Mr Miller said about two out of every three homes built between 1940-80 "had asbestos in them somewhere" and the problems caused by breathing in asbestos fibres may have no effect for many years.

"It's a worry because the latency period could be anywhere from 10-50 years," he said.

He said renovators should get an expert to check if asbestos was present in the home and to have it safely and properly removed.

"How are you going to feel in 20 years' time when your child, who was in the house while you were doing renovations, has an asbestos related problem? There is certainly no safe level of asbestos," he said.

He said asbestos was used in more than 3000 products - from lino and tile floorings and bathrooms and wet areas to fire retardant racing driver hoods.

Asbestos was known as the "miracle fibre" because it could be woven, bent or shaped into many things.

Mr Miller said the Asbestos Victim Support group has about 400 members with a variety of asbestos-related conditions. Each year it loses about 15 to 20 members.

"We would like to see asbestos all gone, but it's probably a bit of a pipe dream in my lifetime because you can't dismantle all of the buildings and factories," he said.