



Bernie Banton Foundation Media Release - 28 January 2020:

Bernie Banton Foundation to close as Karen Banton retires as CEO

Sydney, 28 January 2020: Karen Banton, asbestos related disease campaigner and widow of Bernie Banton, is retiring from her role as CEO of the Bernie Banton Foundation, with the Foundation set to close its doors by 30 June 2020.

The decision was based on a number of factors, but most importantly will allow CEO Karen Banton and her husband Rod Smith, who has served as Awareness and Support Coordinator at the Bernie Banton Foundation since 2012, to take a much needed break and focus on their health following twenty years of tireless asbestos related disease advocacy.

The Board felt the best way forward was to wind up the charity, particularly as the organisation bears the name of Karen's late husband.

The Foundation's funds and assets will be distributed in accordance with its Constitution to charities which have similar objects to the Company. The Foundation will give notice of these details via its website prior to the charity's closure.

The Bernie Banton Foundation is an apolitical, not-for-profit organisation founded in 2009 which builds on Bernie Banton's legacy of supporting sufferers of asbestos related diseases and their loved ones and raising awareness of the continued risks of asbestos exposure.

The Foundation has assisted victims and their families to navigate the challenging path forward upon diagnosis of an asbestos related disease, offered peer-based support from people who have the hands-on and lived experience of caring for an asbestos related disease sufferer and offered information about treatment options, medical practitioners and specialist dust litigators.

Over the last decade, the Bernie Banton Foundation has supported over 1,100 asbestos related disease sufferers and family members. Through their advocacy efforts, the Foundation has reached over 14 million Australians, sharing the important message about the risks of asbestos exposure and advocating for ongoing research to help current and future asbestos related disease sufferers.

"I'm extremely proud of what the Bernie Banton Foundation has achieved in the last decade," said Karen Banton, CEO at the Bernie Banton Foundation.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is our peer-based support program for asbestos related disease sufferers and their families. My partner in the Foundation and in life, Rod Smith, has done an incredible job driving this program.

“The Foundation was instrumental in advocating for changes to the Dust Diseases Board (DDB), which has resulted in vastly improved lead times concerning the registration process for dust disease claimants being accepted.

“We partnered with icare™ Dust Diseases Care, via the Dust Diseases Board's Grants Program, to fund the distribution of asbestos disease support brochures to GP waiting rooms across New South Wales. In over two and a half years, the average uptake rate has been 2,000 brochures per month. It is anticipated by the end of this program in May 2020, the program will have reached over 70,000 people.

“The Foundation’s advocacy has also led to more funding for palliative care and more awareness of the risks of asbestos exposure.

“Now, after twenty years of advocacy for victims, Rod and I both losing a spouse to mesothelioma cancer, and ten years with the Foundation, it’s finally time for us to retire and spend some much needed time together as a family.

“We’re ready to pass the baton to the other asbestos related disease organisations already carrying out the good work of supporting victims and their loved ones and raising awareness of the risks of exposure.

“We encourage government, organisations and advocates to continue their support for asbestos awareness as a means to prevent future asbestos exposure and also for medical research into asbestos related diseases in an effort to discover new treatments toward ultimately finding a cure.

“Bernie was a major force in the fight for justice and compensation for asbestos related disease sufferers. It has been an honour to continue Bernie’s legacy of supporting victims and their loved ones.”

For more information on the Bernie Banton Foundation visit www.berniebanton.com.au