Australian Government
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

ASEA REPORTS

Remote Australian communities: The asbestos legacy

FINAL REPORT

As prepared by MATRIX on BOARD CONSULTING

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Report – 03-2017

Foreword

Australia's past use of asbestos in our building products has resulted in an asbestos problem that all levels of government and the community are working to address. This is particularly true in remote Australia. Asbestos waste and disused buildings have been identified in many remote Indigenous communities. Based on the age of buildings in remote Australia, remote communities also face the problem of asbestos products in ageing infrastructure. Asbestos containing material is found in many community buildings such as churches, housing and public offices, which if not managed safety, can degrade and become friable. This is our asbestos legacy.

These are unique challenges for remote Australian communities, and the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency commissioned this report to highlight and better understand this challenge. This issue was raised in the *Asbestos Management Review Report* released in 2012, and working with the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council and state and territory governments, I have worked to ensure this issue continues to receive attention so that we can identify how it can be best addressed. Legacy asbestos in remote Australian communities is a significant issue that impacts Indigenous Australians and requires a targeted approach.

In order to look towards ways in which this legacy issue can be managed in a sustainable way, the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency consulted with remote community stakeholders including land councils; Indigenous community stakeholders; regional, territory, state and Australian government representatives, as well as other stakeholders to bring together their diverse experiences. The aim of this research was to document asbestos management practices and issues in remote Australia and highlight where stakeholders are working towards addressing this challenge, and this report highlights some of the promising solutions being implemented.

The cost of removing asbestos in remote communities can be up to three times higher than for other parts of the country; however remote communities have very limited resources to remove legacy asbestos, manage asbestos in existing buildings and remediate buildings in need of repair or replacement. Despite this, there have been some promising responses which have included the building of a new asbestos disposal facility within a community and training community members to identify and remove damaged asbestos containing material. However, the remediation of asbestos legacy waste remains an ongoing challenge. Communities have reported large sites of contaminated waste which is generally made up of old building materials being too costly to clean up and further consideration of this issue is needed.

The report is realistic about funding constraints in remote communities and, importantly, provides a focus on ways to do things better within existing resources. We have examined initiatives that work in remote communities and have looked at effective ways communities can tackle the problem.

Peter Tighe
Chief Executive Officer
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency
April 2017

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Acronyms and glossary

ACM	Asbestos containing material
ALT	Aboriginal Land Trust
APY Lands	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands
The agency	Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency
CDP	Community Development Program
EHO	Environmental health officer
GIS	Global Information System
HACA	Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities
LCAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
MRC	MacDonnell Regional Council
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NPARIH	National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing
NTNER	Northern Territory National Emergency Response
NTG	Northern Territory Government
NSP	National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness
ORIC	Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
PPE	Personal protective equipment
RASAC	Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
WALGA	West Australian Local Government Association
WHS	Workplace health and safety

Executive summary

Removal of asbestos from any asset can be expensive, no matter where it is located - urban, regional or remote – but the costs are significantly higher in remote communities. This is further exacerbated by varied corporate knowledge and inconsistent management practices, limited internal capability of communities to deal with the problem and a lack of awareness about asbestos. These factors frequently limit or prevent effective and coordinated management of asbestos and its associated risks.

The aim of this report is to identify the current approaches to asbestos management, challenges communities are facing in the identification, removal, transport and disposal of asbestos, as well as awareness levels of the risks of asbestos in remote communities in Australia. The report introduces the background and historical context, as well as outlining the research methodology. Chapter four describes the current situation regarding asbestos management in remote communities. Chapter five summaries the key challenges, which are:

- the high cost of licensed removal contractors to travel and work remotely
- ageing community housing and buildings, which are often in a state of disrepair and contain significant amounts of asbestos
- legacy asbestos lying on the outskirts of communities
- limited access to licensed landfills

Despite these barriers, there are a range of approaches that Australian, State and Territory Governments, regional councils, land councils and Indigenous corporations and communities are implementing. Some of the approaches are pragmatic, some systemised, and others more opportunistic, but all of which are providing solutions to address this challenge. These responses are highlighted in chapter six, which is the focus of this report's findings.

Numerous challenges in the removal of asbestos in remote communities have been identified and in response to this the report examines a range of approaches that may be appropriate for adoption. Diagram 1 illustrates it is most effective to explore these approaches collaboratively in order to foster a holistic approach to asbestos management within remote communities.

Asbestos management in remote communities is a complex and multilayered problem, therefore solutions must be multilayered.

Emerging responses

This research shows the following four challenges (detailed in chapter five) can be met with emerging responses (detailed in chapter six) as collective solutions to prevent exposure to asbestos in remote communities.

Diagram 1: Seven responses

This diagram illustrates seven proposed approaches to managing asbestos risk in remote communities in Australia. No single approach is a stand-alone fix. However, when these approaches are combined, communities will be better placed to deal with core challenges around cost, management, capability and awareness. The research consultation found that communities making progress in managing asbestos risk were employing two or more of these approaches at once.

Summary of the seven responses

Partnering

Building community, interagency and regional partnerships will improve access to resources (including monetary and human) as well as build more effective on–the-ground responses to local issues. Increasing participation rates of land councils and Indigenous corporations in such partnerships is critical to managing many of the challenges faced by remote communities due to ageing assets which contain asbestos products. Engaging with Regional Service Providers who manage the Community Development Program is potentially a way to create training and job opportunities.

Capability building

Capability building is a key element in sustainable community management. There are three parts to this approach:

1. Regional councils, land councils and Indigenous corporations should be encouraged to build their own internal staffing capability as a strategy to manage the costs of engaging contractors to travel to and from, and to work in remote locations. This may include enabling staff to obtain Class A licences in asbestos removal (friable and non-friable asbestos) and Class B licences (non-friable asbestos) and, where possible, to complete competency units in asbestos removal supervision. It is acknowledged that there is high staff turnover in many remote communities; however there are also long-term residents and community members for whom the community is their home. If there are sustainable employment opportunities in their own or nearby communities, they will be more likely to stay in the community. For example, there is also opportunity for Group Training Organisations here to link in with Indigenous Corporations who have established business to undertake repairs and maintenance on community assets or housing.
2. Drawing on the expertise of long-term community residents who have existing relevant community corporate knowledge and understanding of asbestos risk management issues to act as community educators and asbestos management advocates will strengthen community engagement. These workers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) often have a high awareness of the dangers of asbestos, already live in the community and can act as community ‘watchdogs’, interpreters and advocates for other community residents. This recommendation aims to build awareness across the whole population of a community. This can simultaneously be adopted by companies and EHOs.
3. Increased capability of, and participation in, this issue by land councils, could be achieved through an asbestos risk management awareness campaign targeted at land councils, which would include a training component on community development processes and building partnerships.

‘Big picture’ thinking

Remote communities should be encouraged to incorporate asbestos management into an overall community waste management strategy, such as through a whole-of-community clean-up, environmental health program or home maintenance program. This approach could facilitate funding opportunities and foster the development of strategic partnerships with other organisations including philanthropic and government bodies. ’Big picture’ thinking also refers to analysing behavioural change around waste management which can go beyond asbestos removal.

Effective communication

Responses to asbestos challenges in Indigenous communities require Indigenous leadership and family and community engagement to be effective. Effective communication by non-Indigenous Australians needs to address cultural and lived-experience elements of Indigenous people. There is an opportunity for regional councils in these areas to upgrade their cultural awareness training in order to foster stronger relationships and reinforce effective communication strategies with land councils.

Community engagement

Community-based Indigenous asbestos management and removal require Indigenous community ownership, partnership and engagement to be effective. As identified in the Capability Building approach, maximising opportunities to engage as many community ‘players’ in community-lead initiatives as possible will increase responsiveness to issues and increase corporate knowledge. Key community players identified in this consultation include land councils, long-term residents who play an active role in their community, and the involvement of senior community leaders and Elders can provide validity to local asbestos awareness and education campaigns.

Using existing infrastructure

As identified in the Partnering approach, the cooperative use of infrastructure and equipment in the removal of asbestos in remote communities should be encouraged. This can be facilitated through the use of vehicles, tools and heavy equipment, air monitoring equipment, temporary fencing as well as storage and disposal facilities. Stakeholders who were interviewed saw a cooperative approach to the use of infrastructure as the most practical and effective approach.

Building local employment opportunities

The consultation showed that a qualified local workforce could deliver significant cost savings for a remote community. Although there are numerous challenges in attracting, retaining and training a suitable local workforce, there are numerous benefits to this approach. Communities that have exploited local employment opportunities have made significant and sustainable in-roads in managing asbestos risks and increased the capability of residents and Council based staff. For example, in Western Australia there are potential partnering opportunities between Municipal Services and the Remote Areas Essential Services Program (RAESP).

1. Background

In late 2015 the agency engaged Matrix On Board Consulting to carry out consultations with key stakeholders from local, state and Commonwealth governments, Indigenous corporations and land councils, as well as private contractors, to build the picture of key issues facing remote communities in managing their asbestos risk. The consultation sought to identify the current approaches to asbestos management, challenges communities are facing in the identification, removal, transport and disposal of asbestos, as well as awareness levels of the risks of asbestos in remote communities.

This document contains the outcome of the consultation.

For the purpose of this report the term 'remote communities' refers to the Indigenous remote communities, which this consultation focused on. The map of Australia at Appendix D identifies the Indigenous communities and the remote regional councils which were consulted. Remote Indigenous community means a community which is classified as either 'remote' or 'very remote' by the Australian Bureau of Statistics ARIA index[1].

[1] For further information refer to: http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/remoteness+structure

2. Historical context

The Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* of 1976 transferred reserve land to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership and supported the creation of land councils in the Northern Territory. This land is referred to as being governed by the Aboriginal Land Trust (ALT). Additional land councils were subsequently formed across Australia, enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' custodian rights and permitting them to establish leases in order to run commercial and community operations - such as housing, schools, mines and pastoral enterprises – on Indigenous land. Consequently, in most communities, assets remain part of the Aboriginal Land Trust land and are the responsibility of the relevant land council, traditional owners or Indigenous corporation. Alternatively, the assets are covered by a lease whereby the leaseholder (be it the police, school, mining company etc) is responsible for the management of any asbestos that may be present in those assets.

A number of Indigenous corporations and land councils continued to operate Indigenous communities after 1976, inheriting ageing church and government infrastructure - such as houses, community offices, art centres and other buildings. Therefore, the responsibility for maintaining these ageing and frequently asbestos containing assets was also inherited. In the decades since, these Indigenous organisations have had limited to no capacity to remove or renovate these buildings. This accounts for some of the reasons why managing asbestos in remote Australia is such a challenge.

In addition, from 2008 social housing that was located on Aboriginal Land Trust land was incorporated into the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH). NPARIH is a ten-year funding strategy between the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory Government for the provision of housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote communities to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and housing shortages. From 2016-17 the NPARIH was replaced by the Remote Housing Strategy for the final two years.

