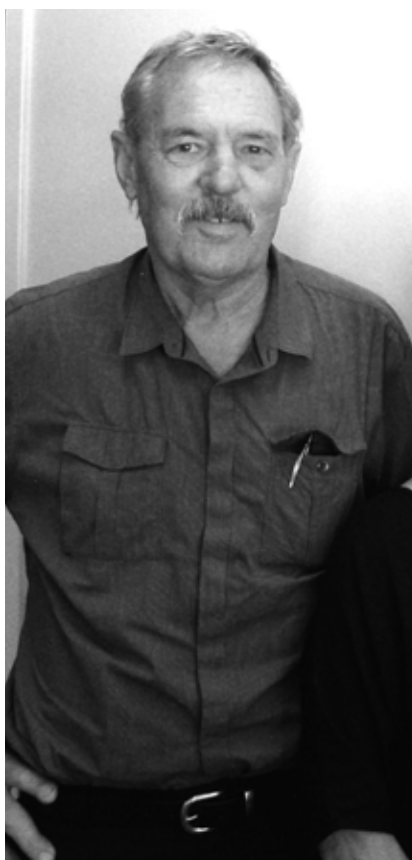




VALE ROD TRIPLETT

On 10 March 2014 Rod Triplett succumbed to mesothelioma after a brave two and a half year battle; he was 64. Rod – and his wife Chris, who travelled each step of this journey with him – inspired all of us at NCARD. Warm, good-humoured and open, both were willing to share their history, offer their time and promote the need for research into mesothelioma; especially to the building industry, which is, as Chris has clearly voiced, losing so much of its invaluable experience with the loss of expert builders such as Rod, for whom working with asbestos was commonplace. (A grim memento of this was noticed in Rod's office by his son Kered, a builder who worked alongside his father, in the days following the funeral).



ROD TRIPLETT

Rod and Chris provided hope and comfort to many other people living with mesothelioma, and many of those caring for Rod commented on the way their cheerful presence brightened them too.

Matthew Tilbrook and I attended Rod's funeral on the beautiful Australind inlet on 21 March. Rod's reputation and generosity in the Australind community was evident by the attendance of around 600 people. The recollections and anecdotes from those close to Rod – known to some as The Cray Slayer – meant that it was a funeral with more

laughter and applause than tears. Vegetables from Rod's garden, pictures drawn by his granddaughters, and a signature can of Carlton Midstrength were among the decorations on his coffin; the music selections included Bruce Springsteen's beautiful "Terry's Song" and Rod's favourite "singalong while driving to the tip" number, Loudon Wainwright's Dead Skunk in the Middle of the Road.

On a personal note, meeting and making the film with the Triplett's, and the friendship we have shared since, has been a valuable and rewarding

In this issue

- Farewell to Rod Triplett
- Anna Nowak receives Eric Saint Award
- Laurie Kazan-Allen visits NCARD
- ICWA renews mesothelioma funding



A GRIM MEMENTO. THE PLAQUE, PRESENTED TO ROD IN 1977, READS: "THE JAMES HARDIE & COY PTY LIMITED AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ASBESTOS CEMENT APPLICATION"

experience. Witnessing the progression of Rod's mesothelioma – while an experience that some of my colleagues have seen hundreds or even thousands of times – has left a deep impression and real sorrow that I have difficulty putting into words. Vale Rod, our thanks and our deepest sympathy to Chris, the Triplett family and Rod's many friends.

The videos featuring Rod and Chris Triplett can be viewed at: <http://www.ncard.org.au/videos.html>

– Tracy Hayward

ERIC SAINT AWARD FOR ANNA NOWAK

We are delighted that Professor Anna Nowak is the 2014 recipient of the Eric Saint Award, presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia (ADSA) in March.

Part of Anna's award is both beautiful and appropriate: a painting by Gloria Petyarre entitled Bush Medicine Leaves.

As Rose Marie Vojakovic AM noted: "Professor Anna Nowak is an inspiration to us all. It gives our members great pleasure to acknowledge Professor Nowak's invaluable contribution to the treatment of mesothelioma".

In responding to the award, Anna said: "It is a great honour to have been recognised amongst a team of committed scientific and clinical researchers centred here in Western Australia where we have the highest incidence of mesothelioma of anywhere in the world.

"What is especially lovely about the work we do with the ADSA is that we have a very close link back to those who are suffering with the disease. Patients come to us from the ADSA for ongoing care and therefore we never lose sight of the end goal in our research."

Congratulations to Anna, a very worthy recipient of this recognition.

Eric Saint was a founding professor of the Medical School of the University of Western Australia. Known for his forthright manner, in 1948 Dr Saint, then a Government Medical Officer, famously wrote a letter to the head of the Health Department of Western Australia:

"Moreover, I've an eye on the future of the asbestos mill at Wittenoom, which at the second operates without any sort of dust extractor whatsoever...in a year or two ABA [Australian Blue Asbestos] will produce the richest and most lethal crop of asbestosis in the world's literature."

