



## newsletter

Summer 2023/24



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### In this issue :

⇒ 20 years of total  
asbestos ban in  
Australia

⇒ Silica  
(engineered  
stone )

⇒ Bunnings Trade  
Show 2023

⇒ AVA Memorial  
Day 2023



On 31 December 2003, a complete ban on all forms of asbestos was introduced in Australia, which had been one of the highest per capita consumers of asbestos in the world.

But the 2003 ban is only part of an unfinished story because it did not extend to asbestos materials already in place. Asbestos still exists in millions of buildings and structures across Australia. It is estimated that around 6.2 million tonnes of asbestos materials remain in our built environment, and that asbestos is in 1 in 3 homes.

As we reflect on 20 years of tackling the deadly legacy of asbestos, we also turn our thoughts to the future and how we can energise our efforts to rid our community of asbestos forever.

There is so much left to remove, and so many reasons to make this a priority.

A commemoration was held in Federal Parliament to acknowledge that 20 years has passed since asbestos was banned in Australia.

AVA representative Brendan Shears was in Canberra for the occasion.



### Twenty years since asbestos was banned in Australia. Now is the time for the Federal Government to ban silica.

Asbestos has been completely banned in Australia since December 2003.

Importing or exporting asbestos or goods containing asbestos is prohibited under Australian law, except in very limited circumstances where permission to import and/or export can be granted.

Despite the ban we are still living with legacy asbestos. Asbestos disease causes 4000+ deaths per year.



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Brendan Shears

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Catherine Wegener

**Whyalla Support Group**  
Marlene Arthur

Now deaths from silicosis are rising. Engineered stone has become the fashion for kitchen benchtops but when cut, the material releases a fine silica dust that can harm the lungs when inhaled. Silicosis is an awful disease. It has a faster disease progression compared to asbestos disease and has a higher chance of death.

AVA was informed recently of a tradie in his 30s who was in the RAH waiting for a double lung transplant. It was his only hope of long-term survival.

Bunnings has announced it will stop selling engineered stone by the end of the year following the Safe Work Australia recommendation that a complete ban is the only option.

The manufacturers of AESAG, Caesarstone, Quantum Quartz, Stone Ambassador and Smartstone have placed advertisements saying that engineered stone is safe in homes and the ban should only apply to stone with a silica content of 40% or higher. We accept that engineered stone is safe in people's homes (provided they don't try to cut it) but workers are paying too high a price for fashion.

AVA joins with the CFMEU in calling on National Workplace Relations Minister Tony Burke for a complete ban on silica products



## Bunnings Trade and Kapunda shows

AVA recently attended the Adelaide Bunnings trade show and the 2023 Kapunda Show to promote Asbestos Awareness

At the Adelaide Bunnings trade show we had many great conversations with tradies who attended the event. The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (ASEA) was also present at the event, represented by Matt Werfel from ASEA. The event was a great opportunity to raise awareness about asbestos safety and silica dust among tradespeople.

Asbestos is still a big problem in rural SA. There are numerous old sheds on properties and houses left ready to be demolished. We travelled out to the country to Kapunda for the 2023 Kapunda show.

People at the show had questions about how to identify asbestos and how to get a sample tested



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## AVA MEMORIAL SERVICE (SALISBURY)

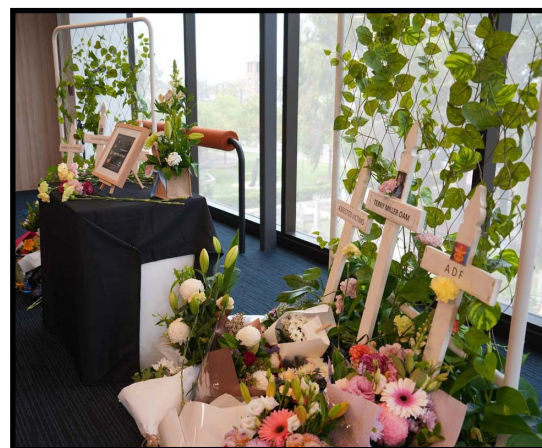


For the first time in many years, the weather did not cooperate during National Asbestos Week which meant we were unable to hold the service in Civic Park Salisbury.

The Little Para Room in the Salisbury Community Hub was set out for the ceremony with ample seating for those attending. We appreciated the presence of the politicians, union members, SafeWork SA representatives and others who joined family members in honouring those we have lost to asbestos related disease.

We especially thank Cliffy Wilson for the Acknowledgement of Country in Kurna language, Jarrad Gilliam for the opening prayer, and our speakers the Hon Rhiannan Crouch MP, Annie Hoffman from Turner Freeman and Alix Farrall, Research Officer, Flinders Medical Centre.

Annie Hoffman recalled the early days of AVA in Whyalla and the individuals who fought for a fairer system for people wanting to make a claim in respect of their condition.



Alix Farrall spoke of the research taking place at Flinders. It gives hope and encouragement to those who are struggling with an asbestos illness.

There was an opportunity to lay flowers in remembrance. These floral tributes were later taken to a local nursing home for residents' enjoyment. Following the service, a morning tea was provided by the council.



A big Thank You! to Salisbury Council who helped us organize the last-minute venue change.

Sadly the indoor location meant the Pipes & Drums of the Royal Caledonian Society of SA were unable to perform and the individual crosses were not displayed.

## AVA MEMORIAL SERVICE (WHYALLA)



The Whyalla Asbestos Victims Association held their annual memorial to remember all of those that have died as a result of asbestos exposure.

It was an especially moving day with the death this year of John Arthur.

John led the Whyalla group and, with his wife Marlene, worked for the asbestos cause for twenty years.

Marlene and a close knit group of volunteers continue to provide support to those affected by asbestos disease.

We will be making changes in 2024 – we will be coming to you! Rather than inviting you to our office in the city, we will meet at different venues outside the city. Tracy Dietrich, our new Care Coordinator, will be hosting and hopes to talk to some of our members about the new services AVA is now able to offer. Please contact us if you would like Tracy to visit your area.



## 2024 UPCOMING EVENTS

ASBESTOS 2024 Conference - 4-6 March 2024  
Master Builders Home Show - 5-7 July 2024



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