
NSW Environment Protection Authority

Asbestos in NSW: Next Horizon

December 2022



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An aerial photograph of a stream flowing through a dense, green forest. The water is dark and turbulent, cascading over large, brownish rocks. The surrounding vegetation is thick and vibrant green, with some bare branches visible. The overall scene is natural and serene.

Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Asbestos Coordination Committee acknowledges the traditional custodians as the first protectors of the land, water, sea and sky on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We recognise the ongoing connection of traditional custodians to their land, their waters and surrounding communities and acknowledge their ancient history here on this land.

We also acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who are an integral part of the diverse workforce of NSW State and local governments and recognise the knowledge embedded forever in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodianship of Country and cultures.

We specifically acknowledge the damage done to Country and communities through the mining, manufacture and use of asbestos, and recognise the need to work with Aboriginal communities in Healing Country.

Dharawal Country, Royal National Park, NSW

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Message from the Chair of the NSW Asbestos Coordination Committee

In 2022 the NSW Asbestos Coordination Committee (NACC) lifted its eyes to look at a five year horizon to identify how we can reduce unsafe exposure to asbestos in our communities, in our homes and in our workplaces. This built on the strategic work that the Committee did in 2021 which focussed on immediate priorities and actions for 2021 and 2022.

I'm pleased to say that since the Committee was formed in late 2020, we have made some real progress.

In this report, *Asbestos in NSW: Next Horizon*, we report back to NSW about delivering on the actions that we committed to in 2021 in *Asbestos in NSW: Setting the Direction*. We are committed to holding ourselves accountable.

Just as importantly, this report lays the issues and themes that the NACC believes are critical to reducing our risk from asbestos in NSW looking at a longer-term, five year horizon. From this we will build a strategic agenda to put to government for support, using the collective voice of the 11 diverse government agencies, Local Government NSW, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council that sit on the NACC. We are also pleased to have the Commonwealth Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency support us as an observer on the Committee.

The agencies within the NACC, representing all levels of governments and Aboriginal land councils, have shown great dedication and commitment to working to the actions in the *Setting the Direction* this past year and I thank each and every one of them. I'd also like to thank our industry partners and stakeholder groups who continue to raise awareness and support a common goal.

I look forward to what we can achieve going forward.

Carolyn Walsh

Independent Chair of the NSW
Asbestos Coordination Committee Introduction

Asbestos is dangerous – more than 4,000 people still die from asbestos-related disease in Australia every year. This is four times the annual national road toll. Australia was one of the highest users of asbestos in the world, and it is estimated that asbestos is present in one-in-three Australian homes. This has long-term implications for our health systems and the management of our built and natural environments.

Asbestos that is well managed through identification, management and removal and disposal significantly reduces any risks we have from the material.

Asbestos is a complex, multi-faceted issue to address effectively. It takes effort from across State, local and Commonwealth governments as well as industry and community.

The NSW Asbestos Coordination Committee (NACC) is a high-level group established in 2020 to drive a strategic, coordinated approach to asbestos, with issues that need collaboration from across agencies and levels of government. (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Members of the NSW Asbestos Coordination Committee

Department of Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs NSW	Observer – Australian Government Asbestos Safety and Education Agency
Department of Planning and Environment	Observer – NSW Ombudsman
Fire and Rescue NSW	Office of Local Government
icare	Property and Development NSW
Local Government NSW	Public Works Advisory
NSW Aboriginal Land Council	Resilience NSW
NSW Environment Protection Authority	SafeWork NSW
NSW Health	

What is our next horizon?

There are many pathways the NSW government can take to respond to asbestos. Frameworks already exist for many of the places in which asbestos appears such as waste streams and workplace safety. But there is always room to improve and better connect existing systems together.

We can and should be ambitious in the goals we set. In 2021, the NACC launched its first strategic agenda: **Asbestos in NSW: Setting the Direction 2021–2022** (Setting the Direction) to signal its ambitious goals and to drive action at a strategic level.

Setting the Direction focused work on five immediate priority areas:

- Asbestos in discrete Aboriginal communities
- Improving asbestos waste disposal
- Legacy asbestos fill sites
- Improving asbestos awareness
- Understanding the economic impact of asbestos in NSW.

This document sets out the longer-term agenda for NSW over the next 5 years that will be driven by State, local and Commonwealth agencies participating on the NACC as well as peak bodies for local government and Aboriginal land councils. The NACC’s priorities will continue to align with the outcomes set in the **National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management 2019–23**.

This document follows on from Setting the Direction, bringing these immediate issues into a broader vision. It also provides a report back on the progress made in tackling the issues described under Setting the Direction since 2021.

Our goal

Our ultimate goal is to eliminate asbestos-related disease.

This is supported by an outcomes framework which breaks down how we can do this (Figure 2).

