

## **Background**

The Herald Sun Home Renovation show is an annual event held in the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. Over four days up to 40,000 people visit the Show. Figures from the 2011 Show indicated that 85% of people who attended the Show planned a building or renovation project. This year Asbestoswise invested in a stall at the Show aimed at raising awareness of asbestos in homes and the dangers of contracting an asbestos related disease.

## **The Asbestos Wise Stall**

The Asbestos wise stall was in a prominent position and at least two volunteers or staff were in attendance throughout the opening hours of the show. Volunteers came from Asbestos wise staff, members and supporting legal firms.

The stall had a simple layout with photos of common areas where you find asbestos in most houses on one wall, examples of safety equipment needed on another wall and details of asbestos removalists and official tip sites on the third wall. People who visited the stall were asked to complete a five minute survey. The survey had a dual purpose. One was to provide data on the awareness of risk amongst prospective home renovators and the other was to educate them about this risk and what they needed to do to avoid exposure.

## **Holding Conversations with Home Renovators**

Over the course of the four days and two evenings it is estimated that between 1300 and 1500 people visited the stall, examined what was on display and held conversations with us. Nearly all of these people were actually planning a renovation in the near future.

The advice given to people was to identify where asbestos might be found and if they were renovating that area then to seek professional advice. If asbestos had to be removed then we advised they use a qualified removalist. Those people who indicated that they were going to carry out the job themselves were shown the kind of safety equipment needed. They were directed to the GARDS home removal tutorial, instructed on P2 and the Asbestos approved equipment needed to do this and also directed to EPA landfill sites that can accept asbestos products.

## **Survey Results**

The survey was completed by 203 people, 49% were male and 51% female. Asked when their house was built 77.8 % indicated that this was before 1985 and 82% before 1991. In other words four out of five of those lived in houses where the likelihood of finding asbestos products was reasonably high. Asked if they thought there would be asbestos in their home, 43% thought there would be, but 31 % said they did not know.



Just over half of those surveyed had previously carried out renovations. 30% indicated that that they had come across asbestos and 22 % did not know. The majority of those surveyed (84.7%) were likely to renovate in the future. This matches the figures published by the Home Show last year.

One of the more significant figures in the survey is that 59% of those surveyed would do some of the work themselves and they would be at risk. Asked how likely they were to come across asbestos 60 % thought it was likely. Asked about how dangerous asbestos was in the home 68% indicated it was very dangerous, 23% somewhat dangerous and 9% not dangerous.

The majority of indicated that they would take precautions when handling asbestos or coming across it. This may have been influenced that a safety kit was on prominent display at the Asbestos wise stand. Asked where they would go for advice if their home contained asbestos the majority would have asked a builder or professional contractor. Only 28% indicated that they would approach their local council.

#### **What we have learnt**

Home Renovation shows are an excellent way of meeting a targeted audience to raise awareness of the risks involved in encountering asbestos when renovating. Our first experience is that enough people will stop by for advice and information to make it worthwhile. Asbestos wise was able to refer to its web page for information and advice afterwards and this is critically important. We will monitor visits to the web page.

Our survey would seem to indicate that significant numbers of people don't know whether there are asbestos products in the home and many will attempt to renovate themselves. A public awareness tv and media campaign is still the main priority. In the interim asbestos support groups who wish to raise awareness themselves may find this kind of initiative a useful model.

An interesting illustration of a State Government agency not coming to grips with the need to raise awareness was provided by Consumer Affairs Victoria who had an impressive stand at the show. A 68 page booklet which gave a checklist for consumers building and renovating makes no mention of asbestos in the home. Asbestoswise would look towards the Asbestos Management Review recommendations bringing an end to Government Departments and agencies not taking responsibility for the necessary education and awareness around asbestos risk in the home, community and workplace.



## Advocacy, Education and Awareness

Asbestoswise advocates on behalf of those with ARD and also advocates for the safe removal of asbestos from the home, workplace and community. We support the aim of making Australia Asbestos free by 2030 and the creation of a national authority to achieve this.

We promote education and awareness activities that make people at risk aware of the continuing dangers of breathing asbestos fibres in the atmosphere.

## Membership and Donations

You can become a member of Asbestoswise.

You will receive a quarterly newsletter and will be entitled to participate in the affairs of the organisation.

As Asbestoswise is a registered charity you can also donate to the work of Asbestoswise.

To find out how to become a member or how you can donate, telephone Asbestoswise on 03 9654 9555.

Asbestoswise is proudly supported by Slater & Gordon, and Maurice and Blackburn.