Under the Remote Housing Strategy and previously the NPARIH, social housing is overseen by the relevant state or territory department of housing. Therefore, risk management around asbestos in social housing/territory is the responsibility of that state or territory government body. In a state like Western Australia - with its large geographical reach, and the majority of its Indigenous population living in the remote East and West Kimberley,[2] - distance compounds the already significant challenge faced by agencies in managing community housing.

In some remote locations mining infrastructure, such as staff camps and housing, suffer from poor maintenance and insufficient arrangements for asset replacement. Many mines are very old and mining

[2] 2011 ABS Census identifies the East and West Kimberley with the highest Indigenous population for Western Australia, the Kununurra region with 48.4% and the West Kimberley with 48.1% of total population.

companies are choosing not to replace assets. However as workers are still working and living on site according to some stakeholders, workers are at a risk of asbestos exposure.

The housing in remote Indigenous communities managed by the Western Australia Housing Authority are inspected for asbestos and appropriate action is taken for removal or sealing of asbestos containing material. Properties identified as containing asbestos are included on the Authority's asbestos register for further reporting and management in accordance with existing public housing policies for ACM.

The Housing Authority Stock Replacement Programme under NPARIH demolished and replaced 111 high-risk asbestos containing houses in five (5) remote Indigenous communities. The NPARIH program has also refurbished 1561 houses, including encapsulation or removal of ACM.

The 2007 Northern Territory National Emergency Response (NTNER) led to a formal program of asbestos removal within the remote Northern Territory called the Asbestos Management Project, which formed part of the Community Clean Up high risk removal Program. This programme has continued into 2016 as the current "medium risk" Asbestos Removal Program delivered by the Northern Territory Government. In addition to surveying and identification of asbestos, it involved removal and disposal of damaged ACMs that had the potential to expose communities to asbestos fibres, as well as the establishment, coordination and maintenance of an asbestos register for all assets in the 73 NTNER communities.

In 2008, the Australian Government funded an Asbestos Management Project to identify, remove and dispose of asbestos and ACM requiring immediate removal from 64 remote NT communities.

In addition to the Asbestos Management Project, the Australian Government funded the NT Government to undertake a new program of asbestos and ACM removal and remediation from remote NT public housing between 2012-13 to 2014-15. This was through the National Partnership Agreement on Stronger Futures in the NT (SFNT). Under the SFNT, the Australian Government also funded the NT Government to undertake a new program of asbestos removal and remediation from remote NT community buildings. This funding was provided between 2012-13 to 2015-16.

Following the NTNER, the Australian Government continued its commitment to the problem by funding a program of removal of ACMs from buildings such as stores, churches, art centres, regional council buildings and buildings managed by Indigenous corporations in 34 additional remote communities between 2013 and 2016. From the consultations carried out in this project, the Northern Territory Government confirms that a total of 54 communities have been involved in the program by its conclusion and will total 57 by June 2017, which is more than the 34 communities that the programme was initially funded to run. Although this programme targets the removal of medium-risk ACMs, it does not seek to remove all asbestos; however, it has delivered on local employment outcomes with 279 community residents trained and subsequently 151 Indigenous employed on the project.

3. Methodology

Desktop literature review

On project commencement, a brief desktop literature review was conducted to ensure the team was across all current agency research, initiatives and any other relevant literature. This review also ensured that the development of questions and the selection of stakeholders were as dynamic and relevant as possible. Key surveys and research accessed during the review were referenced throughout the project. A project reference list is provided at Appendix A.

Consultation questions

The consultation questions were developed in close collaboration with agency policy staff. The questions were open-ended, which allowed interviewees to answer in their own words. Where possible, storytelling and a narrative approach were encouraged to maximise engagement. The nature of the data received was very much a combination of primary source material and anecdotal re-telling of stories and incidents they had seen and observed. In this way, the open-ended questions enabled respondents to describe issues of importance in their own words (Ares et al, 2010). This ensured greater privacy to respondents than other qualitative techniques and thereby elicited more genuine responses.

Four different sets of questions were developed to enable customisation for the particular circumstances of stakeholders. The full list of questions is at Appendix C.

Set of Questions	Stakeholder cohort
SET A	Stakeholders with no known asbestos management programs running
SET B	Regional councils or Indigenous corporations with known asbestos management programs
SET C	Government or institutional bodies
SET D	Private contractors who carry out work on remote communities

Questionnaire format

When each stakeholder was initially contacted and invited to participate in the consultation, they were given the choice of the following three formats:

1. **Phone interview:** A 30-60 minute phone interview, depending on stakeholder responses
2. **Questionnaire:** Nine of the interviewed stakeholders nominated the Word document questionnaire option, which was emailed to them. This option suited stakeholders who needed to consult on their responses or provide a collective response from across an organisation

3. **Online Survey Monkey questionnaire**: While this method was offered to stakeholders, none of them elected to use it

The majority of participating stakeholders chose the phone interview option.

Development of stakeholder list

The development of the stakeholder list formed a significant part of the project's first stage. In order to provide a national perspective on remote communities, the initial framework used to identify these communities was the local government jurisdictional areas. This provided a starting framework only, as variation exists in relation to the working relationship between remote communities and the administrative body (the regional council) within each local government region. Once the appropriate regional area of focus had been identified, relevant stakeholders in each region were identified. Stakeholders were recommended by the agency, while others were identified in the desktop research or were previously known to the Matrix. The remainder were recommended by stakeholders once the consultations had commenced. The map showing the location of remote communities is provided at Appendix D. Note that not all remote regional councils or communities were consulted in this process. This was due to managing the scope of the project which aimed to maintain a sufficient range of geographical location, as well as cultural and language diversity.

Stakeholder consultations

The majority of stakeholder consultations were conducted from the middle of January 2016 to mid-February 2016. Four interviews were completed after this date. A total of 52 stakeholders participated, with 47 choosing the phone interview option and five completing the written survey option. The full list of stakeholders interviewed is detailed in Appendix B. A further thirteen stakeholders were approached for an interview, however they either did not reply to our requests or did not return surveys.

Means of consultation

The project consultations were limited to phone and written surveys. Aside from one face-to-face interview with officials of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in Darwin, the project scope did not allow for in-person or on-community consultations. This limited the consultations to primarily staff from Indigenous corporations, land councils, unions, local government regional and shire councils, State and Commonwealth government agencies, private contractors and non-community based individuals. While this limitation does affect the views conveyed by the consultation and case studies provided, we do not believe that this impacts the overarching areas for consideration.

4. Current situation

Indigenous corporations and land councils

The management of assets - such as houses, offices, youth centres and arts centres - on Aboriginal Lands Trust lands or assets owned by Indigenous corporations, generates multiple challenges for communities in managing asbestos. As a result of the limited capacity to manage asbestos exposure risks and the high costs for removal of ACMs, responsibility frequently lies with individuals who put pressure on a local council or state government body. One CEO from an Indigenous corporation in the Kimberley region of Western Australia commented, *"Like with most Aboriginal communities...no one really cares...unless there is a squeaky wheel."*

In some communities, there is an EHO, Indigenous community health organisation, or the CEO of an Indigenous Corporation who has the capacity to speak to government entities to activate a response. This reliance on one or two motivated people to speak out and find creative or pragmatic solutions is commonplace. It drives change in asbestos management and increases knowledge of the effects of asbestos in many communities.

In the Northern Territory, there is less reliance on a single individual in relation to asbestos management as the Northern Territory Government Asbestos Removal Program is already in place. It is also less of an issue in the APY Lands in the far north of South Australia due to the number of regional organisations working collaboratively on asbestos management. For example, the Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation, with support from the South Australian Department of Housing, has undertaken extensive work in this area. This consultation has indicated that asset management is a significant issue for multiple communities in far western New South Wales as well as several communities in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of Western Australia. As a result, the possibility for regional and local collaboration in asbestos management, as seen in the APY Lands, is far more difficult to achieve.

In Western Australia, the Housing Authority does not own the houses; they are owned by the Indigenous Community or Aboriginal Lands Trust or other groups who lease land to the community.

The Housing Authority under NPARIH is required to enter into a Housing Management Agreement to act as a landlord and manage specific houses in the community on their behalf. These houses have public housing policies applied to them.

However other houses and buildings in a community are managed by the Indigenous community and the available funding and skills may be insufficient to manage the ACM in these buildings. This is a significant issue for remote communities as funding arrangements may be different for each jurisdiction further complicating a community's ability to effectively manage ACM.

Local government

The jurisdictional structure of local government in remote parts of Australia differs between all the states and territories included in this consultation. As an example, although East Pilbara Regional Council, Western Australia, the largest local council by area in Australia, includes several very remote communities, its servicing responsibilities do not incorporate these communities. Thereby the council is not involved in any asbestos management programs and these communities are responsible for their own asset management and related asbestos issues.

In contrast, MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) in the Northern Territory also covers a significant land mass and oversees thirteen Indigenous communities and many outstations across the south-west region of the Northern Territory. MRC provides all standard local government services with responsibility for many community assets, and provides a consultation platform through the Local Authorities Representational Structure. This harnesses an increased capacity for the community to manage asbestos risk and increases the regional communities' awareness of the risk of asbestos. By contrast, councils with jurisdictional service boundaries that do not include remote communities do not formally engage with communities.

At the other end of the spectrum are councils that extend support they are not legally bound to offer, which has subsequently been rejected. Two regional councils in New South Wales reported making offers of support to their local land councils to work together to carry out generalist community clean-ups, which were to include ACM removal. In both cases, the land councils did not endorse these offers of collaboration. However, it is acknowledged that this may be due to a lack of resourcing on the part of the land councils, rather than a lack of interest.

5. Summary of the challenges

The consultation identified a number of key issues that frequently limit or prevent effective and coordinated management of asbestos and its associated risks in many remote communities across Australia, in particular management practices relating to asbestos awareness, identification and removal.

Four main challenge areas emerged. These are:

- the high cost of removal
- limited capability within communities to deal with asbestos
- inconsistent management practices
- general lack of awareness of the problem

The following chapter (chapter six) uses case studies to illustrate on-the-ground issues that commonly stem from these four broader challenges. It analyses practical initiatives that remote communities are implementing to respond to these issues. It also analyses how these responses might be adopted and adapted as part of a higher-level strategy to manage asbestos risks.

Later in this report are some broad approaches that could be applied in combination to address or alleviate the overarching challenges of asbestos management, including cost, capability, management and awareness. These approaches include partnering, capability building, 'big picture' thinking, effective communication, community engagement, using existing infrastructure, and building local employment opportunities.

There is, unavoidably, considerable overlap between the challenges, issues and responses captured within this report. This evaluation framework provides structure to a complex and multi-layered operating landscape to present findings and solutions in a practical format.

Ultimately, this report demonstrates the benefits of working collectively in order to combat the high cost of removal, harness increased communication and awareness as well as overcome inconsistent management practices.

6. Responding to the challenges

The challenges we have identified are being addressed from multiple perspectives. This chapter highlights how these challenges identified in chapter five create a variety of issues that must be taken into account when managing the risks posed by legacy asbestos in remote Australia.

The responses to these challenges are shown in a table below, which illustrates the outputs and benefits of different approaches that we can build on to reduce the risks of asbestos-related disease.