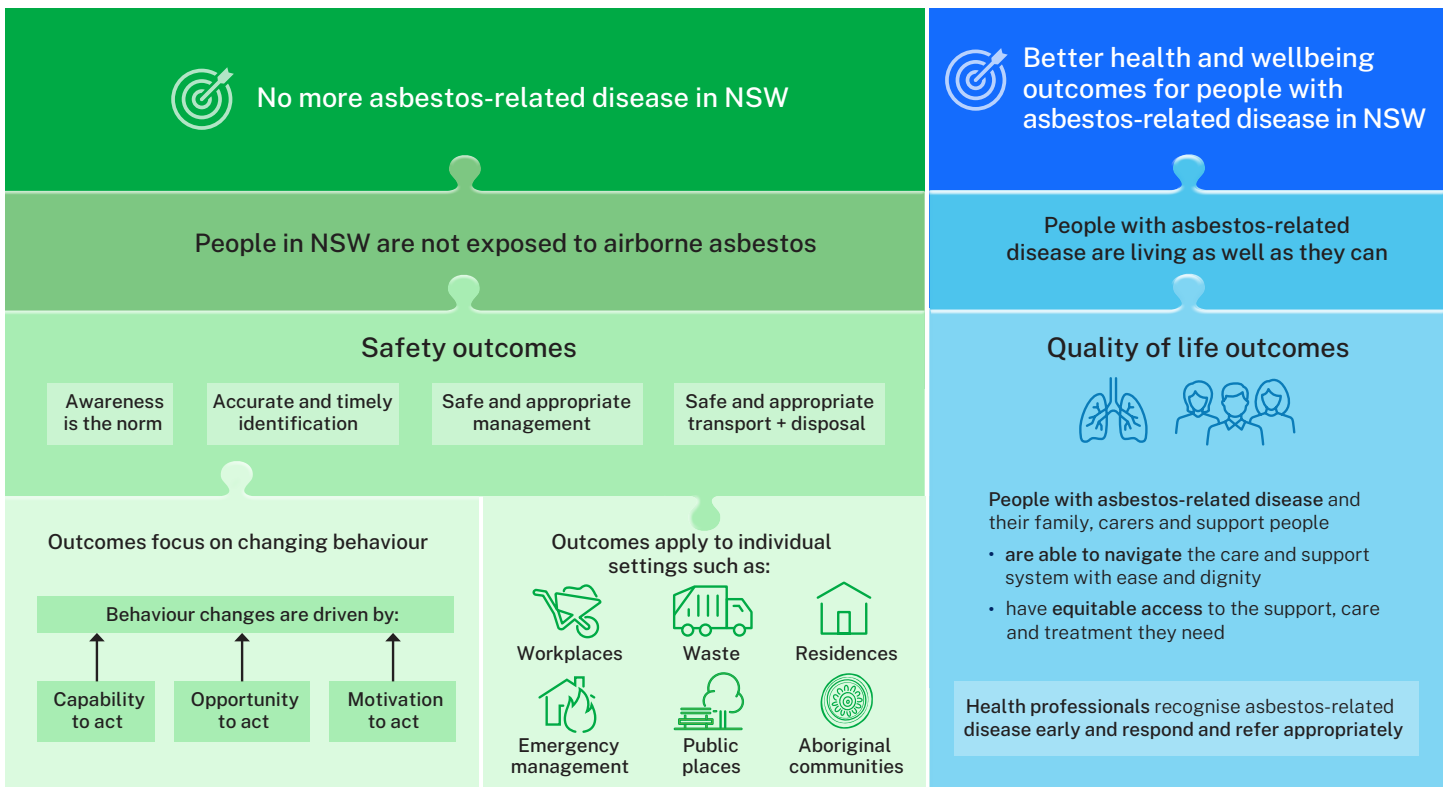


Figure 2: Outcomes framework for asbestos in NSW

What has NSW achieved and learnt?

Asbestos management has been a part of the NSW built environment since the early 20th century. An estimated 6.4 million tonnes of asbestos is still in the built environment around Australia (*An Australian stocks and flows model for asbestos*, 2021, ASEA).

Land managers remove thousands of tonnes of asbestos every year from buildings and land. We need to keep doing this, but it can't be our only focus. The wholesale removal of asbestos from the built environment is cost prohibitive to governments, industry and homeowners.

We need to normalise living safely around asbestos. We need systems to drive safe behaviours.

Our choices as government agencies have been driven by assessing risk, aided by better data and research. NSW has benefited from research undertaken by the Commonwealth Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (ASEA), all of which is available online.

