



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Kgalagadi Relief Trust Utilises AGM to Remind Communities of Critical Asbestos Issues**

The Kgalagadi Relief Trust, which was formed in March 2006, held its annual general meeting in Johannesburg today.

Chairman of the KRT, Phiroshaw Camay, said it was critically important to remember the dangers which asbestos still presented despite the fact that it was no longer mined in South Africa. He also urged all mineworkers to take advantage of the legal provision which entitled them to a free medical examination from the MBOD every second year. He reminded workers and their families that a post-mortem examination is conducted, if they suspect a family member has died of an asbestos-related disease. Such a post-mortem report is critical for the claims process.

He emphasised that advocacy campaigns for improved public sector examination and treatment services as well as a major review and improved compensation system were issues which should remain on the national agenda. It was time government implemented a review and enactment of new legislation for improved occupational compensation, and collapsed all the activities into a single authority which should operate speedily and, effectively and efficiently to pay workers compensation rightfully due to them. In addition the national environmental department should fulfil its legislative mandate to responsibly rehabilitate mining areas. The Department of Mining and Mineral Resources should also ensure that mine closures were closely monitored and mining companies did not abscond their legislative duties and obligations to mining communities.

Those who are eligible to claim from the KRT are:

- Workers who were employed at the mines operated by KCBA and/or DCBA between 1952 and 1981, and who have been diagnosed with an asbestos-related disease with mild to moderate or severe lung function impairment.
- Dependants of any former employee who died from mesothelioma or asbestos-related lung cancer less than three years before the claim was lodged.
- Community members who have contracted an asbestos-related disease from having lived in the vicinity of the above-mentioned mines.

"In addition to the effective management of the Trust, the KRT has also felt it important to stay in close touch with the communities with which it works. Therefore, the KRT continues to fund and promote support to various community projects – which helps our learning about the behaviour of asbestos-related diseases and the continued impact of asbestos on communities."

*18 September 2013*

The Kuruman Palliative Care Project, funded by the Asbestos Relief Trust and Kgalagadi Relief Trust jointly, is one such project. The Palliative Care Project is predicated on the fact that there is a lack of essential services to communities affected by asbestos-related diseases including adequate health care in the Kuruman area; lack of hospice facilities; lack of an effective environmental rehabilitation programme and on-going need for information and evaluation on the dangers of asbestos. Mr Camay said the palliative care nurse employed by the programme provides medical, psychological and social support to claimants and their families in the district. She has actively engaged in alerting the community on the dangers of various cancers and has provided relief through the distribution of oxygen concentrators to cancer sufferers in the district. This was rightfully an obligation that the provincial authorities should be responsible for, but was undertaken by the KRT, in the absence of a sympathetic health service. He thanked the generosity of the Swiss donor organisation which had donated oxygen concentrators to alleviate the plight of mesothelioma sufferers

Since inception, the KRT has paid some R80, 6million to 1255 claimants. Some claimants who were diagnosed with asbestosis have since developed an asbestos related cancer and have successfully lodged a second claim.

Together with his fellow Trustees, Brian Gibson and Dr Markus Heitz, Mr Camay said the Trustees were pleased with the results that they had achieved so far.