The table summarises the issues and suggests what benefits may be achieved in building on these actions. Case studies have also been included to illustrate how organisations have applied strategies in practice. This demonstrates these responses are practical and effective ways to address the challenges posed by legacy asbestos.

Table 1: Overview of challenges and responses

Challenge	Issue	Responses	Outputs	Benefits	Approaches being applied
6.1 Cost	**6.1.1 High costs of asbestos removal** Remote location adds significantly to already high cost of removal	**6.1.1.1** Perform asbestos identification and removal work internally through increased staff capability within organisations **6.1.1.2** Take a broad approach **6.1.1.3** Build partnerships and collaborations	- Reduces costs of identification and removing low grade ACMs - Broadens funding opportunities beyond specific ACMs removal grants - Increases appeal to funding bodies by improving effectiveness of funding - Increases community awareness via multiple partnering bodies	- Better compliance - Direct oversight - Reduced costs - Locally managed - Increased local employment	- Partnering - Capability building - Big picture thinking - Effective communication - Community engagement - Using existing infrastructure - Building local employment opportunities
	6.1.2 Limited internal financial capacity of remote organisations and communities Many remote organisations are limited by small operating budgets, limited savings and limited opportunity to generate additional income to spend on asbestos management issues	**6.1.2.1** Build partnerships and collaborations **6.1.2.2** Engage long-term community residents to act as advocates and community educators	- Increases organisational capacity in terms of access to appropriate equipment, technical skills and shared corporate knowledge - Existing 'social' assets who know the community, the assets and hold corporate knowledge - Long-term residents who have strong understanding of the issues - Understand community protocols through effective communication strategies	- Access to resources at no or reduced costs such as funding, PPE and heavy equipment, specialist skill set - Access to *human resources* at no or reduced costs who are already in the community, have community relationships and will act as risk management advocates	- Partnering - Capability building - Effective communication - Community engagement

Table 1: Overview of challenges and responses

Challenge	Issue	Responses	Outputs	Benefits	Approaches being applied
6.2 Capability	**6.2.1 Limited internal capability of remote organisations** - Lack of qualified staff - Competing priorities - Lack of suitable equipment - Lack of community interest / motivation	**6.2.1.1** Build partnerships and collaboration **6.2.1.2** Engage long-term community residents to act as advocates and community educators **6.2.1.3** Take a broad approach	- Increases organisational capacity in terms of access to appropriate equipment, technical skills and shared corporate knowledge - Existing 'social' assets who know the community, and hold corporate knowledge - Some long-term residents who have a strong understanding of the issues - Understand community protocols through an effective communications strategy - Can enable access to partnering organisations who may remove all waste	- Access to resources, including funding, equipment and specialist skill set, at no or reduced costs such as funding, equipment. - Access to *human resources*, who are already in the community and have community relationships, at no or reduced costs and will act as risk management advocates as part of their 'normal' job. - Increased self-reliance and 'empowerment' - Access to PPE, heavy equipment, project coordination and local employment outcomes at no/limited cost to the community organisation	- Partnering - Capability building - Big picture thinking - Effective communication - Community engagement - Building local employment opps
	6.2.2 Barriers to building local workforces in remote areas	**6.2.2.1** Establish formal employment support structures and connect with commercially successful business partners	- A formal and well planned approach to building a local workforce will increase workforce longevity	- Reduced costs - Local employment opportunities - Better management practices - Local workers with expertise and qualifications	- Partnering - Capability building - Using existing infrastructure - Building local employment opportunities

Table 1: Overview of challenges and responses

Challenge	Issue	Responses	Outputs	Benefits	Approaches being applied
6.2 Capability (cont.)	**6.2.3 Under-utilisation of partnerships by remote organisations** - physical isolation - politics - different language groups - learned behaviours of 'siloing'	**6.2.3.1**- Actively engage and motivate land councils **6.2.3.2**- Build partnerships and collaborations	- Land councils are key community partners on most communities - Encourage local workforce employed by land councils - Access to shared resources which can benefit more communities and have wider impact	- Land council is more empowered to act on behalf of traditional owners - More efficient use of available resources - Land council can employ a larger local indigenous workforce - Reduced costs may result from sharing of resources	- Partnering - Capability building - Community engagement - Using existing infrastructure - Building local employment opportunities
6.3 Management	**6.3.1 Varied levels of corporate knowledge in remote organisations** On topics such as: - Internal asbestos risk management practices - Asbestos related policies and procedures - The mandatory requirement for workplaces to have and maintain asbestos registers	**6.3.1.1** Carry out work internally through increasing internal organisational staff capability **6.3.1.2** Engage long-term community residents to act as advocates and community educators	- Build organisational capability to be able to respond to low grade tasks internally and build on internal systems through maintaining the asbestos register and engaging with a management plan - Long-term residents bring significant corporate and community knowledge - Long-term residents often act as unofficial community advisors and language interpreters	- Increases compliance - Reduces costs of having to duplicate resources to find information/ documentation each time there is new staff member/CEO - Increases local employment opportunities - Makes visible corporate knowledge already held in the community and enables it to be shared and documented - Builds confidence within the community that asbestos risks are being monitored	- Capability building - Effective communication - Community engagement - Using existing infrastructure - Building local employment opportunities

Table 1: Overview of challenges and responses

Challenge	Issue	Responses	Outputs	Benefits	Approaches being applied
6.3 Management (cont.)	**6.3.2 Accessing appropriate storage facilities** Includes: - Limited asbestos licenced landfills results in need for off-site removal (expensive) - Limited accessible land to develop licensed sites - Impacts motivation to train and develop local staff to carry out removal	**6.3.2.1** Development of storage facilities customised to community capacity **6.3.2.2** Encourage a greater use of on-site removal **6.2.3.2** Build partnerships and collaborations	- Storage facilities matched with community and geographical needs - May enable access to private or land council land which could be used as a site for a storage facility	- Local control and visibility over management of storage facilities - Reduced costs to transport waste materials to off-community locations - Opportunity to build local workforce to develop, construct and maintain the facility - Increases accessible land to develop licensed sites	- Capability building - Community engagement - Using existing infrastructure - Building local employment opportunities
	6.3.3 Managing legacy asbestos sites - Historical storage of asbestos was not always appropriate and poses a current health and safety risk	**6.3.3.1** Legacy mapping project carried out via organisational partnership	- Maximisation of impact through the engagement of several partners - Pilot project with potential for replication in other sites - Research into appropriate software to meet local needs	- Increased community knowledge and awareness of where asbestos is present in a community - Shared resources between partners increases corporate knowledge and reduces costs	- Partnering - Capability building - Using existing infrastructure

Table 1: Overview of challenges and responses

Challenge	Issue	Responses	Outputs	Benefits	Approaches being applied
6.3 Management (cont.)	**6.3.4 Overseeing and managing removal contractors in remote locations** - Challenges in checking that work by private contractors is compliant due to often inadequate staff coverage in remote areas	**6.3.4.1** Carry out work internally through increasing internal organisational staff capability **6.3.4.2** Engage long-term community residents to act as advocates and community educators	- Local staff with increased skill set are able to perform external contractor oversight and monitoring tasks - Long-term residents often act as community advocates and watchdogs	- Reduced costs as it will not be necessary to engage external contractors for all work - Increased opportunities for Indigenous workforce development - Long-term residents already engaged and committed to the well-being of the community. They also often bring knowledge of EPA compliance requirements and best practice for contractors from previous experience	- Capability building - Effective communication - Community engagement - Using existing infrastructure - Building local employment opportunities

Table 1: Overview of challenges and responses

Challenge	Issue	Responses	Outputs	Benefits	Approaches being applied
6.4 Awareness	**6.4.1 Low level of awareness of dangers of asbestos by Indigenous residents on remote communities** - Asbestos management is not a community priority for community leaders due to the competing demands - Lack of awareness of the mandatory requirement for workplaces to have and maintain an asbestos register	**6.4.1.1** Actively engage and motivate land councils **6.4.1.2** Taking the broad approach **6.4.1.3** Carry out some asbestos identification and removal work internally in order to increase internal organisational staff capability **6.4.1.4** Develop culturally and community appropriate communication strategies	- Land councils bring local cultural knowledge/access and relationships - A broader waste management or home maintenance awareness campaign can have greater traction than current asbestos removal strategies by themselves - Builds awareness of the issue with people who live/work locally who can be advocates to families - Strategies which will have greater and longer lasting impact	- Land councils can communicate to community residents in language and utilise existing relationships - Increased community engagement and participation - Increased hands on and real understanding of the issues - Greater community knowledge and increased motivation to act on/ advocate for issues when they arise	- Partnering - Capability building - Big picture thinking - Effective communication - Community engagement - Using existing infrastructure Building local employment opportunities

6.1 Cost

6.1.1 Issue - High costs of asbestos removal

Removing ACMs is an expensive exercise in any location, with costs doubling or tripling when materials are removed from remote communities.

Engaging licensed asbestos removal contractors and related workers to carry out jobs in remote locations attracts not only high service fees, but also significant living-away-from-home costs and travel expenses. One stakeholder from the consultation estimated the cost of demolishing and removing ACMs from a single house in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY Lands) in far north South Australia to be $100,000, with each subsequent house costing slightly less. In Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia's Kimberley region, $60,000 was quoted for the demolition and removal of one building with blue asbestos, while in Bourke Regional Shire in Far Western New South Wales, this figure was $40,000. The closest asbestos contractor for the Arukun community on the Cape York Peninsula is based in Cairns, some 830 kilometres away, and the community is inaccessible by road for four months of the year. For the Balgo community in the southeast Kimberley, the nearest qualified contractor would be 926 kilometres away in Broome.

If a remote community organisation or council does not have a local site licensed to take asbestos they must transport it to a licensed waste site, adding further to removal costs. Communities in the Torres Strait and Cape York rely on wrapping and securing ACMs, storing them temporarily in shipping containers before transporting the material by barge to Cairns or Townsville, often via other island stops. It was reported that some barge operators refuse to take ACMs onto their barges.

Larger councils, land councils with greater financial assets and councils located closer to larger regional cities are better able to arrange and pay for removal whenever asbestos is detected. Comments from stakeholders ranged from those without financial capacity stating: "*We have no money to remove it, we just paint over it where we can*", to "*It's not a point for discussion, we just remove it*".

The high costs of asbestos removal and the inability of most remote communities to meet these costs were central to many of the asbestos management issues identified in the consultation.

Responses

6.1.1.1 Carry out some asbestos identification and removal work internally to increase staff capability within organisations

Increasing the capability of staff within remote organisations to carry out low-level identification and removal themselves (where access to landfills allows) would reduce reliance on costly external contractors (see table 7.1). Building internal staff capability to carry out workplace health and safety (WHS) practices, identification and low-level removal was a desire of many of the stakeholder organisations. If regional council or land council staff could be upskilled to safely carry out these processes, rather than having to engage external expensive contractors and their related remote area travel costs, there would be a significant cost saving for many organisations. Upskilling and building

awareness in local staff also increases overall community awareness and knowledge around asbestos risk management.