We have also learnt that we can make change through many smaller wins. In 2010, the NSW Ombudsman issued a report recommending a change in NSW government's handling of asbestos. Since that time NSW has:

- Reached out to the entire NSW community to raise awareness about asbestos through repeated campaigns.
- Published a single point for asbestos information in NSW – asbestos.nsw.gov.au.
- Mapped areas of naturally occurring asbestos across NSW.
- Removed 50,451 tonnes of asbestos damaged by the 2019-20 bushfires, and removed 1,757 tonnes of flood-affected asbestos waste under the levy exemption at NSW facilities from March 2021 to present.
- Built good practice and consistency in asbestos management across local councils with the Model Asbestos Policy, now adopted by over 90% of councils.
- Completed 'make-safe' work on properties impacted by legacy asbestos from manufacturing.
- Under the loose fill asbestos ('Mr Fluffy' asbestos insulation) program-inspected 71,213 homes and demolished or remediated 152 properties in NSW affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation since 2015.

- Funded rehabilitation of legacy asbestos sites such as Woodsreef Mine.
- Funded removal and remediation of some discrete Aboriginal communities across NSW.
- Supported 5,261 clients who are workers with an occupational dust disease and their dependants. About 83% of cases compensated are due to an asbestos related dust disease.
- Introduced harsher penalties for the unlawful management of asbestos waste by amendments to the Protection of Environment Operations Act 1997.
- Changed the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 to allow SafeWork NSW to issue on-the-spot fines to workers for asbestos-related offences.

The Ombudsman's second Report in **2017** was more positive about the progress made in NSW and put forward additional recommendations.

Through all of this, we have learnt we can't solve the problems asbestos causes unless we work together. None of our successes would have been possible without the willingness of government agencies and peak bodies to come together to solve problems jointly.

Going forward we know that we have to make some strategic decisions about where to act and what to prioritise. A clear focus is our only chance of continuing success.

Next Horizons priority issues

The NACC has consulted widely with industry, victims groups, asbestos professionals, and local government about critical issues to address in NSW.

Priority issues have been chosen based on risk, opportunity and impact. They provide a focus for the work of the NACC and lay the foundations for a long-term strategy with deliverables, which will be put to the NSW Government for adoption. This will not lessen work on the 'business as usual' matters that don't require inter-agency collaboration.

As well as a focus on safety, the NACC is focussed on better outcomes for people with asbestos-related disease and their families. This has not been possible for the NACC to develop further, given the work of the NSW health system in responding to the pandemic.

Summary table of NACC's priority issues

Keeping people safe

Priority issue	Where does it arise?	Key safety outcomes	Possible responses
Asbestos awareness in community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness is the norm 	Policy, communication
Asbestos training for workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness is the norm 	Legislation, policy
Asbestos in homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness is the norm Accurate and timely identification 	Legislation, policy

Dealing with the legacy

Priority issue	Where does it arise?	Key safety outcomes	Possible responses
Asbestos in discrete Aboriginal Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe and appropriate management 	Removal and/or remediation
Legacy asbestos fill sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes Workplaces Public places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe and appropriate management 	Removal and/or remediation
Ageing asbestos materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes Workplaces Public places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate and timely identification Safe and appropriate management Safe and appropriate transport and disposal 	Legislation, policy, removal, systems

Improving systems

Priority issue	Where does it arise?	Key safety outcomes	Possible responses
Improving asbestos waste disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe and appropriate transport and disposal 	Legislation, policy, systems
Disaster waste management and communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency management Waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe and appropriate transport and disposal 	Systems, communication

Analysis to underpin a long-term strategy

Priority issue	Where does it arise?	Key safety outcomes	Possible responses
Economic analysis of the impact of asbestos in NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All outcomes 	Data and analysis

Keeping people safe

Asbestos awareness in community

1 in 3 homes contain asbestos



Be asbestos ready



Problem

Over 4000 people die of asbestos-related disease every year – four times the national road toll. An estimated one-in-three homes contains asbestos, and one-in-five renovations.

The fastest growing groups of disease-sufferers are homeowners, DIY renovators and tradespeople – indicating where the large risk groups are.

Social research in NSW and nationally shows the community is not aware of where asbestos could be in buildings, how to identify it or how to be safe around asbestos when they do come across it. They also don't know where to source reliable information.

Outcomes sought

- All people that come into contact with asbestos have the knowledge and confidence to deal with it safely.
- That awareness about asbestos and how to keep safe is the norm in NSW.

Key issues to address

- **Changing the social norm** around managing asbestos in homes. This will take time and consistent effort from government and industry to embed change but is absolutely critical. Education and awareness campaigns are key, plus the right information at the right time.
- **Providing the right support** to community members to help them act. Once messages have been heard, the community needs to find good advice and professional help easily and cost effectively.