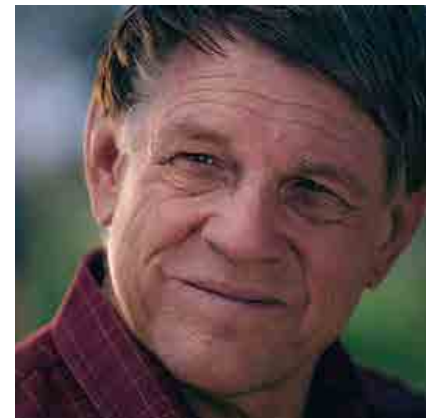


PROFESSOR ANNA NOWAK WITH THE ERIC SAINT AWARD AND THE PAINTING WITH WHICH SHE WAS PRESENTED, BUSH MEDICINE LEAVES BY GLORIA PETYARRE. (PHOTO COURTESY NORTH METROPOLITAN HEALTH SERVICE).

Bruce Robinson, AM CitWA

Those who know Professor Bruce Robinson AM CitWA know he's not one for "putting on the dog". And thus it was that in late January, before Bruce left for Canberra as the West Australian nominee for Australian of the Year, presided over the Governor-General of Australia, then Her Excellency Quentin Bryce, the NCARD team saw him off with a no expenses spared lamington and Tim Tam morning tea, served on a \$3 Australia flag plastic tablecloth. (In fact, Bruce even had to share the honours with Joost Lesterhuis, one of our researchers, as he and his family had just been granted Permanent Residency: Joost, originally from The Netherlands, was thrilled to be presented with the tablecloth, and a pair of Australian Flag thongs).

In all seriousness, Bruce's nomination for Australian of the Year was exciting and humbling. An interview with Bruce and ABC radio presenter James Lush



BRUCE ROBINSON, WA AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR. (PHOTO COURTESY THE NATIONAL AUSTRALIA DAY COUNCIL).

about the opportunities this, and his year as West Australian of the Year, which will come to an end in June when his successor is announced on WA Day, can be found on the NCARD website at lushdigital.com/ltv/prof-bruce-robinson/

LAURIE VISITS NCARD AT PERKINS

It was our privilege to host Laurie Kazan-Allen, the coordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat – and her grand-niece Melissa – for afternoon tea and a “guided tour” of our new facilities in the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research on 2 April.

And it was an obvious pleasure for Laurie to be in a laboratory where not just a rare few, but an entire team specialises in mesothelioma research.

It was a salient reminder for many of us – and possibly unfamiliar to the many younger research assistants– to have Bruce explain to us the role that Laurie has played on the world arena over the decades that asbestos compensation has been so hard fought in lawyer’s offices and court rooms. Relevant information could not be used from one case to another if deemed sub judice. Laurie, by producing a newsletter about asbestos disease, made freely available information that proved invaluable to the victims of asbestos exposure and those supporting them.

A beautifully written (and satisfyingly complimentary!) article by Laurie, Blue Sky Thinking (an expression Laurie credits to Bruce Robinson) which gives the context of our research and her visit can be found here:

basecretariat.org/lka-blue-sky.php



LAURIE WITH THE PORTRAIT OF PROFESSOR ERIC SAINT.
(LAURIE WAS PRESENTED WITH THE ERIC SAINT AWARD IN 2012).



JENETTE CREANEY WITH LAURIE KAZAN-ALLEN. THESE TWO LAST MET WHEN LAURIE PRESENTED JENETTE WITH THE IMIG YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD IN AMSTERDAM IN 2008.



PART OF THE NCARD TEAM. FROM LEFT: SAMANTHA WOO, DAPHNE LAKHIANI, CATHERINE RINALDI, ALISTAIR COOK, CLARISSA YATES, WAYNE ASTON, LAURIE’S GRAND-NIECE MELISSA, BRUCE ROBINSON, MATTHEW TILBROOK, JENETTE CREANEY, TRACY HAYWARD, RICHARD LAKE, SCOTT FISHER.

NCARD AT PERKINS

In late December NCARD and the UWA School of Medicine & Pharmacology packed up and moved from G block in Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital to the brand new Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research a few hundred metres, and decades of design style, away.

The Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research, formerly the Western Australian Institute of Medical Research (WAIMR), is named after the original WAIMR chair, former Bruce Rock farmer and later Chairman of Wesfarmers Limited, the late Mr Harry Perkins AO. Singularly dedicated to boosting medical research in Western Australia, Mr Perkins died of lung cancer in 2002. His signature has become the logo for the new institute.

The striking eight storey glass building accommodates researchers from groups including the Lions Eye Institute, the Heart Research Institute, the Lung Institute of WA and numerous others.