The consultation found that there is strong interest from many of the smaller Indigenous local councils (mostly those from far north Queensland and Cape York) in upskilling their own council workers to carry out identification and low-level removal. Several of these councils were keen to know where and when this training could be offered. One of the large land councils also expressed a strong interest in increasing the capability of its own workforce in this area. Some examples of the types of training requested were:

- skills and qualifications in asbestos removal (Class A and Class B licences)
- competency units in asbestos removal supervision
- asbestos assessor licence
- information about correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Certificate II or III in Community Services, with selected electives in asbestos identification and management
- Certificate II in Environmental Services

One of the challenges for communities such as Pormpuraaw in far north Queensland is accessing training, which is usually held in Cairns (671 kilometres away) or in Townsville (989 kilometres away). Participants (such as Council employees or community members wanting asbestos related training) attending training would usually travel by charter flights. This makes any training an expensive exercise.

Victoria Daly Regional Council in the Northern Territory provides a good case study of a local council that is building internal capability to reduce costs that would otherwise be incurred through outsourcing ACM removal.

Case Study 1.1

Building internal council/organisational capability: Victoria Daly Regional Council, NT

Issue*: Engaging an external licensed contractor to identify and remove asbestos from the remote Victoria Daly Regional Council in the Northern Territory is very costly.*

Response/Output*: Victoria Daly Regional Council in the Northern Territory has acquired its own asbestos removal licence. The Health and Safety Manager is a qualified supervisor and Class B Removalist and the council is licensed as a Class B Removalist. The council owns all removalists' personal protective equipment as well as machinery and tools required for removal tasks.*

Benefit*:*

- *cost savings*
- *better compliance as a result of direct oversight*
- *increased council capability and capacity to manage asbestos issues*
- *increased local employment*

It should be noted that a number of other regional Indigenous councils such as Aurukun Aboriginal Council, Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council, Torres Strait Regional Council and Bourke Regional Council also have staff with varying classes of asbestos assessor, supervisor and removal licences.

The approach Aurukun Aboriginal Council has taken to help overcome funding barriers around ACM removal is detailed in the following case study.

Case Study 1.2

Building internal council capability: Aurukun Aboriginal Council, QLD

***Issues**: Aurukun Aboriginal Council in the Cape York region of Queensland is very remote, 830km from Cairns and during the wet season, which last four months each year, it is accessible only by plane. ACMs must be sent by barge to Cairns for storage. There are very high levels of community unemployment and low levels of motivation involved in council initiatives around waste management workforce development. This set of circumstances makes asbestos removal a very costly exercise for the council.*

***Response**: The regional council has two very motivated council staff: the Building Services Supervisor who has obtained a Class B license and the Site Supervisor who has Class A and B Licences as well as an Asbestos Assessor License. The Building Services Supervisor has also improved the capability and profit of the council's own building company, which has created an increased income stream, and funds the removal of high level ACMs by external contractors, when required.*

***Output**: Despite the consultation showing low levels of community interest at Aurukun in ACM removal programs, the council has built considerable internal staff and organisational capability to carry out asbestos risk management activities. For as long as these two staff remain with the council and the building company stays profitable, the community is well supported in its response to asbestos management.*

***Benefit**:*

- *reduced costs*
- *direct oversight leads to better compliance*
- *increased local employment*
- *increased financial capacity within council*
- *increase internal capability within council*

It is important to note that other regional councils showed no interest in carrying out any internal training for their council staff, or offering it at a community level. Some of these councils were very clear about not 'mucking around with it [asbestos]' and 'leaving it to the experts'. In seeking feedback in relation to offering training to interested community members through employment programs, some stakeholders did not feel that any community members would have any interest in working in this area.

6.1.1.2 Take a broad approach

Some Indigenous corporations had taken a broad approach to removing ACMs by carrying out a community wide clean-up, which by its nature would remove most of the legacy piles of ACMs, as well as old car bodies, piping and other housing materials, which lie around the outskirts of many communities. The Manager of Environmental Services at Bourke Regional Council in far west New South Wales identified the positive reception of a pilot community waste management project – the Bourke and Enngonia Sustainable Waste Management Model – driven by Waste Aid Ltd. This not-for-profit organisation works with disadvantaged Indigenous communities to address inadequate waste management and deliver education and training, so that communities are better equipped to deal with these issues themselves.

When asked if there was any asbestos included in the clean-up projects at Bourke and Enngonia, Waste Aid Senior Project Officer, Kate Brown said, "*We didn't specifically go to remove asbestos and as far as I'm aware there wasn't asbestos identified*". Ms. Brown emphasised that the work in the community after the initial clean-up is focussed on keeping waste and rubbish in these communities at a minimum, in an ongoing and sustainable way. The project is now targeting building community capability and capacity to manage community waste.

Several stakeholders identified influencing broader community *behaviours* rather than enforcement as a more manageable goal for communities. One stakeholder believed 95 percent of compliance was related to people's attitudes. This was linked to education and knowledge about the issue rather than enforcement.

The clear immediate benefits of community-wide clean-up programs like these, such as a cleaner and safer environment, and awareness around waste stemming from hands-on involvement, have the potential to reap longer-term cost savings stemming from a more engaged and self-sufficient community.

6.1.1.3 Build partnerships and collaborations

The challenges facing Indigenous corporations and land councils are significant; however experiences communicated during the consultation demonstrate that these organisations have been able to address some local issues by embracing partnership opportunities with other Indigenous corporations, land councils or government departments.

The following case study is an example of how two community organisations in Australia have responded to issues of costly ACM waste management and legacy asbestos removal by taking a broad approach and by collaborating.

Case Study 1.3

Overcoming cost barriers through partnering Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation, Balgo, WA

Issues*: In this very remote community, there is a particularly high cost associated with identifying and removing ACMs. Building internal capability to independently carry out the work in order to reduce these costs is difficult due to an unmotivated local workforce and poor access to suitable equipment and machinery.*

Response*: Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation in Balgo in Western Australia partnered with another Indigenous corporation, Nirrumbuk, which is based in Broome. Nirrumbuk receives funding from the Western Australian Health Department to deliver an Aboriginal Environmental Health Program to communities in the Kimberley region. In 2015 Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation and Nirrumbuk carried out a community-wide clean-up. Nirrumbuk brought in the required heavy machinery graders, loaders and truck and partnered with the community development program (CDP) provider to facilitate short-term employment for members of the local community.*

Output*: The CDP delivered training to local staff in safe ACM removal and provided appropriate PPE. The CEO of Wirrimanu said that the "clean-up got rid of decades of rubbish which no doubt included asbestos, given the age of it." The program also went to nearby Mulan and Billiluna communities.*

Benefits*:*

- *cost savings through pooling resources*
- *access to broader funding opportunities*
- *stronger partnerships between organisations*
- *increased local employment opportunities*
- *access to specialist equipment*

It is important to note that Balgo has a licensed asbestos landfill, which meant that any ACMs removed in the clean-up could be taken to the local landfill, with no transportation costs to external facilities.

6.1.2 Issue - Limited internal financial capacity of remote organisations and communities

As identified in the Current Situation section of this report (*Section 4: Current Situation - Indigenous corporations and land councils*) all the consulted organisations with responsibilities over removal of ACMs identified financial constraints as a challenge to their ability to manage asbestos in their communities. Centrally controlled and funded program delivery by a single agency would make achieving outcomes in asbestos management and awareness more efficient.

Responses

6.1.2.1 Build partnerships and collaborations

As per *Issue 6.1 High costs of asbestos removal*, a potential solution is for community organisations tasked with asbestos management to initiate partnership opportunities with other Indigenous corporations, land councils or government agencies.

6.1.2.2 Engage long-term and committed community residents

Long-term and committed community residents who have existing community corporate knowledge and understanding of the issue are a valuable resource. These workers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) often have high awareness of the dangers of asbestos and already live in the community. Therefore, they are able to act as educators and asbestos management advocates by taking on roles of community 'watchdogs', interpreters and advocates for other community residents.

The following case study illustrates how cooperation and community engagement helped a community in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia to overcome barriers posed by high costs and limited practical resources.

Case Study 1.4

Enlisting support of motivated community members: Fitzroy Valley, WA

***Issue**: A small community in the Fitzroy Valley identified asbestos in two buildings owned by its Indigenous council. The buildings were derelict and posed an exposure risk. The council has no capacity to engage licensed asbestos contractors to travel to the remote community to remove it.*

***Response**: After much persistence by the council's CEO to find a solution, the CEO approached the Western Australian Housing Authority, which was due to come to the community in the coming months to renovate and build more community houses. The CEO enquired as to whether the demolition and removal of ACMs from the community buildings could also be included in the contract with the building contractors already engaged to do the housing work.*

***Output**: Western Australian Housing Authority agreed and carried out the work, demolishing the buildings in question and removing ACMs. This was a direct catalyst for the establishment of a licensed landfill site on the outskirts of the community – one of the very few asbestos licensed landfills in the Kimberley. The council now also has its own asbestos register.*

***Benefits**:*

- *significant cost saving for community organisation*
- *increases impact and value for money of government expenditure*
- *builds community and government partnerships and communication*
- *provides a safe disposal solution*

6.2 Capability

6.2.1 Issue - Limited internal capability of remote organisations and communities

Similarly to the way in which internal financial capacity impacts the extent to which remote Indigenous communities can independently manage their asbestos risks (as discussed in the previous section 6.1.2), these communities also face significant challenges stemming from limited internal capability – ie non-financial resources such as knowledge and expertise, skilled labour, specialist equipment and infrastructure, organisational systems and initiatives. Representatives consulted identified the following factors as the greatest constraints on their communities' capability:

- lack of internal staff to carry out the work, or a lack of suitably qualified staff to carry out low-level identification or removal
- decisions not to prioritise asbestos removal over other competing community priorities
- lack of suitable PPE and other equipment and machinery to carry out work
- lack of interest and motivation by community members to build their own awareness and become involved in organisational initiatives.

Responses

6.2.1.1 Build partnerships and collaborations

Boosting community competency and resources by initiating partnership opportunities with other Indigenous corporations, land councils or government agencies – as per 6.1.1.3, which outlines how partnering and collaborating can reduce costs – is also an effective means of addressing the issue of limited capability within remote communities to adequately manage asbestos risks.

6.2.1.2 Engage long-term and committed community residents

As described previously (see section 6.1.2.2), engaging longstanding, trusted and influential residents who have a sound understanding of asbestos and are committed to improving its management in their communities is one means of fostering community capability. Ultimately, this encourages awareness and motivates community members to actively participate in initiatives that address the problem. Investing in the expertise and connectedness of these committed prominent individuals who have the ability to take on the roles of 'watchdogs', interpreters, negotiators and advocates is also a way of boosting community morale and resourcefulness as well as reducing reliance on external specialist contractors, thereby minimising the cost to the community.

6.2.1.3 Taking a broad approach

As discussed in Response 6.1.1.2 taking a broad approach can result in cost savings and increased community engagement.

