

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Our ref: A1080796

26 August 2024

Melita Markey
Chief Executive Officer, Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia
Principal petitioner
219 Main Street
Osborne Park WA 6916

By email: melita@asbestosdiseases.org.au

Dear Ms Markey

Petition No. 089-Wittenoom Memorial for Australia's worst industrial disaster

I refer to the above petition, which I tabled in the Legislative Council on 9 May 2023. It was, as you know, referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs (Committee).

As part of its preliminary inquiries into the terms of the petition, the Committee wrote to the following:

- Former Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Hon Bill Johnston MLA
- City of Perth
- Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage
- Shire of Ashburton
- Minister for Industrial Relations.

Copies of their responses are enclosed.

On consideration of those responses, the Committee understands that the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and the Shire of Ashburton recommend against a permanent memorial within the Shire. The Shire of Ashburton instead suggest the concept of a virtual memorial.

Both the City of Perth and Minister for Industrial Relations support the building of a physical memorial within the City, however are unable to fund and administer such a project.

Following consideration of all responses, the Committee decided on 14 August 2024 not to conduct any further inquiries into this matter and to finalise its consideration of the petition.

Copies of documents in relation to the petition are available on Parliament's website at www.parliament.wa.gov.au (> Get involved » Petitions).

The Committee thanks you and your fellow petitioners for bringing your concerns to the attention of the Parliament. If you have any queries, please contact Daniel Hawkett, Research Officer, on 9222 7258 or email env@parliament.wa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Foster', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Peter Foster MLC

Chair

*Enc: Letter from former Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Hon Bill Johnston MLA, dated 5 October 2023
Letter from Kenn Donohoe, Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Ashburton, dated 29 November 2023
Letter from Bill Seager, Coordinator Cultural Heritage Services, City of Perth, dated 16 January 2024
Letter from Anthony Kannis PSM, Director General, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, dated 22 February 2024
Email from Bill Seager, Coordinator Cultural Heritage Services, City of Perth, dated 3 May 2024
Letter from the Minister for Industrial Relations, Hon Simone McGurk MLA, dated 21 June 2024*



Hon Bill Johnston MLA
Minister for Mines and Petroleum; Energy; Hydrogen Industry;
Industrial Relations

Our Ref: 71-35814
Your Ref: A1038709 Petition No. 089

Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office

Email: env@parliament.wa.gov.au


Dear Mr Foster

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS - PETITION
NO. 089 - WITTENOOM MEMORIAL**

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 August 2023 seeking comments on the terms and submissions from the principal petitioner of petition 089.

I note the petition from the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia (ADSA) seeks a memorial in Perth and in the Pilbara, and while the plaque at Solidarity Park in West Perth recognises the lives lost, this request is made more significant as the closure of the Wittenoom township has left loved ones without a place of memorial to grieve and remember.

ADSA receives annual funding of \$100,000 from the Western Australian Government, through the WorkSafe Group (WorkSafe) of the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS). The purpose of the grant is to support the administration of ADSA, promote public awareness of risks associated with asbestos exposure and provide support and assistance to its members.

The establishment and maintenance of memorials requires significant investment. Moreover, recording of the names of individuals as proposed requires the verification of records dating back over 70 years, with many of those records not available given the recording practices during that period. DMIRS does not have the resources or the remit to assist with the proposal.

The Wittenoom Steering Committee, led by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH), continues to coordinate and provide advice on the resolution of issues concerning the residual asbestos in and around the Wittenoom town site.

The Wittenoom Steering Committee recently considered the issue of access to the former township's two cemeteries, which are still frequented by families and visitors. There is a risk of asbestos exposure for visitors to the cemeteries due to asbestos contamination.

Should the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs require further information from the Wittenoom Steering Committee, I respectfully submit that contact be made with Nicole Ford, DPLH Senior Project Manager, Property and Risk Management, nicole.ford@dplh.wa.gov.au.

While I am supportive and sympathetic to the request from the petitioners for permanent and lasting memorials to those that have lost their lives to asbestos-related diseases, I am unable to provide further assistance in the matter.

Yours sincerely



Hon Bill Johnston MLA
Minister for Mines and Petroleum; Energy;
Hydrogen Industry; Industrial Relations

5 OCT 2023

cc: *Hon Peter Foster MLC*
Member for Mining and Pastoral Region
peter.foster@mp.wa.gov.au

29 November 2023

Our Ref. PH17
Your Ref: A1051810

Hon. Peter Foster MLC - Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Sent via email: env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Peter,

Response – Wittenoom Memorial – Petition 89

I refer to correspondence dated 19 October 2023 from the Committee requesting the Shire's position on a permanent memorial in the Pilbara and consideration for future maintenance of such a memorial if supported, following the tabling of a petition in the Legislative Council that sought "a permanent memorial in the Pilbara and Perth for those who have died from asbestos-related diseases as a result of operations in Wittenoom".

A report was presented to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 14 November 2023 to consider the Committee's request for the Shire's position on a memorial in the district.

I advise that Council adopted the following position in regards to the request received (Decision 206/2023).

