

# National Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases



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Editor | Tracy Hayward

## Meeting Laurie Kazan-Allen



OUTSIDE THE ASBESTOS DISEASES SOCIETY OFFICE IN OSBORNE PARK (FROM LEFT): ROBERT AND ROSEMARIE VOJAKOVIC, LAURIE KAZAN-ALLEN, TRACY HAYWARD, MATTHEW TILBROOK

Matthew Tilbrook and Tracy Hayward from NCARD were lucky to catch Laurie Kazan-Allen and Laurie's husband Dave at the Asbestos Diseases Society office in March before they drove away on a well-earned holiday. Laurie was in Australia from the UK, primarily for meetings in Canberra to encourage Australian politicians to act on previous commitments to provide leadership on asbestos issues in the Asian region. As coordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat, her ultimate aim is to see a total worldwide ban on asbestos.

While in Perth, she spoke to Lindy Brophy from UWA News:

"You would think that other countries would learn from the devastating experiences of Australia and the US," Ms Kazan-Allen said. "But it doesn't seem to matter what you say or what you show them. In Thailand, for example, the Ministry of Health

supports the ban, but it is overwhelmed by the wealthy asbestos industry, which says 'nobody is dying of asbestos-related diseases here'. That's because nobody is diagnosing [asbestos diseases] and because it takes a long time for these diseases to develop."

"I'm trying to get Australia to commit to setting an example," she said. "I want the politicians to... work together with countries like Thailand and India where we know that millions of people will die from mesothelioma and other asbestos-related lung cancers in 30 or 40 years' time."

"The collaborative spirit of the research team at NCARD is inspiring and impressive," Ms Kazan-Allen said. "I would love to see researchers learn from the collaborative spirit of asbestos researchers here. Elsewhere, researchers are much more competitive for individual grants, but it is clear that the best work is being done here, with a targeted and co-ordinated effort."

In 2008 Laurie organised for Bruce Robinson to speak to the British House of Commons Subcommittee on Asbestos Diseases about the way

that NCARD was established, hoping that the outcome would be a similar cooperative research centre for Britain; disappointingly this has not occurred.

*Editor's note: Speaking to Laurie solved a longstanding mystery for me. Years ago, when I was in my teens, I watched a deeply moving British documentary about asbestos which left a lasting impression – except that I could not remember the title. Laurie was certain it would've been the 1982 documentary "Alice, A Fight For Life". You can read about the film and find links to youtube excerpts here, from Laurie's own newsletter. [http://ibasecretariat.org/lka\\_alice\\_now\\_online.php](http://ibasecretariat.org/lka_alice_now_online.php)*

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ALISON McDONNELL, NCARD, JASON WAITHMAN, INSTITUTE FOR CHILD HEALTH RESEARCH, ANDREA KHONG, NCARD (NOT FACING CAMERA)

The NCARD Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) offers the chance for researchers and clinicians to get out from behind their desks, laboratory benches and consulting rooms to share and discuss their research with their colleagues – the ones that some days they only bump into in the corridor, as well as researchers working in other states and other countries. Holding the ASM (31 October – 2 November 2012) at Matilda Bay Function Centre also offers a welcome view of the sparkling Swan River, boats and (we were excited to see) dolphins.

We were fortunate that Professor Joe Trapani from Melbourne's Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute, in Perth for another meeting, was able to

spend time with the group and present his research on killer lymphocytes. Professor Richard Simpson from La Trobe University was at his second NCARD Scientific Meeting, and shared his work on proteomics. Longtime collaborator biostatistician Dr Steven Skates from Harvard was also able to join us, as was Dr Serena O'Neil, an Australian researcher currently working in Sweden who combined her trip to Perth with a presentation on immune related proteins. Dr Elena Shklovskaya from Sydney's Centenary Institute of Cancer Medicine and Cell Biology presented on immune cell subsets in the anti-tumour response.

We were particularly pleased to welcome Professor Courtney Broaddus from the University of California, San Francisco on her first trip to Australia. Courtney, who is renowned for her work on apoptosis (cell death) not only gave two scientific presentations, but

participated in a review of NCARD, with fellow reviewers Professor George Yeoh, Associate Dean (Research) from UWA's Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, and Professor Stuart Kaye, Dean of UWA's Law School. While relatively brief and informal, the review was nonetheless thorough and open, and proved useful in reflecting how NCARD is progressing, and areas in which the Centre can improve.

The NCARD ASM combines with the Tumour Immunology Group meeting, thus giving some of the newer researchers the invaluable opportunity of presenting their work to their peers and invited guests. It is also an excellent chance to hear of the work happening in other local research centres, including the Lung Institute of WA, Curtin University, the Institute of Child Health Research and what is now the newly named Centre for Genetic Origins of Health and Disease.