6.2.2 Issue - Barriers to building local workforces in remote areas

The development of a remote area workforce where local unemployed people participate in training in low-level identification and removal of ACMs, thereby strengthening community capability around asbestos management, is currently being trialled and planned by two stakeholders involved in this consultation.

The interest in this approach for both remote Indigenous employment and in building an asbestos management workforce in remote communities was explored in this consultation. It was found to be a highly contested issue due to polarised and diverse views from stakeholders. Various regional councils, EHOs and government stakeholders were not enthusiastic about engaging CDP (or similar) participants in asbestos related programs. A commonly identified risk was the negative public perception of 'people on the dole made to clean up asbestos'. One Indigenous stakeholder, who was a supporter of such an employment program, recognised the potential for this to be seen as, *"Let's get the poor blackfellas to clean up the whitefellas' mess."* Some interviewees had concerns about the competence of some remote community CDP providers to manage the risks of handling asbestos and the potential risks of accidental exposure.

An EHO who works only with Indigenous communities in Western Australia *said "Work for the dole is not where you want to be exposing people to risk, generally they [the CDP participants] are young and don't have any workplace experience. It's more appropriate for people who are not as vulnerable, there is plenty of other work they could be doing."*

A concern shared by several stakeholders was the long-term sustainability of employment after the majority of the asbestos had been cleaned up. Most people consulted had never heard about such a program beyond the odd private contractor who had taken on trainees, and these cases were mostly in urban or large regional centres. The consultation showed there was not a significant appetite for a program of this nature by the majority of stakeholders. However, it is important to note that much of the sentiment surrounding this proposed program manifested primarily as the result of the lack of success and negative perception of previous Indigenous employment programs.

Response

6.2.2.1 Establish formal employment support structures and connect with commercially successful business partners

While the majority of those consulted had limited or no experience or interest in engaging unemployed community members employment programs, those communities which were either planning or currently carrying out programs were trying very specific strategies. At one end of the spectrum is Cape York Partnerships (CYP) and BAMA. BAMA is a 100 percent Indigenous-owned civil construction, building

and landscaping service owned by CYP, which is looking into setting up a company (as a joint venture with an existing private firm) targeting unemployed people in the Cape York region. The company would aim to provide meaningful training leading to sustainable careers, through carrying out a range of demolition and waste management tasks. This would include asbestos identification and removal. When the BAMA example was shared with the stakeholder from the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, the stakeholder was supportive of the idea of setting up an Indigenous-owned business that could build an Indigenous workforce in the area of general waste management with expertise in remote community asbestos removal. This stakeholder noted that in recent years SafeWork NSW had run some accredited courses for people interested in starting up their own business in asbestos management.

The Northern Territory remote contracts legislation within the previous Department of Local Government and Community Services (LGCS) now the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) ensured Indigenous employment opportunity has grown through the Northern Territory Government's Asbestos Removal Program. The Department has partnered with the local Community Development Program (CDP) providers throughout the Northern Territory and in order to address the equity of male employees vs female employees the government trialled a pilot project in Yuendumu to offer an asbestos removal training program specifically designed for, and targeted at, women in that community. The promotional flyer for this program is included at Appendix E.

This Northern Territory program forms part of a larger strategic vision by the Northern Territory Department of Housing and Community Development to build on the residual employment outcomes of the Asbestos Removal Program through the formation of a reservoir workforce living on remote communities. This workforce would be able to apply the workplace health and safety (WHS), identification and removal skills, learnt through the Asbestos Removal Program, to other situations such as natural disasters including cyclones, flooding and bushfires. The vision for this initiative is to have a workforce which would be available to work with other government departments, and perhaps other states, in an effort to remove asbestos. Northern Territory Remote Essential Services Unit recognised that the greatest challenge for such an initiative is to ensure sustainable employment for people involved in the program. This has resulted in a push to think pragmatically about how skills learnt in an asbestos removal program are transferrable to other emergency services and waste management environments. An update on the outcomes achieved at the beginning of March 2016 is provided in the following case study.

Case Study 2.1

Successful local workforce development: remote central Northern Territory communities

Issue*: There is a range of barriers to building local remote workforces to carry out asbestos management activities and which could leverage off a formal asbestos removal program.*

Response*: A visual training program in Class B asbestos removal was provided for women from the Yuendumu community in the Northern Territory. Training was conducted by a female trainer in partnership with Intract/McMahon Services.*

***Output**:*

- *14 women were trained and certified in Class B asbestos removal*
- *28 women from three communities (Yuendumu, Willowra and Pmara Jutunta) gained construction industry White Card certification*
- *asbestos works have been completed at Ali Curung. Remediation work was 75% complete - package 7A (at the time of consultation)*
- *asbestos awareness sessions were conducted at the school in Ali Curung on the 12 February 2016. Five different classes were invited to the presentation*
- *an asbestos awareness session was conducted at Pmara Jutunta Primary School on 4 March 2016*
- *a start-up meeting and barbecue were held in Ali Curung on 18 February 2016*
- *a start-up meeting was held in Pmara Jutunta on 3 March 2016*
- *a start-up meeting was due to be conducted in Yuendumu on 7 March 2016*
- *14 students from Yuendumu, Willowra and Pmara Jutunta communities successfully achieved competence in Removal of Non-friable Asbestos courses*
- *three Indigenous women from Pmara Jutunta have been successfully employed in the asbestos removal program by Intract/McMahon Services*

***Benefits**:*

The initiative means that asbestos can now be assessed and low levels can be removed by a workforce living in these communities without needing to pay for services by external contractors, and their associated travel and accommodation costs, thus lowering the costs of asbestos management.

- *local jobs have been created for Indigenous people*
- *awareness levels have increased throughout communities*
- *local residents have become ongoing advocates for risk management and are knowledgeable about where asbestos is located*

An organisation based in Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia described an alternative community employment program.

Case Study 2.2

Building a sustainable local workforce: Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

***Issue**: There was a lack of local employment opportunities for men in a community where there were high levels of ACMs.*

***Response**: The Manager of Environmental Health Services at Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services at Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley is also the Chair of the local Men's Shed. He organised a team of men*

accessing the Men's Shed to work with a local licensed contractor to carry out various local asbestos demolition and removal jobs.

***Output**: A locally based employment program now exists in the community, embedded within the Men's Shed program and support structures.*

***Benefits**:*

- *provides local employment and participation for local community members*
- *builds the capacity and value of the already existing Men's Shed program, contributing to positive social outcomes*

6.2.3 Issue - Underutilisation of partnerships by remote organisations

For a range of reasons – physical isolation, politics, different language groups or learned behaviours of 'siloing' – a number of stakeholders recognised that their organisations either are not interested in working together with other groups, or have been unable to work effectively or productively with other organisations as a way of boosting their capability. The consultation identified several stakeholders who had endeavoured unsuccessfully to build partnerships.

Two separate regional councils in far western New South Wales voiced their frustration at being unable to develop working partnerships with their local land councils to deal with some derelict community property that contained asbestos. One stakeholder described how he had approached the land council about partnering to manage risks associated with these houses, but said that the land council was not receptive to his initiative and he has stopped contacting them.

A different council had been running a community awareness and education campaign across channels including radio, newspaper, school newsletter, council library and the community's administration centre. It had tried unsuccessfully to build a partnership with a local land council, citing a lack of engagement on the part of the land council.

Responses

6.2.3.1 Actively engage and motivate land councils

The consultation found that in locations where the local land council was actively involved as a community agent in community business and was representing the needs of the traditional landowners, there were increased opportunities for collaborations between land councils and regional councils to carry out risk management practices. The stakeholder from Central Land Council in central Australia explained their process for issuing Clearance Certificates, which permit access to Land Trust land where landfill sites to dump asbestos can be developed. Both stakeholders from the Tiwi Land Council and Tiwi Regional Council in the Northern Territory described how they share communication and meeting protocols on a number of projects in which they are both involved.

In this consultation, the standout example of a productive partnership between two proactive land councils was in the Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory. Representatives from the Tiwi Regional Council

and the Tiwi Land Council said that their constituents had a high awareness of the risks associated with asbestos and were very motivated to manage the risk or remove asbestos if detected.

Case Study 2.3

A whole of community and inter-agency focus to raise asbestos awareness: Tiwi Islands, Northern Territory

Issue*: Awareness of asbestos is low in some remote Indigenous communities, however in the Tiwi Islands levels of awareness are high. The consultation asked the Tiwi Regional Council to reflect on the reasons for this variation.*

Response/Output*: The Tiwi Regional Council has fostered an active inter-agency network with the Tiwi Land Council, facilitating good communication and knowledge sharing across communities. Both councils are engaged and motivated to work collaboratively to build community awareness around a range of community issues, including asbestos risk management.*

Benefits*:*

- *the council boasts strong interagency partnership and collaboration with high levels of asbestos risk awareness across Tiwi communities*
- *asbestos is being effectively managed*
- *the risk of community exposure to asbestos has decreased*

It is important to acknowledge that the Tiwi Islands region is geographically small compared to the Kimberley or Pilbara, and this physical proximity makes it somewhat easier for communities to meet and collaborate together on asbestos management.

6.2.3.2 Build partnerships and collaborations

Increasing the capability of Indigenous corporations and land councils to participate in partnerships and collaborations is fundamental to managing many of the challenges that stem from their ageing asbestos containing buildings. The consultation showed there were a variety of ways to build supportive partnerships, even when an organisation or council was not required to support a remote community or was limited by access to resources. An example of this kind of partnership is illustrated in the following case study.

Case Study 2.4

Community support through pragmatic partnering: Western Australia

Issue*: There was considerable asbestos present in old housing within the community of Kurrawang, located in the Shire of Coolgardie in Western Australia. In 2015 the community experienced a number of house fires, which increased the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres released in house fires.*

***Response**: The EHO from the Shire of Coolgardie met with the Kurrawang Community Council, explaining the new exposure risks and providing printed information and contacts required to properly manage the situation.*

***Outcome**: Awareness levels in the community increased and community leaders developed access to valuable risk management information.*

***Benefits**:*

- *strengthened relationship between the two councils*
- *improved communication channels*
- *improved local knowledge about asbestos risk*
- *increased community capacity to manage future risk*

6.3 Management

6.3.1 Issue - Varied levels of corporate knowledge of asbestos management within remote communities

The consultation showed varied levels of corporate knowledge about internal asbestos risk management practices, policies and procedures within remote organisations. Larger regional councils and land councils could each confirm they maintained asbestos registers either on-site or off-site, together with an Asbestos Management Policy and an Asbestos Management Plan. At the opposite end of the spectrum were smaller Indigenous corporations and regional councils whose representatives were unsure of the existence and/or currency of registers and did not mention a policy or management plan relating to asbestos. Some interviewees believed that registers were unhelpful unless they maintained and had an attached Action Plan or Asbestos Management Plan (which is mandatory for workplaces) which detail how any identified asbestos would be risk-managed or removed.

The ability of organisations to maintain registers depended on the stability and capability of the community-based workforce. Many remote Indigenous corporations and regional councils struggle with staff turnover. In the case of one community in far north Queensland, the council's asbestos register is held and maintained by an external contractor engaged by the council.