"That with respect to the Wittenoom Memorial Request, Council,

- 1. Does not support the request for a permanent Wittenoom memorial within the Shire of Ashburton, at this time.*
- 2. Requests the Chief Executive Officer to write to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs requesting the State government investigate the development of a permanent virtual Wittenoom memorial."*

I trust Council's position on a memorial in the district is accepted and I respectfully ask you, through the Committee, to seek the State Government's support to investigate opportunities for a permanent virtual Wittenoom memorial.

If you have any questions, please contact Jasmine Bray, Manager Governance on 9188 5448.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kenn Donohoe', with a horizontal line underneath.

Kenn Donohoe
Chief Executive Officer

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH

16 January 2024

Dear Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

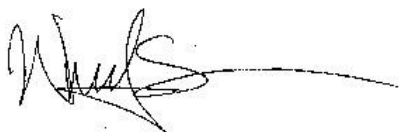
Proposed Wittenoom Memorial

Following communications begun in October 2023 the City of Perth (the City) would be happy to discuss further the proposed Wittenoom Memorial outlined by Petition 089 with the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.

In particular the City will be able to familiarise the Committee with Council Policy 4.9 Commemorative Works and guide the process for a Commemorative Works proposal.

The City's representative in this matter will be Bill Seager, Coordinator Cultural Heritage Services.

Kind regards,



Bill Seager
COORDINATOR CULTURAL HERITAGE SERVICES

Enquiries to:

Bill Seager
City Culture
Our Ref: 010577/24

T (08) 9461 3333 E info@cityofperth.wa.gov.au
A 27 St Georges Terrace, Perth WA 6000
ABN 83 780 118 628



Department of **Planning,
Lands and Heritage**

Your ref: A1051815
Our ref: DG-2024-0329
Enquiries: Nicole Ford, 6552 4420

Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Via email to: env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Foster

PETITION NO. 089 – WITTENOOM MEMORIAL

Thank you for your email dated 19 October 2023 regarding 'Petition No. 089 – Wittenoom Memorial'. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

The Wittenoom Steering Committee (WSC) has been convened to lead a coordinated government approach in the ongoing and future management of the Wittenoom Asbestos Management Area (WAMA) and to address issues and actions arising due to the asbestos contamination resulting from historical mining within the WAMA.

Please note that, if its advice was sought, the WSC would not recommend the placement a memorial within the boundaries of the WAMA, which would encourage visitors to enter the area.

Should you have any queries in relation to the matter, please contact Ms Nicole Ford, Senior Project Manager via email to nicole.ford@dplh.wa.gov.au or by telephone on 6552 4420.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Kannis PSM
Director General

22 February 2024

From: Bill Seager
Sent: Friday, 3 May 2024 3:04 PM
To: Environment and Public Affairs Committee
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Reminder to provide a submission for Petition No. 089-Wittenoom Memorial for Australia's worst industrial disaster

Hi Daniel,

Further to our conversation earlier today, I would like to confirm that in alignment with our Commemorative Works Policy, it is a requirement that all new commemorative works must be funded by the applicants.

I would refer you to Clause 28 of Council Policy 4.9 Commemorative Works [Policies | City of Perth](#)

Unfortunately the City of Perth does not currently have a discretionary budget for such works and as such we would be unable to fund the proposed Wittenoom Memorial.

However should circumstances change and the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia Inc find themselves in a position to resource the proposed work I would be more than happy to discuss this with them and guide them through the Commemorative Works process.

I hope this clarifies matters and don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this with us further.

Have a wonderful weekend,

Bill

Bill Seager

Coordinator Cultural Heritage Services
City Culture



27 St Georges Terrace, Perth | GPO Box C120 WA 6839

www.perth.wa.gov.au





Hon Simone McGurk MLA
Minister for Training and Workforce Development;
Water; Industrial Relations

Our Ref: 74-76093

Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office
env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Foster

Thank you for your correspondence dated 31 May 2024 regarding Petition No.089 "Wittenoom Memorial for Australia's Worst Industrial Disaster" by the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia Inc (ADSA) and the Shire of Ashburton's suggestion that the State Government consider development of a virtual Wittenoom memorial.

I would like to firstly acknowledge the tragic situation of asbestos related deaths of former Wittenoom residents and I appreciate the Standing Committee on Environmental and Public Affairs' recommendation for developing suitable memorials.

As indicated by the former Minister for Industrial Relations in October 2023, the development and maintenance of permanent memorials is beyond the remit and resources of the Department of Energy, Mines, Industrial Regulation and Safety (DEMIRS). As such, I am unable to offer direct Government support for the development of a virtual Wittenoom memorial.

ADSA receives annual funding from the Cook Labor Government through the WorkSafe Group (WorkSafe) of DEMIRSAs part of their role in providing support and advisory services to those affected by exposure to asbestos or silica dust, ADSA may wish to consider establishing and maintaining a virtual memorial on their website.

While I am not able to provide direct support for a Wittenoom memorial, I would like to assure you that the prevention of occupational dust disease is a priority for the Cook government. Work health and safety legislation is being amended to provide enhanced protection to workers from silica hazards. Respiratory hazards are also identified as a priority in WorkSafe's strategic plan.

Thank you for raising this important matter with me and I trust the information provided in this letter is useful to the Standing Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simone McGurk'.

HON SIMONE MCGURK MLA
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

21 June 2024