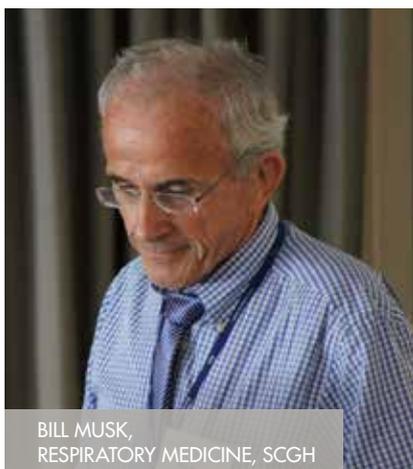
DINNER AT THE MATILDA BAY FUNCTION CENTRE



ANNA NOWAK, NCARD WITH  
COURTNEY BROADDUS, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



STEVE SKATES,  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



BILL MUSK,  
RESPIRATORY MEDICINE, SCGH



ROS FRANCIS,  
NUCLEAR MEDICINE, SCGH



ERIC MOSES,  
GOHdD



ALISTAIR COOK,  
NCARD

... a chance for  
researchers and  
clinicians to get out  
from behind their  
desks, laboratory  
benches and consulting  
rooms to share and  
discuss their research ...



ELENA SHKLOVSKAYA,  
SYDNEY CENTENARY INSTITUTE



DELIA NELSON,  
CURTIN UNIVERSITY



JOE TRAPANI,  
PETER MacCALLUM CANCER CENTRE



JENETTE CREANEY,  
NCARD

# FILMING DAY

BY TRACY HAYWARD

James Lush from Lush TV, was fairly adamant: our short promotional film for NCARD needed to have a mesothelioma patient in their own home describe the experience of suffering from this dreadful disease. We needed to approach someone who was well enough to be filmed and comfortable with cooperating; but they also needed to live in Perth. If they were on oxygen it would be easier for an audience to understand the effects of mesothelioma. If they were young, and someone whose exposure had been through home renovation, he suggested...

That's where we started. But in the end we filmed Rod Triplett, a successful builder in his early 60s from Australind, and his wife Chris, in B Block at Charlie's and up at Kings Park, and we all learnt something!

Rod's father was a builder, and when Rod was a small boy the family used to move about and camp where his Dad was working, including a longish stint at Jerramungup where they built "fibro" war service homes. Rod became an apprentice carpenter and joiner in his teens, and it was commonplace to work with asbestos on a home building site, to cut into it with saws and power tools, dust flying everywhere. The first warning was a persistent cough in winter that just didn't seem to shift. Chris insisted a visit to their family GP, and an X-ray showed a shadow on

Rod's lungs. "That was a bit of a kick in the teeth", he says.

**For a man with mesothelioma, Rod appears remarkably fit and healthy. He is still working on site every day, and dearly hoped to be given the all clear by Professor Gary Lee to be allowed to go diving on the first day of crayfish season, which happens to be his birthday.**

Chris talked about how positive it has been for her to be in charge of changing his indwelling pleural catheter once or twice a week, as needed. "It makes me feel like I'm doing something useful", she says.

As a trip to Australind with a film crew would eat into the modest budget, it was agreed that we would film both Rod and Chris – who are clearly in this together – at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital to fit in with Rod's next oncology appointment: Chris changing the catheter in B Block, and an interview in a garden setting so that it didn't look too clinical. I'd noticed a bench nearby that looked like it would be suitable.

Well, that was the plan.

Filming day was unseasonably hot for mid-November. Mark the camera operator said that the bench didn't provide sufficient "depth of field", and was too close to an airconditioner. We tried a spot on Hospital Ave, and although buses rumbled past every few minutes it was the jackhammer on the new parking building that drove us away.

We borrowed some plastic chairs from Respiratory and went walkabout,

rejecting three sights on the way to the Lions Eye Institute courtyard. The lift on the building site for the new research building was the culprit there, and in desperation we headed up Gairdner Ave, Rod and Chris insisting on carrying chairs and filming equipment. We tried one spot in the gardens but the babbling brook was a little too babbly. With good humour and great relief and jokes that a new building would probably be started any moment, we settled on a spot near some pine trees, and Rod started on the story of his first exposure for about the fourth time (with less and less detail). But...was that bobcat behind us driving on the roof of a building? Was it carrying loads of garden soil to and fro? That was it. For a moment even the calm and patient Ian nearly lost his cool. We had to walk all the way back to Hospital Ave and find a maxi taxi to take us up to Kings Park. We attracted an awful lot of kookaburras, but no more building sites!