Awareness – a universal issue

50%	Almost 50% of adults in NSW currently live in properties built before 1990 - which could contain asbestos.
18%	Fewer than one in 5 (18%) of people claim to know about asbestos.
52%	Over half (52%) have no idea how to dispose of asbestos if they found it on their property.
48%	48% of renovators do not have a specific plan for dealing with asbestos.

Source: Asbestos Safety Part 1 – Household Renovations and Maintenance 2019, EPA



Asbestos training for workers



Credit: Campbelltown City Council, Coates Registered Training Organisation and Local Government NSW.

Problem

Training is a universal need for those who work around asbestos – everyone from tradespeople, home renovators and council workers.

Work health and safety laws require that if you are working around or with asbestos you are trained in safe asbestos management, but the quality and effectiveness of training can vary substantially. Tradespeople are often trained as part of their apprenticeship but training is not refreshed later.

Work health and safety laws don't apply to do-it-yourself renovators (they are not paid workers), so no training is required.

Outcomes sought

- That all workers who come into contact with asbestos have the knowledge and confidence to deal with it safely.
- That awareness about asbestos and how to keep safe is the norm in NSW.

Key issues to address

- **Vocational training** for workers entering trades is a focus of the ASEA as a nation-wide issue. NSW supports the ASEA recommendation to get accredited, consistent training across Australia.
- **Training for other workers** across a diverse range of occupations is still subject to work health and safety laws requiring training, but is variable or not maintained.
- **DIY renovators and handy people** currently fall through gaps and there is no mandatory training requirement when working on your home. Some other states and territories have schemes to capture this group.

Training

32% of tradespeople and paid handy people in NSW had not completed any training on asbestos.

29% of those who had completed training had done so over 5 years ago.

Source: Asbestos Safety Part 1 – Household Renovations and Maintenance 2019, EPA

Asbestos in homes



Problem

Property owners are often not aware that any home built before 1990 could contain asbestos. If owners do know about asbestos, they may be reluctant to disclose this to buyers or tenants if there is no legal requirement to do so.

This unknown means residents or workers are at risk of being exposed to asbestos fibres when asbestos materials are damaged or disturbed during building work, or if asbestos-containing building materials deteriorate. In fact residents and building trades workers are turning up in the disease statistics, suffering from mesothelioma and other asbestos-related diseases. This is often called the ‘third wave’ of asbestos disease sufferers. This is not an issue in commercial buildings, which are required to have asbestos registers under work health and safety laws.

Outcomes sought

- Property owners are aware of the presence and location of asbestos.

Key issues to address

- There is **currently no specific requirement** for a purchaser or occupier of a residence in NSW to be informed where asbestos is or may be in a

residential building. Introducing a requirement may lead to unintended effects, including devaluing of older homes, or presenting people with difficult information.

- **Property owners may not be aware that their property contains asbestos**, or if they are, may not disclose this information to buyers or tenants if not required to do so by law.
- **Providing the right framework for notification** – In some cases there are inconsistent provisions in various legislation about asbestos that could be confusing.

Asbestos in homes

65% of NSW homeowners have not had their home assessed for asbestos.

39% of homeowners that did have their homes assessed, had a tradesperson have a ‘quick look’ (noting that in most cases asbestos cannot be definitely identified by sight).

Source: Instinct and Reason 2017, internal report.

Dealing with the legacy

Asbestos in discrete Aboriginal communities



Problem

There are 61 discrete Aboriginal communities (DACs) located on former Aboriginal missions and reserve lands in NSW.

The lands are now owned by Local Aboriginal Land Councils under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* in 1983 (NSW). When Aboriginal lands were returned to communities, the legacy of asbestos housing and waste came with the land. The presence of asbestos in these communities can be extensive and is deteriorating, which increases the health risk for community members and anyone working in those spaces.

Local Aboriginal Land Councils (not all of which contain DACs) also own other land and provide significant housing for their communities. Asbestos can be extensive in these contexts too.

Communities are often regional or remote, increasing the difficulty of managing or removing asbestos and accessing specialist knowledge.

Communities lack funding to manage or remove asbestos.

Outcomes sought

- Asbestos in discrete Aboriginal communities and in Aboriginal Community owned housing is actively and safely managed.
- Aboriginal people understand the risks of asbestos, how to stay safe and who to contact if help is needed.

Key issues to address

- **Significant funding is required** to remove or remediate asbestos in DACs. There are no other options available to resolve this significant legacy issue in these vulnerable communities. Of the 61 DACs it is estimated that problem asbestos is present in around half. Existing funding is piecemeal and extremely limited, with demand far exceeding the ability to respond. The extent of asbestos in Aboriginal Community owned housing is not yet known, and needs to be assessed as a first step.