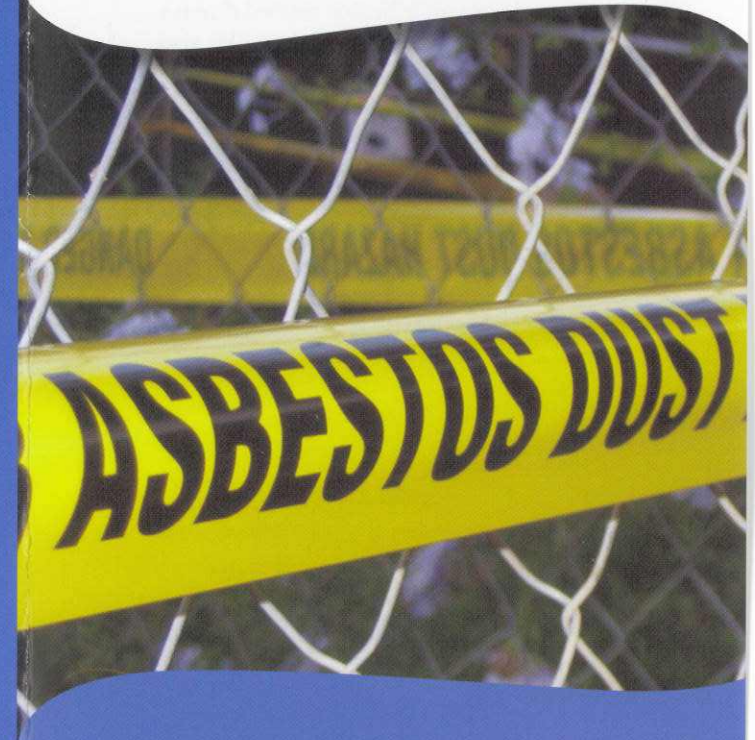
## Asbestoswise

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Level 1  
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W: [www.asbestoswise.com.au](http://www.asbestoswise.com.au)

# asbestoswise

Information and Support



Asbestos,  
*takes your breath away*



## Who are we?

Asbestoswise is a community based charity organisation providing information and support to those suffering from an asbestos related disease (ARD), their families, carers and friends. We also provide information to people at risk of being exposed to asbestos.

It brings together the skills and expertise of two organisations, the Asbestos Information and Support Service (AISS) and the Asbestos Diseases Society of Victoria (ADSVIC). Asbestoswise has an active volunteer based committee of management and a small, dedicated staff. Many of our active volunteers have been touched by ARD.

## Asbestos Diseases

Australia has one of the highest per capita rates of ARD in the world. This is because asbestos has been mined, manufactured and used extensively in the construction and building industry in Australia. Asbestos related diseases include:

- Mesothelioma, a rare cancer only caused by exposure to asbestos
- Lung cancer, caused by exposure to asbestos, smoking or other causes
- Asbestosis, a respiratory disease which can be extremely debilitating and may lead to life threatening complications



It takes a long time between being exposed to asbestos and the possibility of diagnosis of the disease. In the case of mesothelioma this can be from 20 to 40 years. Experts estimate that the number of cases of mesothelioma will rise over the next 20 years.

## Not Just an Old Problem

All forms of asbestos are now banned in Australia and in most developed countries. Because of the current high levels of asbestos in buildings and in the environment, people are still being exposed to asbestos and are at risk. Home renovators may be at risk and recent research has indicated a rise in numbers of home renovators being diagnosed with ARD.

## Help Is At Hand

### Support Group

Asbestoswise runs a support group in Melbourne for people living with an ARD. The group meets monthly and provides information on all aspects of treatment and care. It is open to anyone diagnosed with ARD, their carers, families and friends and the bereaved.

For more information about the support group, telephone Shirley Bare, Support Group Coordinator on 0418 904 847 or email: [sbare@asbestoswise.com.au](mailto:sbare@asbestoswise.com.au)



## Information Services

The Asbestoswise office located in the city at Ross House provides a comprehensive information service on issues regarding asbestos in Australia.

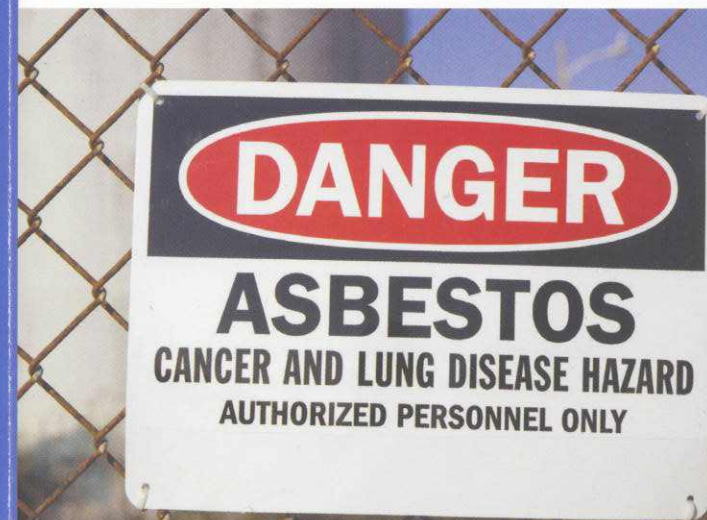
You can contact us if you need information on:

- The health effects of asbestos exposure
- The nature of an ARD
- Medical treatments and support services
- Legal entitlements if you have an ARD
- Advice on how to identify asbestos in the home, workplace or community
- Legal obligations for the removal of asbestos in the home, workplace or community

Asbestoswise has a very informative website that contains much of this information and links to other useful sites.

Our website address is:

[www.asbestoswise.com.au](http://www.asbestoswise.com.au)



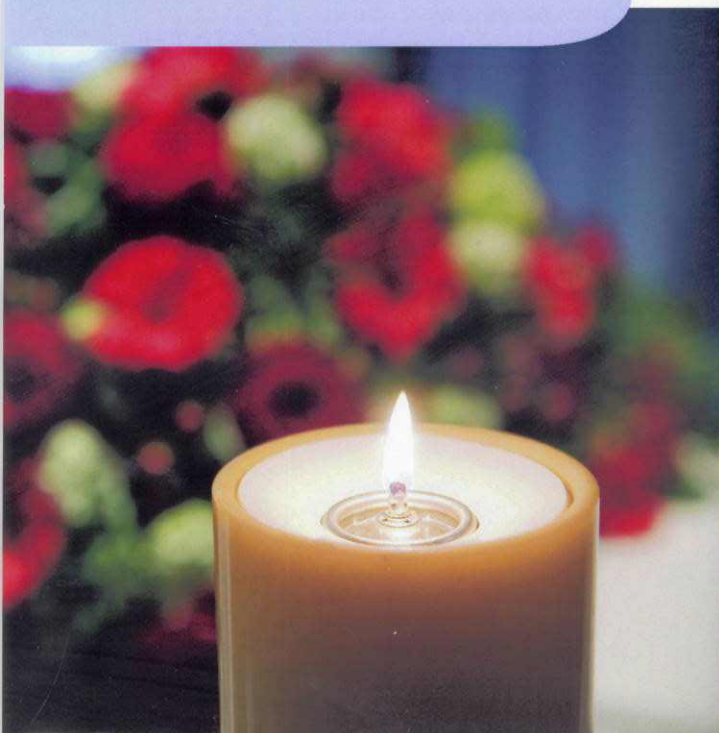


## Bereaved Support Group

Asbestoswise has a bereaved Support Group designed to bring those who are dealing with their loss and grief together, to share the journey.

This group meets every 2nd Wednesday of the month in South Melbourne.

"I was amazed how much strength I felt when listening to like-minded people who were going through the exact same issues – learning to live a new, normal life."



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# asbestoswise

Support Groups



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*takes your breath away*



## Who Are We?

Asbestoswise is a community-based charitable organisation providing information, education, advocacy, awareness and support to those suffering from an asbestos related disease (ARD). We support their families, carers and friends and provide information to people at risk of being exposed to asbestos.

## What is an Asbestos Related Disease (ARD)?

Australia has one of the highest per capita rates of ARD in the world. This is because asbestos has been mined, manufactured and used extensively in the construction and building industry in Australia. Asbestos related diseases include:

- Mesothelioma, a rare cancer only caused by exposure to asbestos
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## The Support Groups

We welcome you, your partner, family or close friend/s, to come and join our Group meetings, held monthly, where coffee, tea and a bite to eat is provided.

### ARD Support Group

In this safe and positive environment you will be able to listen to others, share your medical journey or discuss any topic you may want to share relating to your diagnosis. Sharing knowledge and being in a supportive and understanding environment can make the world of difference when you need to understand the condition you have recently been diagnosed with.

This group meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month in South Melbourne.

"I believe the information I gathered from attending this group certainly did extend the life and quality of life for my husband. Thank you."

"Mesothelioma behaves in a way unlike any other cancer - that's why this group is so important."

## Venue Details

The venue for both groups is:

South Melbourne Community Centre  
Corner of Park Street and Ferrars Place  
SOUTH MELBOURNE VICTORIA 3205

Melways Ref: 2K/B4

If you are intending to come along we would appreciate being notified in advance to assist us in providing adequate catering.

## Contact Details

Please contact our Support Group Coordinator:  
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