A friend of mine who has worked in the film industry in Sydney for a couple of decades said that this is why careful location scouting is so important. He also conceded that that's why production managers carry a pocketful of cash, to pay off the operators of lawnmowers, leaf blowers, and bobcat drivers!

Meeting Rod and Chris, with their warm natures, great humour and positive attitudes, has been a genuine privilege. I realise that we could not have attempted a circuit of a hospital with seven different building sites with someone on oxygen or in a frail condition. I cannot thank the Triplett's enough for candidly and generously sharing their time and experience.

The NCARD film can be viewed at [www.ncard.org.au](http://www.ncard.org.au)



## Bruce, AM

Congratulations to Bruce Robinson AM! Bruce was made a Member of the Order of Australia (General Division) in the 2013 Australia Day Honours List. The honour was granted for "significant service to medicine in the area of research into asbestos-related cancers, and to the community, particularly through support to fathers".

Speaking to the ABC, however, Bruce was keen to share: "All my work is done with fantastic teams of people so my award is about a team of people". One of nine Western Australians to be on the Honours List on this occasion, the Order of Australia will be conferred at a reception at Government House in Perth on 10 April 2013.

## SATELLITE SYMPOSIUM

The 15th World Conference on Lung Cancer (WCLC) will be held in Sydney in October. Expected to attract around 7000 delegates from 100 different countries, the biennial conference is a huge and unique gathering of cancer and respiratory specialists. NCARD, in conjunction with the International Mesothelioma Interest Group (iMig) is taking this opportunity to host a Satellite Symposium on mesothelioma on Saturday 26 October 2013, the day before the conference begins.

The theme of the symposium is Molecular Mechanisms, Genomics and Translational Implications. We are delighted that world renowned US researchers Matthew Meyerson, Raphael Bueno and Brooke T Mossman have agreed to speak on lung cancer genomics, mesothelioma sequencing



and protein kinase pathways; Isabelle Opitz from Switzerland will present on her signalling research, and Dean Fennell from the UK on apoptosis. Australian speakers include Stephen Clarke, Richard Simpson and Neil Watkins. We are building a programme which will include proteomics and bioinformatics, to inform and enhance the national and international collaboration on these aspects of mesothelioma research.

Attendance is free, but places are limited. Those wishing to register simply need to send an email to Tracy Hayward ([tracy.hayward@uwa.edu.au](mailto:tracy.hayward@uwa.edu.au)) with their name and organisation, position and areas of special interest.



## Charitable Partnership with Housing Industry Association

NCARD is the selected beneficiary of the Housing Industry Association Charitable Foundation for 2013. The Foundation identifies that "one of its important goals is to fund research concerning the health and wellbeing of those involved in the Australian residential building industry through grant opportunities to best practice research organisations". A version of the NCARD film was especially tailored for the Housing Industry Association's website: [www.hia.com.au/foundation](http://www.hia.com.au/foundation)

We are optimistic about the potential for this partnership, and very grateful to the HIA Charitable Foundation for their support.

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## GRANTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Publications published or accepted, and grants awarded since November 2012.

### PUBLICATIONS

Rozali EN, Hato SV, Robinson BW, Lake RA, Lesterhuis WJ. Programmed death ligand 2 in cancer-induced immune suppression. *Clin Dev Immunol.* 2012;2012:656340.

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Creaney J, Dick IM, Dare H, Demelker Y, Nowak AK, Musk AW, Robinson BW. Does CA125 binding to mesothelin impact the detection of malignant mesothelioma? *Lung Cancer* 2013 Apr; 80(1): 39-44.

Lesterhuis WJ, Salmons J, Nowak AK, Rozali EN, Khong A, Dick IM, Harken JA, Robinson BW, Lake RA. Synergistic effect of CTLA-4 blockade and cancer chemotherapy in the induction of anti-tumor immunity. *Plos One.* In Press.

Matullo, G, Guarrera S...Creaney, J, Robinson BW et al (38 authors.) Genetic variants associated to an increased risk of malignant pleural mesothelioma: a genome-wide association study. Accepted by *PlosONE* 11 March 2013.

Lustgarten DES, Deshpande C... Creaney J, Nowak A. et al (13 authors). Thymidylate synthase and foyl-polyglutamate synthase are not clinically useful markers of response to Pemetrexed in patients with malignant pleural mesothelioma. *Journal of Thoracic Oncology* 2013, April Vol 8 Issue 4, pp. 469:477.

### GRANTS

#### WA Department of Health

NCARD Prof Bruce Robinson \$200,000 – 2013 (1 year)  
Mesothelioma Pre-clinical and Clinical Trial Work

#### NHMRC Project Grant

Prof Bruce Robinson \$640,000 2013-2015 (3 years)  
Novel surgery-chemotherapy-immunotherapy approaches for lung malignancies