- **Asbestos is preventing other government programs** from delivering in these communities. For example, the Roads to Home program is providing significant infrastructure such as roads and lighting, and opportunities to subdivide land. Asbestos is a significant barrier to this program, preventing government investment from achieving its purpose and blocking economic advantage for Aboriginal communities.
- **Funding decisions need to be prioritised.** The NACC has prioritised the removal of asbestos from DACs as a first issue, to maximise the impact of government investment in DACs. Asbestos in Aboriginal Community owned housing will continue to be an issue of focus for the medium term. In both spaces, funding decisions need to be made according to fair and transparent criteria.

Legacy asbestos fill sites



Problem

As part of previous manufacturing processes, asbestos waste was used to fill land (largely in Western Sydney) at multiple locations between the 1950s and 1970s. This has resulted in legacy land contamination for hundreds of residential, commercial and industrial properties, and public open spaces.

Innocent landowners are significantly affected by reduced property values, limitations on the use of the property and potential health risks. Infrastructure development, such as new road corridors, has also been affected.

Over recent years the City of Parramatta Council and State Government landowners have remediated some affected sites.

Outcomes sought

- That the community is not exposed to legacy waste from previous asbestos manufacturing industries used as fill on public and private land.

Key issues to address

- **Existing ‘make safe’ works are effective, but have a limited life span of a few years.** The EPA has assessed all residential sites and offered work to private landowners to make their land safe. Many, but not all, have taken up this offer. These ‘make-safe’ works are effective but temporary.
- **Significant funding is required for a long-term resolution.** It will be complex and expensive.

Ageing asbestos materials



Problem

Australia was one of the highest users of asbestos in the world. All asbestos materials are now coming to their end of life. As they deteriorate the risk of airborne asbestos fibres increases. The need to manage or remove these materials from the built environment also then increases.

Incidents such as a devastating fire in the former wool store in Wickham (Newcastle) in 2022 have highlighted the risks from asbestos roofing – often called ‘super six’ roofing – when it is left to weather and in the case of the Wickham woolstore, to burn. The costs to councils, response agencies, government regulators and affected communities to respond and make property safe are extraordinary.

The issue of ageing asbestos is compounded when buildings containing these materials are left abandoned, become derelict and are often burnt (due to house fires or vandalism). This is a particular problem in rural and regional NSW where property values can make it difficult to recover the cost of asbestos removal and clean-up. Councils are often left to respond to public health risks and community concerns and incur the cost for clean-up.

Outcomes sought

- Owners of burnt and derelict properties remove the asbestos risk in a safe and timely manner.
- Regulatory, insurance and other systems support owners to remove asbestos in a safe and timely manner.

Key issues to address

- **There are many asbestos materials, and we need to choose our focus.** With asbestos found in over 3,000 products, we need to make decisions on the most important materials to focus on now, based on risk, prevalence, cost and/or other factors.
- **Effective management needs to centre around preventing exposure.** There are many options for government to respond from funding, to incentives, to policy or legislative change, and industry practices.
- **Balancing rights of property owners and their ability to respond.** Any solutions need to carefully consider any requirements on property owners or councils, and can potentially affect property values.
- **Tackling landlord/tenant and owner/occupier scenarios.** The risks of ageing asbestos materials may be the same whether a building is rented or owner-occupied. The way asbestos is managed in both situations will have different frameworks and constraints.

Improving systems

Improving asbestos waste disposal



Problem

The cost and inconvenience of asbestos disposal is often raised as a major influence over whether asbestos is disposed of safely and legally.

Many factors contribute to inappropriate disposal: perceived and actual costs, access to suitable disposal facilities, the need to separate asbestos from other materials before sending it to waste facilities, and tracking asbestos waste from site to landfill. Asbestos cannot be recycled and has only one destination – landfill. If not handled safely and legally, it will contaminate other recyclable materials and prevent them from circulating back into the economy.

The EPA has targeted many of these factors through the *NSW Asbestos Waste Strategy 2019–2021*. Ongoing work in partnership with state and local government agencies will be critical to the integrated management of end-of-life asbestos waste.

Outcomes sought

- Householders and businesses understand what they need to do to dispose of asbestos waste safely and legally.
- When people transport and dispose of asbestos in NSW, good practice is the norm and bad practice is rare.
- Everybody who transports and disposes of asbestos waste finds it easy and affordable to do legally and safely.

Key issues to address

- **Asbestos can contaminate recyclable materials.** Waste transport and disposal systems need to facilitate separation of asbestos from recyclable materials. This also applies to separation systems at the source site of the asbestos materials.
- **Unexpected finds of asbestos can lead to less safe and legal disposal.** When the presence of asbestos is known before building work starts, it can save on delays and extra costs, according to NSW research (*Asbestos Safety Part 1 – Household Renovations and Maintenance 2019*, EPA). Identification is key.
- **Asbestos removal and disposal needs careful management** for the safety of all from site to landfill, and to ensure a ‘chain of custody’ from beginning to end. This adds immediate costs and time upfront, but minimises longer-term health and environmental impacts down the line.
- **Landfill charges are not the main cost driver for disposal.** Costs for asbestos disposal depend on many factors including quantity and type of asbestos, and whether it is separated from other materials. The EPA has consulted with stakeholders on the removal of the waste levy from householder amounts of asbestos, charged on waste as it enters landfill. It will be part of the EPA’s waste levy review in 2023.