While neither the move nor the new building has been without teething problems, NCARD has benefitted from excellent laboratory space, light and airy offices, and – for many staff – rooms with windows for the first time.

The Perkins website is www.perkins.org.au

To see the extraordinary lighting and other medical technology exhibitions in the foyer, which are the hallmark of the Harry Perkins building, go to:

www.frd.com.au/exhibitions/perkins.html and <http://lightwell.com.au/projects/harry-perkins-institute-of-medical-research/>

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Funding from ICWA

The Insurance Commission of Western Australia (ICWA) has been a steadfast supporter of asbestos disease research, and at the beginning of April announced a close to \$2 million commitment to NCARD over the next four years.

ICWA has been funding asbestos disease research since 1989 through the Tumour Immunology Group, part of NCARD in the School of Medicine and Pharmacology at UWA. In that time they have provided \$5.56 million in funding for research on the early

detection, prevention and treatment of diseases caused by asbestos. WA State Treasurer Dr Mike Nahan said: "The work led by Professor Bruce Robinson AM and his team...is first-rate and leading the world in this important area".

The outstanding feature of the ICWA-funded research is that its focus is on diagnosis and intervention on *early* mesothelioma. Early diagnosis, intervention and prevention are the best hopes for finding a cure for this and other cancers.

The ICWA funds provide salary support for several of our most senior, and internationally recognised, researchers.



FROM LEFT: ROD WHITEAR, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ICWA; DR MIKE NAHAN, WEST AUSTRALIAN STATE TREASURER; BRUCE ROBINSON.

REGULAR RADIO GIG

Bruce Robinson is no stranger to the airwaves, but this year he has a regular monthly gig on ABC 720 Perth with renowned radio presenter Geoff Hutchison. Bruce talks about the many issues to which he is committed, from medical research to parenting. ABC offers a range of platforms and alternatives to catch up with radio programmes for those who miss them or live elsewhere – Podcasts, Soundcloud, Live Streaming – so anyone should be able to catch Bruce on air.

ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING 2014

Plans are well under way for the NCARD Annual Scientific Meeting, which will this year be held at the Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club, overlooking the Swan River in Nedlands, from Wednesday 26 November till midday Friday 28 November 2014. We are delighted that Dr Robert Holt, University of British Columbia Professor of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry in Vancouver has agreed to join us; as has Franca Ronchese, Group Leader for the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research at the University of Wellington, New Zealand. We hope that some dolphins come past to say hello.

This newsletter is written and compiled by Tracy Hayward, Admin Officer, NCARD. Graphic design by Uniprint at UWA. Comments or enquiries: Ph. 08 6151 1078 Email: tracy.hayward@uwa.edu.au



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RECENT GRANTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Publications published or accepted, and grants awarded since December newsletter.

GRANTS

Science and Industry Endowment Fund John Stocker Post-doctoral Fellowship

W Joost Lesterhuis
A systems biology approach for discovering synergistic immunotherapy drug combinations in cancer
\$276,000
2014-2016 (3 years)

Early Career Researcher Fellowship Support, University of Western Australia

W Joost Lesterhuis
\$30,000
2014 (1 year)

Outstanding Young Investigator Award, University of Western Australia

W Joost Lesterhuis
\$2000
2013

Insurance Commission of Western Australia

Improving the diagnosis and treatment of early mesothelioma
\$1,958,335
2013-2017 (4 years)

Cancer Council Western Australia

Outcomes and predictors of efficacy of palliative radiotherapy in patients with malignant pleural mesothelioma
Anna Nowak, Roslyn Francis, Gary Lee, Sean Bydder, Jenette Creaney
\$99,679
2014 (1 year)

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Cleaver AL, Bhamidipaty K, Wylie B, Connor T, Robinson C, Robinson BW, Mutsaers SE, Lake RA. Long-term exposure of mesothelial cells to SV40 and asbestos leads to malignant transformation and chemotherapy resistance. *Carcinogenesis*, Feb 35(2):407-14, 2014.

Robinson C, Woo S, Nowak AK, Lake RA. Dietary Vitamin D supplementation does not reduce the incidence or severity of asbestos-induced mesothelioma in a mouse model. *Nutrition and Cancer*, 66(3), 383-7, 2014.

Williams AM, Bulsara CE, Joske DJ, Petterson AS, Nowak AK, Bennett KS. An oasis in the hospital: the perceived benefits of a cancer support center in a hospital setting offering complementary therapies. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, March 20, Epub ahead of print, 2014.

Nelson D, Fisher S and Robinson BW. The "Trojan Horse" approach to tumor immunotherapy: targeting the tumour microenvironment. *Journal of Immunology Research*, Article ID 78906, 18 May 2014.

Lesterhuis WJ, Bosco A, Lake RA. Comment on "drug discovery: turning the titanic". *Science Translational Medicine*. 2014 Mar 26; 6(229):229le2.