Some stakeholders said that they found it challenging to meet the legislative requirements relating to the management of asbestos in their assets given the physical environments of some remote areas. The WHS coordinator from the Indigenous Land Council recounted a story about how the ink on some paper records for one of the council's properties in northern Australia had started to run due to the humidity, affecting its legibility. Other stakeholders commented that the legislation is constructive, however it is often better suited to being delivered in urban settings. This was particularly relevant to managing access to landfill sites and in maintaining asbestos registers in the context of a transient workforce.

In the Northern Territory, the establishment and maintenance of an asbestos register for each of the participating communities formed part of the original NTNER Asbestos Management Project. Once the program had completed its removal works in a community, all final certificates and asbestos register updates were completed and handed to relevant community bodies or regional councils. In December 2015, the Northern Territory Government transferred the maintenance of asbestos registers to individual communities, as the legal responsibility for asbestos management and removal lies with the owners of the assets.

One of the challenges identified by a Northern Territory stakeholder is that the Northern Territory Government's Asbestos Register is not being maintained and updated as the lease holders of the Aboriginal Land Trust land, once the lease has expired after five years, has not been updated into the system. The Northern Territory has developed an updated asbestos register for non-government public owned assets and an employment matrix of every Indigenous resident who is licenced in B Class Asbestos removal in readiness for the next Asbestos removal program run by the Department of Housing.

While the consultation heard mixed views about the value and effectiveness of asbestos registers held by organisations with assets in remote communities, in general it was evident asbestos registers are valuable safekeeping places of community corporate knowledge in environments where workforces can be transient.

Responses

6.3.1.1 Carry out some asbestos identification and removal work internally to increase staff capability within organisations

Increasing the capability of organisations in dealing with asbestos is discussed in section 6.1.1.1.

6.3.1.2 Engage long-term and committed community residents

Engaging community residents in the management process is discussed in section 6.1.2.2.

6.3.2 Issue - Accessing appropriate storage facilities

A common issue for many community organisations and regional councils is securing appropriate storage facilities and landfills for asbestos following removal. While it appeared that most regional councils have licensed landfills, very few are licensed to take asbestos so any ACMs need to be transported off-site. This adds significantly to the removal costs. In other communities, various land ownership arrangements limit the development of new landfill sites on community land. A representative from the Victoria Daly Regional Council in the Northern Territory identified a lack of available locations to accommodate the development of landfill sites for asbestos disposal, because land within the shire is owned by local land councils, church bodies and private landholders.

For one large regional council, the lack of appropriate landfill sites also affected their participation in a community employment program linked to asbestos removal. This council noted that they were not motivated to engage with any type of community employment program to remove low-level asbestos, despite the benefits of building a local workforce, as this would generate increased amounts of ACM waste.

Responses

6.3.2.1 Development of storage facilities customised to community capacity

Two community approaches to overcoming barriers to storing asbestos waste are demonstrated through the following case studies, involving two regional councils in the Northern Territory.

Case Study 3.1

Overcoming ACM storage barriers: Victoria Daly Regional Council, Northern Territory

Issue*: Victoria Daly Regional Council in the Northern Territory identified storage, not removal, as one of their biggest challenges. Land ownership by the Northern Land Council, Central Land Council, Catholic Church and private landowners means there are no available sites to develop new landfills.*

Response*: Victoria Daly Regional Council instead stores ACMs in shipping containers which are transported to Darwin once they become full. At the time of the consultation, the council had recently paid to lease a landfill site from a private landholder at Timber Creek. Resources required for establishing this storage solution included shipping containers, freighting costs and negotiation with a private landholder.*

Benefits*:*

- *asbestos material is stored safely and in a cost-effective manner*

Case Study 3.2

Overcoming ACM storage barriers: Yuendumu, Northern Territory

Issue*: There is considerable legacy asbestos across a number of the communities in the Central Desert Shire, in particular the largest community of Yuendumu. Limited financial capacity is a major barrier to developing enough new landfills to contain the asbestos waster, which precludes the purchase of upgraded equipment and provision of training for road crews.*

Response*: The Director of Works and infrastructure at the Central Desert Shire made a commitment to develop a dedicated licensed asbestos landfill on the outskirts of Yuendumu. The landfill is limited to asbestos from Yuendumu, Yuclemi and Nyirripi. There are plans to develop a similar facility in Lajamanu, which is also in the Central Desert Shire area but 600km from Yuendumu (see Yuendumu Landfill Environmental Management Plan 2014).*

Benefits*:*

- *tailored local storage and disposal solution to meet specific needs of community*
- *removal costs reduced*
- *local-employment opportunities*

6.3.2.2 Build partnerships and collaborations

In locations where the development of licensed asbestos storage and disposal facilities suitably close to communities is limited by ownership of potential sites by other landholders, building partnerships and collaborations with these landholders where possible is an additional approach to consider. This may not be the appropriate approach for every community and it may take years to develop working

partnerships, however this is one option to increase access to land in order to accommodate more licensed facilities.

6.3.3 Issue - Managing legacy asbestos sites

Remote communities are dealing with a range of challenges in managing legacy asbestos sites. These include instances where ACMs have been left around the edges of community dumps or buried using bulldozers but are now rising to the surface of the ground as the result of erosion over the years and posing risks to the community. As previously described, a lack of accessible land to develop landfill sites is another challenge for some communities.

Many of the communities consulted identified ACMs, such as building materials and asbestos piping, in piles of waste on the edges of their community, bulldozed into local tips or buried near the tip. These legacy stockpiles of waste reflect previous building and waste management practices, which community councils must now deal with. Central Desert Regional Council in the Northern Territory has carried out considerable work to address this challenge, as described in Case Study 3.3.

Response

6.3.3.1 Developing a legacy mapping project via organisational partnership

In the Northern Territory, three regional councils had formed a partnership to share human and financial resources to develop methods of documenting legacy asbestos and laying the groundwork for progressive management. While organisations in other regions were also addressing legacy asbestos, this partnership was the most systematic and well-planned management approach to asbestos management.

Case Study 3.3

Developing systems to manage legacy asbestos: Central Desert Regional Council, Northern Territory

Issue*: There is a significant volume of legacy asbestos in and around communities in the Central Desert Regional Council area, including old landfills, piles of asbestos contaminated soil and fragments of pipping on the ground.*

Response*: In 2015 in the Northern Territory, Central Desert Regional Council received assistance from the agency to research the development of an approach to map legacy asbestos in three of their remote communities. Later that year further support from the agency enabled expansion of the program to include 15 more communities in the Central Desert, MacDonnell and Barkly Regional Council areas. This included evaluation of the Global Information System (GIS) as a potential method for mapping asbestos waster in removal areas. The three regional councils also share a Regional Waste Coordinator member of staff who manages all three councils' Regional Waste Management Program, which manages all three councils' Regional Waste Management Program, which includes asbestos management. The development of a mapping system to identify where asbestos is located, its volume and type, is currently underway.*

***Benefits**:*

- *build partnerships and collaborations*
- *encourages the sharing of knowledge and learnings*
- *viable projects demonstrate value for money and maximum impact in asbestos removal to funding bodies and project partners*

6.3.4 Issue: Overseeing and managing removal contractors in remote locations

High demand for asbestos removal contractors in remote locations leads to them charging premium fees for their services. As identified previously, remote locations have added costs related to travel to remote areas and related staff on-costs, primarily as the result of a lack of difficulty in accessing towns, limited dumping facilities and high transport costs. Any industry with such a high level of demand can attract unscrupulous operators who take advantage of market forces and uneven power dynamics within remote communities. Stakeholders shared stories about contractors who carried out practices such as inappropriate consultation with Elders, illegal dumping of ACMs on communities, transport and burying of ACMs during the night as well as inadequate signage on demolition sites.

The capacity of a community to engage a licensed contractor to remove ACMs from its assets is linked to the community's overall organisational capability, as detailed previously (8.1.2 Limited internal capacity of remote organisations). Western Australia has a unique set of challenges due to its vastness and the need for housing maintenance and renovation entities to be able to provide adequate compliance oversight of any external contractors engaged to work in very remote locations.

Responses

6.3.1.1 Carry out some asbestos identification and removal work internally to increase staff capability within organisations

Increasing the capability of organisations in dealing with asbestos is discussed in section 6.1.1.1.

6.3.1.2 Engage long-term and committed community residents

Engaging community residents in the management process is discussed in section 6.1.2.2.

6.4 Awareness

6.4.1 Issue: Low level of awareness of asbestos risk among Indigenous residents in remote communities

Awareness of asbestos varied significantly between communities, however stakeholders felt there were generally low levels of awareness among residents in Indigenous communities. This is because community members, especially community leaders have numerous other concerns they consider to be a higher priority.

The Environmental Health Officer at Halls Creek Shire in Western Australia commented that the 'health risk from asbestos exposure is far lower than the other health risks that are present in people's homes and communities'. There was also a sense from some stakeholders that asbestos was brought to communities by 'whitefellas' and therefore 'it's their problem and they should be responsible for removing it'.

In some communities there was concern that carrying out focused 'Asbestos Awareness' campaigns might raise community expectations and unresolved (but pertinent) questions such as *'how do we remove it then?', 'where do we put it?' and 'where is the money to do it?'*. However, in general, carrying out awareness campaigns for remote communities was positively received with most people stating they would welcome an awareness campaign as there is no or little recognition in their communities about asbestos and how to manage its associated risks.

Responses

6.4.1.1 Actively engage and motivate land councils

Actively engaging with land councils is discusses in section 6.2.3.1.

6.4.1.2 Take a broad approach

Taking a broad approach is discussed in section 6.1.1.2.

6.4.1.3 Carry out some asbestos identification and removal work internally to increase internal organisational staff capacity

Internally carrying out some asbestos work is discussed in section 6.1.1.1.

6.4.1.4 Develop culturally and community appropriate communications strategies

The consultation asked stakeholders what methods of communication they had seen work effectively on communities, for either asbestos education or other community health issues. This communication strategy highlights the important role of appropriate community consultation when working with remote communities. There are well-documented best practice models for carrying out consultation aimed at

improving the built environment in remote communities, as seen in the work of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) (Lee & Morris, 2010). Although these strategies are not necessarily new, it is important they are highlighted and reiterated as they are not always used in practice.

Recommended communications strategies based on the findings of this consultation are:

Ask communities first

A number of stakeholders emphasised the need to ask communities before the consultation starts about methods that would work best for that particular community. Not all remote communities respond to the same methods. If the community cannot be visited to gain this information, then speaking with an intermediary or someone with long experience working in a particular community would be valuable. Where possible, meeting with Elders and other community leaders during a first visit is recommended.

Use established community channels

Many communities have trusted long-term staff at community agencies, such as Aboriginal health services or Indigenous art centres, who can provide support, where needed, in navigating cultural differences. Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services in Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia explained part of its role in delivering holistic, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate health care, includes acting as a conduit for communities, sharing information about activities and pointing out safety concerns in its catchment area. The organisation has long-term staff who are familiar with the histories of communities, have significant community corporate knowledge and have trusted relationships with Elders.

