

Shattered Lives: The Human Face of the Asbestos Tragedy

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Shattered Lives: The Human Face of the Asbestos Tragedy

Miriam Miller

Wakefield Press, \$29.95

POPULAR IN POSTWAR Australia, asbestos was widely used for being durable, fire-resistant and insulating. Even after its lethal qualities became well known, it wasn't until the late '80s that its mining and use were stopped. **Shattered Lives** describes the situations of some of those who came into contact with asbestos and their subsequent ruined health and death after developing mesothelioma - a type of lung cancer caused by asbestos fibres.

In between summaries of how the victims became afflicted, the book surveys the business dealings of James Hardie and CSR, companies whose large profits were amassed by using asbestos in their mines and building products. Workers brought lawsuits claiming work-induced asbestos disease. **Shattered Lives** interviews and offers a voice to those caught unawares of the danger of this mineral.

It also lambasts the slippery and underhanded tactics employed by various corporations to defend themselves against litigation claims by ex-employees, in some cases wilfully instructing lawyers to delay court proceedings as long as possible so their accusers would become too sick to proceed with their claims. Miriam Miller concentrates on cases in WA, particularly in Perth, the "asbestos cancer capital of the world". It's straightforward reportage, though favouring one side.