

MPGA unites in fight against asbestos diseases

Brett Peake and Dean Harnett are a couple of well-known characters in MPGA circles. And they are now the "pin-up boys" for MPGA's campaign to raise awareness and support research into asbestos diseases.

According to the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia, there's a new wave of asbestos disease sufferers emerging – those involved in home renovations, extensions and maintenance tasks that may expose them to asbestos – often without their knowledge. Over the next decade, ADSA expects up to 50,000 people to be diagnosed.

And plumbers are in that at-risk category. So MPGA has launched the campaign to raise funds that will be donated to ADSA, and through them to Professor Anna Nowak who leads a team of mesothelioma researchers at the University of Western Australia and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

But Brett and Dean are not just involved for their pretty faces. Both have connections and responsibilities that make their involvement in this important cause a little more personal.



Dean Harnett (left) and Brett Peake

As a field officer supporting and mentoring plumbing apprentices with MPA Skills, former AFL professional Brett meets regularly with MPGA members and is well known to our next generation of plumbers currently learning the trade. He says apprentices need to be constantly reminded of health and safety issues they may face on the job and asbestos poses a significant risk.

"The issue with asbestos is that it poses long-term health risks rather than immediate safety risks," Brett said. "It's relatively easy to make people aware of safety risks things when they are just one step from immediate harm, but when the effects may not be evident for 20 or 30 years, the lessons are much harder to teach."

"But the fact is there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos and it is everywhere, so we need to publicise the risks broadly and loudly and hopefully the message will start to be understood."

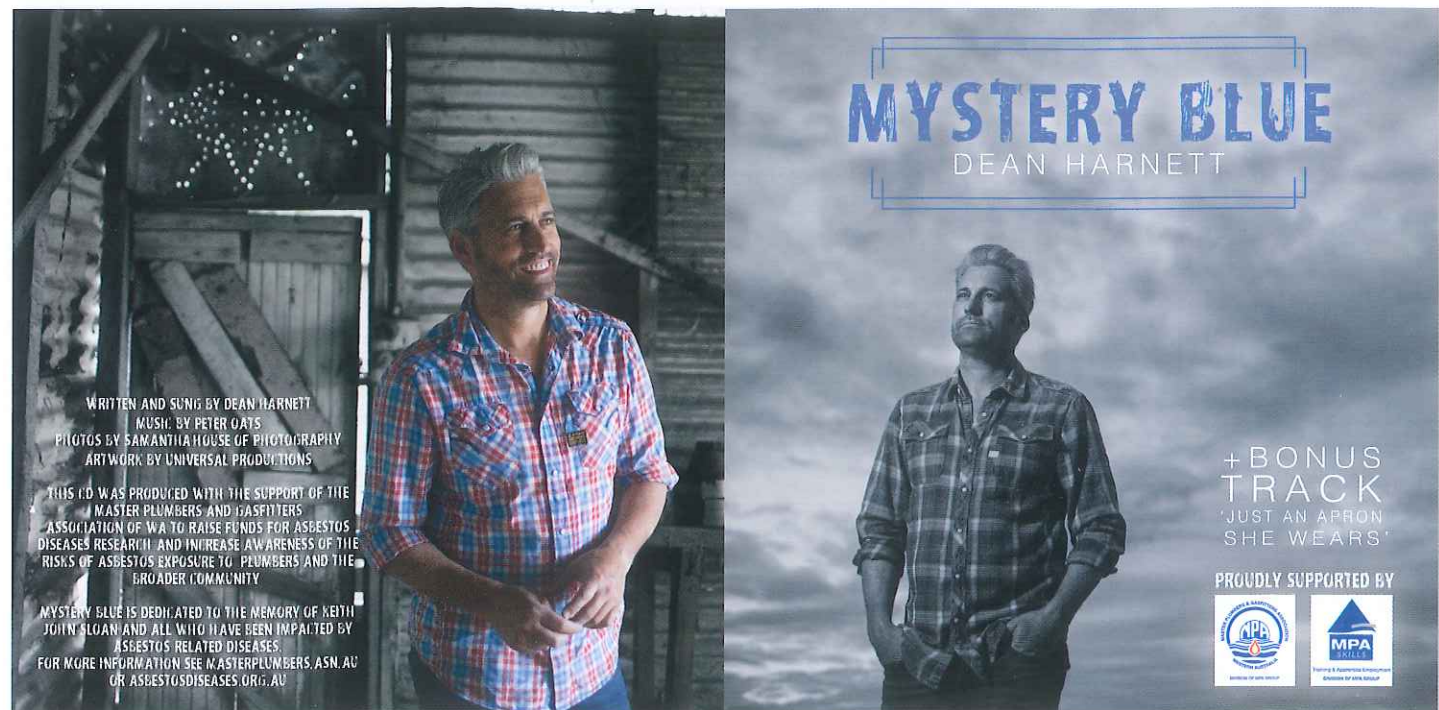
Dean owns his own contracting business, Harnett Plumbing, and is a long-time MPGA member. But he's also an accomplished singer and songwriter who's penned and recorded a number of his own works.

One of those is Mystery Blue, a poignant reminder of the tragic dangers of asbestos. Inspired by the death of a good friend's father from mesothelioma, Mystery Blue captures the real essence of how people can be unknowingly exposed to asbestos fibres in their everyday lives and the suffering and inevitable death that comes years later.

"I was on holiday with my family a few years ago and my mate phoned to say his Dad had died," Dean said.

"That really hit me hard and I felt I had to do something, so we packed up, went home and I started writing Mystery Blue that same day."

"As a plumber, I know I'm in a high risk category and I know there's a lot of innocent people who could be impacted over the coming years. So I'll do whatever it takes to raise funds and awareness, and hopefully that will help work toward far better treatments and cures for asbestos-related diseases."



With the support of MPGA, Dean has released Mystery Blue on CD and copies are being sold on the counters of a range of retail and trade outlets around the State. All proceeds will be contributed to the fundraising campaign.

It has also become the theme song for MPGA's campaign, which culminates with Brett and Dean participating in ADSA's Annual Walk for Research and Awareness. The walk takes place between over six days in September between Perth and

Geraldton, with walkers completing sections along the route. It culminates with a march from Perth Train Station to Parliament House.

MPGA has set a fundraising target of at least \$30,000, which we hope to achieve before the walk concludes on September 16th. To learn more about the story and to donate, please visit chuffed.org/project/plumbers-for-asbestos-diseases-research or contact MPGA.