Workers for Aboriginal Health Services and Aboriginal Legal Services, who are based on communities or service them regularly, are represented by unions. Pat Byrne, President of the State School Teachers Union of West Australia (SSTUWA) said there was a role for union representatives to distribute information and make people aware of the risks of ACMs on communities.

The Local Authorities community representative format within the Northern Territory Local Government Act legislation provides an opportunity for regional councils to build awareness about community asbestos issues. The Director of Service Centre Delivery at the MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) in the Northern Territory, acknowledged that the role of the MRC Local Authority as a key consultative body which is able to 'pass messages through to their communities' (of which there are 13), *'and act as an advisory body for the council'*. He noted two particular successes of the MRC Local Authority in the area of asbestos management, which have increased awareness in small communities such as Papunya where the community was having open discussions in the Local Authority meetings and in focussing on working with one community at a time.

Hold small meetings

Meeting with community members face-to-face in small groups was generally considered a good approach.

Engage residents at community gatherings

The approach of holding a community barbeque encouraged by the Traditional Owners to bring the community together to discuss an issue can have varied results. The Northern Territory Government's Asbestos Removal Program use this consultation technique as part of their communication process when they rolled out the program in various Northern Territory communities between 2012 and 2016, and identified it as one of the key elements to community engagement outcomes for that program. However, other stakeholders were more cynical about this approach and its effectiveness, stating that they believed people had come solely for the food and described the technique as *'a bit tired'*. These stakeholders were more positive about alternative approaches such as small group gatherings and working closely with community leaders and influencers.

Make use of flyers and posters

Several Indigenous corporations identified the placement of flyers and posters at key community venues such as ' the shop', 'the clinic', the school, the art centre, the youth centre, the pool, the women's centre and 'the (community) office' as a commonly accepted method of communicating messages of importance. When one stakeholder was asked if his organisation translated its flyers into the local language, he said, *'no we don't, but generally if community members see flyers and don't understand them, they will ask someone about it'…in our community they are naturally curious'*. The same stakeholder noted that there were also plans to have the same flyers translated into three of the main locally spoken languages. A community in Cape York noted that its flyers are written in the local Creole dialect. Flyers used in the Northern Territory Government's Asbestos Removal Program are included in Appendix E.

Use existing Indigenous media organisations

Many remote communities are serviced by well-established Indigenous media organisations such as PY Media based in Umuwa, which services the APY Lands in South Australia as well as the Ngaanyatjarra Media based in Wingellina in Western Australia, and PAW Media based in Yuendumu in the Northern Territory. Several stakeholders recognised the value of local media, especially radio networks, to provide locally produced education and community awareness messaging. There is considerable potential to use the network of the peak body for remote media organisations - Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) - for awareness-building initiatives. The case study featured in *4.1 Areas for Consideration* outlines a proposed project that would make use of Indigenous media to build awareness around waste management.

Work with influential community figures

Several stakeholders identified the importance of building the knowledge of a local community person who had an understanding of the issue but could also speak the local language to explain the issue at community meetings or with community leaders and Elders. It is important to engage committed Traditional Owners so they can pass on messages to the rest of the community. Targeting all levels of community including Elders, parents, young people and children, is a useful initial approach that can then be adapted to individual community needs. For example, the EHO at Halls Creek Shire in Western Australia said he targets Elders for awareness-raising work because the children are already being supported through the school. Another EHO in the Kimberley region said she carries out school education sessions with the aim of inviting parents to attend.

Encourage community interagency meetings

Only one Indigenous community identified community interagency meetings as a functional mechanism for discussing agency issues, sharing resources and problem solving. Other stakeholders based on communities mentioned interagency meetings as a means to distribute information to their community. Although they did not believe that this approach was very effective, they were trying to improve the functionality of their interagency meetings.

A consortium of government departments working to improve the management, monitoring and response to asbestos in New South Wales formed the Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities (HACA) in 2011.

The HACA is responsible for delivering a State-wide Asbestos Plan in NSW with one of the key initiatives to work with communities in regional, rural and remote regions of NSW, including the Aboriginal Land Councils and communities, to help improve the safe management of asbestos.

The project aims to build greater asbestos capacity and capabilities in these communities through awareness, training and education. An Asbestos Survey is being undertaken at two particular communities (metropolitan and regional) where known asbestos legacy and contamination issues exist to determine the level of contamination and remediation recommendations required.

The HACA has established a Working Group that will specifically look at asbestos legacy issues across NSW.

Case Study 4.1

A considered approach to communication: Torres Strait Islands, Queensland

Issue*: Staff at the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) recognised unwarranted levels of community panic and anxiety about the dangers of asbestos.*

Response*: A TSRA staff member commented that by adopting a strategic and transparent approach on how information was provided to the community, they could reduce undue anxiety about asbestos risk and build community trust. 'We release it correctly and informatively…we make sure information is correct, fact-based and transparent. It started with our auditors (doing an asbestos asset audit) having to get permission to come to the community, community has to know what people are coming here. Some sites weren't accessible for cultural reasons'. As a result, the community how has a very good understanding of the issue and is always asking questions to stay informed about asbestos.*

Benefits*:*

- *strategic and effective communication between organisations and residents*
- *transparency around community issues, leading to greater levels of trust*
- *increased community awareness*
- *reduced risk of exposure*

7. Recommendations

This consultation identifies seven broad approaches that respond to common issues impeding the management of asbestos in remote Indigenous communities. The consultation showed that they were often applied in combination and were adapted to meet the specific needs of communities. The seven approaches have the potential to overcome or alleviate the overarching challenges of high cost, limited community capability, inexpert or inconsistent management practices as well as poor levels of awareness.

Partnering

Building more community, interagency and regional partnerships is likely to maximise access to resources, both monetary and human, to build more effective on-the-ground responses to local issues. Increasing opportunities and ease of access for land councils and Indigenous corporations to participate in such partnerships and collaborations is key to managing many of the challenges faced by remote communities with ageing assets containing asbestos.

Capability building

In the context of this report, building capability refers to developing the non-financial capacity and aptitude of remote Indigenous communities and community organisations to effectively and autonomously manage local asbestos risk.

There are three parts to this approach:

1. As a strategy to better manage high costs of engaging contractors to travel to and from, and to work in, remote locations, regional councils, land councils and Indigenous corporations are encouraged to develop the capability of internal staff through the provision of education, training and practical resources. This may include supporting staff to obtain licences in friable (Class A) and non-friable (Class B) asbestos assessment removal, and where possible to complete competency units in asbestos removal supervision. While high staff turnover on many remote communities can contribute to workforce instability, there are long-term residents and community members for whom the community is home and through sustainable local work opportunities, they are more likely to remain within the community.
2. Engaging long-term community residents with existing relevant community corporate knowledge and understanding of the issue to act as community educators and asbestos management advocates is another way of driving community capability. These workers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, often have high awareness of the risks of asbestos and as they are already living in the community they are able to act as community 'watchdogs', interpreters and advocates for other community residents. This recommendation aims to build awareness across the whole population of a community, not just the CEO or a dedicated EHO.

3. Increased capability and participation in this issue by land councils requires support. This capability could be increased through an asbestos risk management awareness campaign targeted at land councils, which would also include a training component for land councils on community development processes and building partnerships.

'Big Picture' thinking

It is proposed that communities should be encouraged to incorporate asbestos management into an overall community waste management strategy, such as running a whole-of-community clean-up, environmental health program, or home maintenance program. This approach can enable access to a wider range of funding opportunities and partnerships with other organisations as well as philanthropic and government bodies. 'Big picture' thinking also refers to examining behavioural change around waste management generally – for instance, picking up rubbish or maintaining a safe home – rather than isolating asbestos as a stand-alone issue.

Effective communication

Responses to asbestos challenges in Indigenous communities require Indigenous leadership and family and community engagement to be effective. Effective communication by non-Indigenous Australians needs to address cultural and 'lived experience' elements of Indigenous people. There is an opportunity for regional councils in these areas to upgrade their cultural awareness training in order to foster stronger relationships and reinforce effective communication strategies with land councils.

Community engagement

As identified in the Capability Building approach, maximising opportunities to engage as many community 'players' in community-lead initiatives as possible will increase responsiveness to issues and the sharing of corporate knowledge. Key community players identified in this consultation include land councils, long-term residents who play an active role in their community, and the involvement of senior community leaders and Elders can provide validity to local asbestos awareness and education campaigns.

Using existing infrastructure

As identified in the Partnering approach, the resourceful, pragmatic and cooperative use of infrastructure and equipment required for asbestos removal, storage and disposal should be encouraged. This might include vehicles, tools and heavy equipment, air monitoring equipment, temporary fencing, as well as appropriate storage and disposal facilities. Interviews with stakeholders confirmed this approach delivered a number of benefits, including through the use of existing infrastructure to remove or manage asbestos materials at limited or no extra cost to the community with the asbestos risk.

Building local employment opportunities

The consultation showed that a local workforce qualified to carry out many of the stages of identifying, stabilising, storing or removing asbestos, could deliver significant cost savings for a remote community. However, attracting, training and retaining suitable workforce in this context is not straightforward, and for many stakeholders this option is not feasible. The inclusion of this approach in this list acknowledges all the challenges involved and, based on precedent, recognises that communities which have been able to increase the capability of residents or council-based staff to carry out these kinds of operational tasks, have made significant and sustainable in-roads into managing asbestos risk in the future.

A number of approaches towards improving asbestos management are being suggested and envisaged by stakeholders in the field, but have yet to be put into practice. However, these are useful to note as potential solutions to several of the challenges.

In order to overcome the high cost of asbestos removal and the suggested solution of building internal capability of remote regional council staff to carry out removal work, the following approach was proposed by a member of the Queensland Interagency Asbestos Group.

Case Study 8.1

Planned approach to remote community capability building: council staff in far north-Queensland

Issue*: Staff in remote community councils, particularly in far North Queensland, are often physically isolated from staff in other councils doing similar work and from supportive ongoing learning environments as well as proper removal and disposal facilities.*

Response*: A member of the Interagency Asbestos Group – a committee of Queensland Government departments that oversees the regulation and response to asbestos management in Queensland – had requested Queensland Government hygienists to develop an online learning program with highly visual and verbal content, designed specifically to develop the capability of staff in remote communities. This member is also interested in building a 'buddy' system whereby an inexperienced remote worker or removalist could connect online with an experienced worker (located, for example, in Cairns) who would act as a mentor to encourage confidence and skills development. The committee member is keen to develop a small team of one or two dedicated people living on a community who are skilled and whose employment is sustainable in the long-term.*

Barriers overcome*: This approach aims to create a culturally appropriate training program that could be carried out in communities without the travel and accommodation costs incurred by sending staff to Cairns or Townsville for face-to-face training. Simultaneously this approach aims to provide continuing support and confidence-building for council staff in order to encourage ongoing local employment.*

Potential benefits*:*

- *reduced training costs*
- *greater and more effective training outcomes*
- *a more capable and self-sufficient local workforce*

At Halls Creek Shire in Western Australia, the EHO interviewed identified a 'big picture' approach, which incorporated asbestos management awareness into a broader campaign targeting behavioural change around home maintenance work. An idea, which he was starting to implement, is outlined in the Case Study 8.2.

