



**Hanson Renouf  
Advocates**

6<sup>th</sup> March, 2014

For the attention of the Scrutiny Panel  
Scrutiny Office  
Morier House  
Halkett Place  
St Helier  
JE1 1DD

Dear Sirs

**Re Scrutiny Panel – Radon**

I should be grateful if this letter could be included in the deliberations of the Scrutiny Panel.

As a result of the death of my father of lung cancer (who was a non-smoker) I took an interest in the potential causes of lung cancer.

Smoking, of course, is one of the main causes but there are many others that can cause mutation of cells in the lungs and cancer. Professor Seckle of Charing Cross Hospital, London informed me that fumes from kerosene fires or asbestos fibres can set up chronic inflammation leading to DNA damage and ultimately cancer for example. He further referred me to the dangers arising from radon gas.

My father passed away in 2011 after an illness of a little more than a year and I therefore pursued my own research into this area. I still do not know what led to my father's death but I was alarmed at the time to discover the significance of radon to lung cancer and the fact that the States of Jersey had not taken any recent action to promote public awareness and, further, to carry out more extensive surveys than those which were done in the 1980s/1990s. Such surveys had demonstrated that a significant percentage of houses tested were above the radon threshold and required remedial action.

With the assistance of Deputy Paul Le Claire, we put together a Proposition which was passed by the States and led to the publication of a report in July 2013 entitled "Cancer in Jersey". I remain indebted to the former Deputy for his assistance in promoting awareness of this particular danger.

The 2013 report estimated that 1 person in Jersey died every 3 to 4 years as a result of lung cancer caused by radon. In addition there were 2 cases per year where radon combined with smoking led to lung cancer. The report further stated that lung cancer is 25% higher in Jersey than in the South West of England. It correctly highlighted the need to reduce smoking and to protect people generally from the risk of smoke.

The 2013 report confirmed the danger posed by radon gas and that in an Island which suffers from geological features that lead to radon gas coming from the ground, there is a need to educate the public as to the dangers and the protective measures that can be

employed. I am somewhat concerned, however, that because the estimates provided were not more substantial and that there are other areas to work on, that the dangers of radon and the various protective measures that could be employed in older houses in the Island, has lost some of its prominence. Moreover, it is important to appreciate that the 2013 report are only estimates and if one looks at other guidance and material provided in many other jurisdictions, the dangers and mortality rates ascribed to radon are far higher. The United Nations World Health Organisation in 2009 stated that "radon is the second most important cause of lung cancer after smoking in many countries". The United States Environmental Protection Agency states that radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

Accordingly, the estimates contained in the 2013 Jersey report are worrying but it is respectfully submitted that these figures may ultimately turn out to be a gross under estimate as time goes on and more data becomes available.

Ultimately, as in my father's case, it is usually very difficult to ascribe any single factor to lung cancer. Even the inhalation of asbestos may not reveal the presence of asbestos fibres upon a post-mortem.

Radon is merely one of the many aspects that needs to be continually addressed, with the encouragement as to the use of radon monitoring equipment and increased public awareness. Smoking and drinking are obviously at the core of any health protection campaign. However, the recent inquest into the death of Mr Keith Shaw demonstrates the need for greater public awareness as to the dangers posed by asbestos and the need for asbestos management plans to be compiled in all public buildings.

Yours faithfully 

**Advocate Timothy Hanson**  
**Partner**