Disaster waste management and communications



Problem

The frequency and severity of natural disasters is predicted to increase. Natural disasters like fires and flooding can damage asbestos-containing materials that were previously safe, which increases the potential for fibres to become airborne.

During natural disasters local and state government agencies need to scale up their activities quickly and work within the State Emergency Management Plan framework. The management of asbestos waste in these incidents involves collaboration and preparation on many levels.

A response involves multiple agencies and contractors managing the safe and legal removal of large amounts of waste quickly. All parts of the response system need to know how to act and collaborate closely. This includes communicating information about asbestos sensitively to people who are affected by the trauma of disasters.

Outcomes sought

- Local and state government agencies can safely dispose of disaster waste.
- Communities impacted by disasters and emergencies know how to safely manage asbestos.
- There is consistent messaging across response and recovery agencies about asbestos.

Key issues to address

- **Clear and consistent information about asbestos needs to be available to the community quickly once they return to their properties.** ASEA reviewed national disaster asbestos waste communications in **June 2021** and found that this has historically been inconsistent, out-of-date, not easily found and was slow to be disseminated.
- **There needs to be enough disposal capacity in NSW to handle waste from disasters.** Often waste disposal facilities are affected by the same disaster, meaning other options need to be available to quickly and safely manage large amounts of asbestos disaster waste. Strategic planning for waste solutions led by local communities to develop regional solutions may be a way forward.
- **Response agencies need to know how to safely and legally handle disaster asbestos waste.** While the emergency management framework has plans in place at a high level, there is a need for more detailed operational planning. This is particularly complex because multiple agencies are involved in different aspects of the disaster response.

What have we achieved under Setting the Direction?

Organisations that participate on the NACC deliver many programs and functions around asbestos as part of their day-to-day business. These are included in their Annual Reports and other reporting.

The actions prioritised by the NACC in Setting the Direction, and outlined below inherently don't fit within any one agency's business-as-usual work. Good progress has been made on issues that need support from multiple agencies.

Priority 1: Asbestos in discrete Aboriginal communities (DACs)

When Aboriginal lands were returned to communities, the legacy of asbestos housing and waste came with the land. The challenge of asbestos removal is often magnified because of remoteness, funding and access to appropriate specialists.

Actions

Major recent achievements

Action 1: The EPA will develop and deploy an asbestos education and awareness program for NSW Aboriginal communities.

- Through the 'Be Asbestos Ready' campaign (Action 11), Aboriginal community members across NSW are a specific target audience for asbestos safety messages. This has been successful so far with indigenous specific channels performing well.
- Education and awareness will continue to be tailored for specific communities as part of work undertaken in DAC's.
- In addition to education and awareness, NACC agencies provided vocational training to community members in asbestos removal. These community members have then been employed by asbestos contractors on a temporary basis while works are undertaken.

Action 2: The EPA will continue to use existing funding to clean up asbestos in Aboriginal communities.

- The EPA has worked in Baryulgil community to remove and make-safe legacy asbestos.
- The EPA has started work in the Wallaga Lake community to remove and make-safe legacy asbestos.
- The EPA has funded the removal of cottages containing asbestos in Birrigan Gargle community.

Action 3: The NACC will develop criteria and options to prioritise government effort and investment to clean up asbestos in discrete Aboriginal communities.

- A prioritisation framework for communities is under development.

Action 4: The EPA and the DPE will partner through the Roads to Home Program to coordinate efforts from the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program, Aboriginal Communities Waste Management Program, Aboriginal Lands Clean-up Program, Aboriginal Communities Bushfire Clean-up Program, Housing for Health, and improvements to Aboriginal housing through both the Roads to Home Maintenance Program and Aboriginal Community Housing Investment Fund.

- A new committee has been established to oversee and coordinate programs that work with DACs. It is chaired by Aboriginal Affairs, and agencies on the NACC have been invited to participate. The first meeting was held in October 2022.

Priority 2: Improving asbestos waste disposal

The safe and legal disposal of asbestos comes with costs, and requires planning and effort from the waste generator and others.

Actions

Action 5: The EPA will finalise the design and operation of a scheme which will contribute to reducing the harmful effects of illegally dumped asbestos within the community by waiving the levy from household amounts of bonded, wrapped and separated asbestos.

