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STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE EXERCISE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE WORKCOVER AUTHORITY AND THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION (DUST DISEASES) BOARD

At Sydney on Friday 28 March 2014

The Committee met at 9.15 a.m.

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Mr David Shoebridge: Can I ask you about your experience with the chairs and the independence of the chairs historically? Has it changed?

Ms Stokes: Eileen, you have had more experience with that than I have.

Ms Day: I do not know.

Mr David Shoebridge: If you want to think about it and take it on notice and give it to us on notice that is fine.

Answer: adfa has not had any communication with any of the "chairs" of the DDB, this is why adfa is requesting for an independent chair that can consider complex medical and legal issues unique to asbestos

claims and who can liaise with both DDB and adfa on request when adfa raises any difficulties that they are informed of by members and non-members through the helpline.

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Mr Scot MacDonald: Thank you for the work that you did at Warialda. What recommendations can this Committee make to manage that difficult situation of fear, uncertainty and blame apportionment, if you like, at the expense of helping people? Do you want to take that question on notice because we are short of time?

Ms Stokes: We will do that.

Answer: If the Committee needed to manage and assist in these situations of fear and uncertainty and of course blame then a Government based funding approach needs to be addressed so that all Councils when these sort of dumping's etc. happen can get in and clean up the areas with well-trained personnel at no cost to Rate Payers. It is now law that all councils must have an asbestos policy in place, can the Committee go forward and ensure that councils has this law engaged and that each council has an Environmental Manager and that that person should be trained in all aspects of asbestos and that they are able to answer all questions and concerns about asbestos, it's removal and any clean-up process.

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Mr. David Shoebridge: It seems to me in many ways that volunteer organizations with people like you who have been through an experience play a vital advocacy role. Ensuring that you are properly resourced to do that seems to me to be something at which this Committee should look at. If you had one resource request that you think would make your job more effective what would it be? You can take this question on notice.

MS Stokes: That is a very good question. We will take that on notice.

Answer: If only one resource would solve this horrendous problem of how to ensure that not only metropolitan but rural people are able to be correctly and medically informed then a part of this answer would be that not only all hospitals, including nurses, Cancer Care Units, Oncology as well as Doctors, GP's and Thoracic Surgeons be correctly informed in the first place on what to say, how to say it, how to help them by supplying the correct information on who can assist them for help (DDB) then adfa can play it's part in what we are here as volunteers need to do which is support any and all victims of Asbestos as well as giving correct information to those that request it and that adfa sees that the DDB needs to be a separate entity from Workcover for this to happen.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs. Maree Stokes
Vice President

Mrs. Eileen Dăy
Secretary