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### Mesothelioma register may be dumped

The ASCC plans to scrap the Aust mesothelioma register at its next meeting in Melb on May 16, OHN understands. Vic Trades Hall Council (VTHC) OHS information officer Renata Musolino told OHN the ASCC's Nov 2006 meeting had decided to form a sub-ctee to "consider the future of the register". But the registry had already been "suspended" in Dec last year "pending a decision on its future". The subctee held a teleconference in March and will recommend the ASCC "formally close" the registry. Musolino said the VTHC would put forward a resolution this Fri that: "All members of the ASCC to vote against any recommendation to close the register and ensure that funding is guaranteed to ensure the data it collects is of the highest standards." The register was set up in 1986 as a notification system for mesothelioma cases (OHN 515, 495). The register contains demographic and occupational information and, where established, any history of asbestos exposure. Musolino said the ASCC intends to use data from the national cancer statistics clearing house, the national mortality database, statistics from the NSW Dust Diseases Board and the WA Mesothelioma Register to replace information from the register. The VTHC said a "uniform epidemiological surveillance system" was important to identify groups at risk and for responding to the epidemic. Especially given the expected "second wave" of asbestos-related disease, arising from childhood or lower occupational and incidental exposures, it said. An ASCC spokesperson told OHN she could not comment on the agenda for the upcoming meeting. (see "Register more important now", p4)

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### Register 'more important' now

It would be "most prudent" to strengthen efforts in collecting information on mesothelioma rather than weaken them, asbestos disease researcher & Melb Uni School of Population Health **Assoc Prof Anthony La Montagne** told OHN. "We are not even at the peak of mesothelioma in this country." He said revised statistics show mesothelioma cases would peak between 2010 and 2020. "We're on an upward swing here in terms of mesothelioma in Aust," La Montagne said. The decision to possibly scrap the register would have many ramifications, including legal, public health and policy, he said (see "Mesothelioma register to be dumped", p1). "We have to ask: If there was no mesothelioma register, would the campaign against James Hardie have succeeded? It's difficult to estimate how important the register is in keeping the issues in the public eye." Without information on the disease and exposure, liability would be "buried" in the public health system or health insurance, he said. And it was a "worry" that other statistical data said to be replacing the register would not contain information on the "occupational circumstances of exposure". "The most important thing is that there hasn't been public disclosure ... There needs to be consultation ... with the whole spectrum of people who have an interest in or burden of dealing with asbestos disease in Aust," La Montagne said.

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