Action 6: The EPA will undertake an assessment of asbestos waste infrastructure across NSW to identify immediate and emerging market shortfalls, and determine how we meet our critical infrastructure needs.

• **Action 7:** The DPE (Planning and Assessment) will investigate updating the *Managing Land Contamination Planning Guidelines SEPP 55 Remediation of Land (1998)* to provide standard operating procedures for asbestos management and make guidance material on this easy to access.

Action 8: The DPE (Planning and Assessment) will review asbestos identification and management requirements across the range of development pathways, and investigate potential enhancements to improve consistency of approach across pathways.

Major recent achievements

- The EPA conducted targeted consultation with external stakeholders on options to remove the waste levy from household quantities of bonded, separated and wrapped asbestos waste.
- The proposed levy waiver for household asbestos will be considered as part of the upcoming Waste Levy Review. This ensures that there is a more comprehensive assessment of how to put in place efficient and cost-effective solutions to the safe disposal and management of household asbestos consistent with any other proposed amendments to the waste levy framework.

- NSW has commenced drafting of a feasibility assessment of statewide residual waste capacity and needs. This includes for the disposal of asbestos waste. This action is also part of the EPA's Waste Delivery Plan under the Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy (WaSM).

- DPE have prepared draft standardised operational requirements that aim to ensure remediation works not requiring development consent are properly planned and managed to reduce adverse effects on the surrounding community and the environment while being consistently applied.
- These standardised requirements include up to date references of the regulatory framework for managing asbestos and essential guidance material to assist and educate stakeholders on their obligations and best practice for managing asbestos during all phases of remedial works.

- DPE Planning commissioned work to map planning approval pathways and related asbestos controls. This assessment was completed in July 2022. Feedback is currently being incorporated into the final report, which will inform the best areas for the NSW Government to focus its efforts to make the process of managing asbestos easier.

Priority 3: Legacy asbestos fill sites

Asbestos waste was used to fill land at multiple locations around Sydney between the 1950s and 1970s. This legacy land contamination affects hundreds of residential, commercial and industrial properties, and public open spaces.

Actions

Action 9: The EPA will continue to manage the short-term response to identified residential properties and associated interim make-safe works. This will include sampling of newly-identified residential properties as well as the installation or maintenance of interim make-safe works as necessary.

Action 10: Property and Development NSW will work with NACC and council partners to develop long-term options for government to consider.

Major recent achievements

- An EPA Report is close to finalisation, and will be released in late 2022 with a major program of stakeholder engagement.
- Short term make-safe works and community engagement continue.

- An investigation of options for longer-term solutions has been commissioned by PDNSW, with the report expected in mid 2023.

Priority 4: Improving asbestos awareness

The fastest growing group of mesothelioma sufferers are home owners, DIY renovators and tradespeople. Research shows that people are not aware of asbestos in buildings, how to identify it or how to be safe around asbestos when they do find it.

Actions

Action 11: The EPA will release a state-wide awareness campaign targeting do-it-yourself renovators and tradespeople, focusing on where to find asbestos and how to stay safe around it.

Action 12: The EPA will enhance the resources available on asbestos.nsw.gov.au as the source of comprehensive, understandable and reliable information about asbestos in NSW.

Major recent achievements

- A state-wide asbestos awareness campaign was developed, targeting do-it yourself renovators and tradespeople. The first wave ran from April to July 2022, with strong signs of success:
 - 1 in 5 people could recall seeing the campaign after 6 weeks,
 - Awareness that planning can reduce exposure risk increased from 70% to 76%, and
 - Traffic to the NSW government’s asbestos website tripled (asbestos.nsw.gov.au).
 - A second wave of the campaign went live from Nov 2022 to Jan 2023.
- The EPA is currently working to enhance the customer experience of those searching for an asbestos professional. This will create a seamless connection to the Service NSW ‘verify licence’ website.
- A checklist to help community members unpack how to ‘plan ahead’ for asbestos has been developed and is available on the website.

Priority 5: Understanding the economic impact of asbestos in NSW

The impact of asbestos on the NSW economy is vital to support the development of policy responses and funding requests to government.

Actions

Action 13: The EPA will commission an analysis that quantifies the economic impact of asbestos in NSW and assists in identifying priority areas for future action.

Major recent achievements

- Work is continuing to collate existing information and analyses provided by NACC member agencies. This work will identify gaps in our existing knowledge, and will inform how best to scope the commissioned analysis to maximise value and utility.

Accountability

The NACC will continue to report to the community on Setting the Direction.

This Next Horizons document provides the foundation thinking for a five-year strategy on asbestos in NSW. The strategy will include specific actions on each issue, and timeframes for each issue. Some will need action before others.

Once a long-term strategy has been endorsed by the NSW Government, the NACC will coordinate and oversee the actions to address the priority issues and be responsible for reporting of progress against them on an annual basis.

The priority issues and actions will be reviewed every 2 years by the NACC to ensure priorities and actions remain relevant.

The progress reports will be made available to the community through the NSW Government's asbestos website at asbestos.nsw.gov.au.

Who is part of the NSW Asbestos Coordination Committee and what are their roles?

NSW Health

NSW Health provides public health messages about risks from asbestos and expert advice to other government agencies when there is the potential for public exposure to asbestos.

Visit the **NSW Health** website for more information.

NSW Environment Protection Authority

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is the lead agency for the NSW Asbestos Coordination Committee.

The EPA regulates the transport, storage and disposal of asbestos waste; illegally dumped asbestos waste and land contaminated with asbestos.

Visit the **NSW Environment Protection Authority** website for more information.

icare

icare provides compensation for people who have developed work-related dust diseases in NSW and their dependants. icare helps to arrange healthcare, nursing and personal care assistance, mobility aids, oxygen supplies and comprehensive support. icare facilitates lung screening services that employers can organise for workers who are at risk of exposure to harmful dust.

Visit the **Icare** website for more information.

Department of Customer Service (Better Regulation Division)

The Better Regulation Division develops and implements regulations for fair trading, consumer protection, building & construction. It includes overseeing and implementing the Voluntary Purchase and Demolition Program to provide safety, certainty and support for NSW residents affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation.

Visit the **Department of Customer Service** website for more information.

Public Works Advisory

Public Works Advisory supports local and state government agencies to deliver critical infrastructure initiatives by providing expert advisory, planning, delivery and support services.

Visit the **Public Works Advisory** website for more information.

Fire and Rescue

Fire and Rescue NSW is the lead combat agency for hazardous materials (HAZMAT) incidents in NSW. It has the authority to attend, combat and render safe any land-based or inland waterway spillage of hazardous materials. It prioritises life, property, the environment and working with other agencies to provide the best possible outcomes for the community.

Visit the **Fire and Rescue** website for more information.

NSW Aboriginal Land Council

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council is the State's peak representative body in Aboriginal Affairs. It is committed to ensuring a better future for Aboriginal people by working for the return of culturally significant and economically viable land, pursuing cultural, social and economic independence for its people and being politically proactive and voicing the position of Aboriginal people on issues that affect them.

Visit the **NSW Aboriginal Land Council** website for more information.

SafeWork NSW

SafeWork NSW regulates work health and safety laws to prevent harm, manage risk and improve the safety culture in NSW workplaces. SafeWork NSW issues asbestos licenses, verifies the compliance of licence holders, provides technical advice and works with Registered Training Organisations to deliver asbestos training.

Visit the **SafeWork NSW** website for more information.

The Department of Planning and Environment

The Department of Planning and Environment assists the community to manage asbestos through the State Environmental Planning Policies, and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (and associated regulations). For more information on how to safely manage asbestos please see the Department's **asbestos hazards** page.

Visit the **DPE** website for more information.

Office of Local Government

The Office of Local Government is responsible for NSW local councils, which manage asbestos in the community by educating residents, regulating land use and development, and managing waste disposal.

Visit the **Office of Local Government** website for more information.

Local Government NSW

LGNSW is the peak organisation that represents the interests of NSW's general and special purpose councils. LGNSW supports councils to adopt and implement the Model Asbestos Policy for Councils. LGNSW does this through the provision of policy advice, advocacy, forums, training, workshops, online resources and expert advice on asbestos management and regulation.

Visit the **Local Government NSW** website for more information.

Resilience NSW

Resilience NSW leads disaster and emergency efforts from prevention to recovery.

It helps communities rebuild and recover after natural disasters like floods, droughts and bushfires.

Visit the **Resilience NSW** website for more information.

Department of Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs NSW

Aboriginal Affairs NSW works with Aboriginal communities to promote social, economic and cultural wellbeing through opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility and empowerment.

Visit the **Aboriginal Affairs NSW** website for more information.

Observer organisations

NSW Ombudsman

The NSW Ombudsman is independent and impartial. This role involves watching over most public sector and some private sector agencies in NSW and monitoring the way they do their jobs. The Ombudsman's office released two reports about how asbestos is managed in NSW: in 2010 and 2017. The reports made several recommendations that the NSW Government supported in principle, and the Ombudsman continues to monitor how the recommendations are implemented.

Visit the [NSW Ombudsman website](#) for more information.

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

The Australian Government Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency was established in 2013 to coordinate national actions to improve asbestos awareness and the effective and safe management, removal and disposal of asbestos. Working with all levels of government, its aim is to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres in order to eliminate asbestos-related diseases in Australia.

Visit [The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency website](#) for more information.