Case Study 8.2

Raising asbestos awareness through influencing broader behavioural change: the Kimberley region, WA

Issue*: Low levels of awareness of the risks about asbestos*

Response*: The EHO at the Halls Creek Shire confirmed that influencing behaviour change rather than enforcement was more appropriate with the communities he works with in the Kimberley. He describes discussions with a nurse at Mulan Community about a 'home maintenance' program where residents were educated about how to keep a health home. This includes how people cleaned dishes, maintained the fridge and managed basic home maintenance.*

Potential benefits*:*

- *building an improved approach to multiple aspects of home care*
- *access to wide funding opportunities, not specific to asbestos removal*

In Western Australia, the Housing Authority has communications and procedures in place that align with its Public Housing policies on management of ACM. The Housing Authority also uses programs to educate tenants on their roles and responsibilities and also the Housing Authority's responsibility to the tenant. These programs include New Living Skills Program which occurs within the first 30 days of a new tenancy signup, My Tenancy my Home Matrix and support program where a tenancy may be failing and support is necessary. These programs augment other Health and Shire programs.

An approach that focuses on developing culturally and community-appropriate communication strategies is being adopted to target communities in remote South Australia, where the manager of the APY Waste and Landfill Program is engaging the local PY Media to run community announcements in local languages to build broad waste management awareness levels. This approach is detailed in Case Study 8.3.

Case Study 8.3

Using relevant media to raise awareness: Umuwa, South Australia

Issue*: There is a need to promote awareness of good waste management practices across the communities of the APY Lands in culturally meaningful ways.*

Response*: The APY Waste and Landfill Program manager in far north South Australia described the communities' use of the local media organisation PY Media in Umuwa to run community announcements on the radio (5NPY), which are targeted at managing waste generally. The primary message has been about putting rubbish in bins to encourage broader behavioural change. When interviewed, this manager was working with the community to develop some short film pieces which would be shown on NITV and ITV.*

Benefits*:*

- *increased general understanding of waste management in communities*
- *efficient and targeted messaging*
- *low cost communication channel*
- *increased community inclusion, engagement and participation*

8. Conclusion

This report identifies seven distinct themes evident in approaches to asbestos management and removal in remote communities observed during the consultation process and reflects on instances where these types of approaches have been successful and unsuccessful in addressing issues stemming from higher-level challenges of cost, capability, management and awareness. Approaches include partnering, capability building, 'big picture' thinking, effective communication, community engagement, using existing infrastructure, and building local employment opportunities. The consultation found these approaches were less effective when implemented in isolation, and that organisations or communities that employed several approaches concurrently were more successful in addressing a range of issues.

Organisations charged with managing asbestos risks in remote communities are encouraged to consider adopting and adapting these particular approaches as a means of alleviating or overcoming overarching challenges.

Building partnerships and collaborations with organisations, both internal and external to communities, was an effective way of addressing several issues in a number of communities. Many successful partnerships were with local land councils, which have significant sway in this remote context given their strong relationship with Indigenous communities as well as Elders, the ability to oversee Aboriginal land and to encourage the prosperity of Indigenous enterprise in communities. The stronger and more capable the land councils are, the more opportunities they have to partner with other community organisations such as regional councils, state and Commonwealth government, as well as with private enterprise.

The consultation found that organisations on remote communities which were more capable, well-trained and financially stable had greater capability to address their own challenges relating to asbestos. There were a range of ways remote organisations, especially regional councils, were positively driving internal capability. These included upskilling their own staff in lower level asbestos identification and removal to reduce reliance on expensive external contractors.

In addition to upskilling staff, several stakeholders identified key long-term community residents or employees of other community organisations, such as community health centres, who could provide significant community corporate knowledge about the history of asbestos in their communities as well as high levels of awareness about the risks. These residents are existing 'social' assets which have the potential in some communities to be utilised more effectively to raise community awareness and provide a community monitoring role.

Long-term community residents are also valuable in informing interactions with communities in relation to the use of culturally appropriate communication strategies by external contractors, regional councils and other organisations wanting to work with remote communities. The consultation identified a range of communication approaches which were preferred by those community residents.

The final area for consideration is to apply broad 'big picture thinking' to asbestos removal, where asbestos materials removal is included as part of larger initiatives to remove waste on communities.

Several strong partnerships in the consultation involved a community organisation partnering with an external environmental waste specialist to travel to a community in order to clean up all waste in and around the community. This included items such as car bodies, building and fencing materials, tyres and old pipes, with asbestos presumably present in some of the waste. This broader approach opens up larger funding opportunities, partnership benefits, local short-term community employment opportunities and is potentially more sustainable in managing ongoing waste removal. Taking a broad approach with centralised coordination, funding and communication could potentially have significant benefits in ACM management.

Remote areas are generally under-resourced financially and in areas such as workforce capability and infrastructure. Therefore the approaches proposed in this report do not rely solely on funding but instead suggest capitalising on existing resources through increasing the quality of communication, and working together more effectively.

There are a number of Indigenous corporations, local and state government bodies, and land councils that, despite often feeling like they are underfunded and only making a small impact, are carrying out effective management practices in this space. This consultation showed that a lot of innovative practice and creative problem solving around stubborn issues is occurring with numerous benefits. This report tells the individual stories of these successes and identifies factors which have made these approaches successful. In order to facilitate effective asbestos management within rural Australia, it is necessary to encourage sustainable and effective work practices. As one stakeholder commented in relation to the challenging logistics in transporting ACMs off their community:

Logistics are always a problem, cost of doing things …
it's not going to prevent us, but maybe slow us down.

Appendices

Appendix A - Reference list

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Appendix B - Stakeholder list

ORGANISATION
National
Prime Minister and Cabinet
Indigenous Land Corporation
ACTU
AMWU
Unions WA, ASU and CFMEU
Northern Territory
Central Desert Shire
Roper Gulf
Victoria Daly Regional Council
Central Land Council
Tiwi Land Council
Northern Land Council
New Future Alliance
Barkley Regional Council
West Daly Regional Council
MacDonnell Regional Council
Tiwi Regional Council
NT Department of Local Government Community Services
Intract (McMahons)
Power and Water

Western Australia
Department of Housing
Department of Health (Public Health Division, Environmental Health Directorate)
Department of Environmental Regulation (DER)
Kimberley Land Council
Halls Creek Shire
Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation, Balgo,
Broome Shire Council
Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley
Dadaru Pty Ltd
Kurungal Aboriginal Corporation, Wangkatjungka
Shire of Derby/West Kimberley
Shire of East Pilbara
Ngaanyatjarra Council (Aboriginal Corporation)
Ngaanytjarruku Shire
Shire of Laverton
Paupiyala Tjarutja Aboriginal Corporation – Tjuntjuntjara Community
Broome Diocese
Private citizen
WA Local Government Association (WALGA)
Shire of Ashburton
Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service, Fitzroy Crossing

South Australia
APY Lands (Local Government area)
Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC), APY Lands
South Australian Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
Maralinga Tjarutja Lands
Outback Communities Authority
Yalata Aboriginal Corporation
Queensland
Interagency Asbestos Group (IAG)
Diamantina Shire Council
Cloncurry Shire Council
Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council
Mornington Island Shire Council
Carpentaria Shire Council
Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council
Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council
Aurukun Shire Council
Torres Strait Regional Council
Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
BAMA/Cape York Partnerships
Ricon
New South Wales
Brewarrina Shire Council
Bourke Shire Council

Central Darling Shire Council
Safework NSW
NSW Aboriginal Land Council - Far Western Zone
Local Government NSW
Waste Aid Ltd

Appendix C - Consultation questions

Set A - Stakeholders with no known asbestos management programs running

	Question
1	If you had to describe asbestos to someone in the community what would you say? (there's no right or wrong answer)
2	Is asbestos an important issue in your community? • If yes, why, if no, why not?
3	Do you know of any buildings in the community which you have heard have asbestos in them?
4	Are there any piles of building waste lying round ie, cement pipes or old wall panels?
5	When do you think many of the buildings in this community were built? What sorts of condition are they in now, for example are they well maintained or are some falling down?
6	Have you heard any community members recounting stories in relation to seeing asbestos or white powder in the community? If yes, can you tell me about these stories and can you describe them?
7	Do you have an asbestos register? • If yes, how do you use/check the register? • How useful is it, to help community members or contractors working on the community?
8	If asbestos was found, or a product you thought was asbestos was found in the community, what is the process you would currently go through to remove it?
9	Do you have an OH&S program run in this community which includes training on the removal of asbestos materials? Do you know of other communities which have training programs? If so which ones?
10	Have you had any community members present with any lung problems or any of the asbestosis related diseases, such as problems with their lungs or breathing? May any of this be related to asbestosis?
11	Do you need any information or help in relation to: identification, removal, transport and disposal?
12.	Are there any other things you are having trouble with like funding for programs, training, getting messages out to the community etc?

Set B - Regional council or Indigenous corporation with known asbestos management programs

	Question
1	Is asbestos much of an issue in your community? • If yes, why, if no, why not?
2	Can you tell me what/if any asbestos management programs you have running currently? These may relate to: • identification • removal • transport and disposal • storage/landfills • community awareness
3	What might be hampering you to achieve what you need in relation to this work?
4	Are you working with any stakeholders/partners in doing this work? Is there anyone you would like to be working with but aren't?
5	If you need to store ACM, where is the nearest asbestos approved landfill site? Are there any challenges in transporting to this site and how secure is the site?
6	How do you finance the work (ie, identification and removal) the council needs to do in relation to asbestos?
7	What is the policy framework in place to respond to asbestos in the communities you work with?
9	Do you operate/support an asbestos register? • If yes, how do you use it? • How useful is it, to help community members or contractors working on building sites? • Who has access to it?
10	Do you know of any OH&S programs run in communities which include training on the removal of asbestos materials?
11	Do you have any employment programs running in communities which involve employing local people to remove and build community awareness about asbestos?
12	Do you need any information or help in relation to identification, removal, transport and disposal?
13	Do you know of any organisations running any preventative health programs in relation to exposure to asbestos?

14	From your perspective, how well does the community understand asbestos? • How do you communicate information about asbestos in the communities? • What sort of information do you provide? • How do you let the community know about asbestos without them panicking?
15	Are there any other challenges you may be experiencing to do with communicating to communities and property owners, funding for programs, or training etc?
16	Is there anyone else you think I should speak to in relation to this matter?

Set C - Government or institutional bodies

	Question
1	What is the role of the Department of XX in managing/responding to the asbestos on remote Indigenous communities?
2	What are the current programs or initiatives currently active in your department in relation to: • identification • removal • transport and disposal • storage • community awareness?
3	How do you currently finance your asbestos management programs?
4	Are you working with any stakeholders/partners in doing this work? Is there anyone you would like to be working with but aren't?
5	What might be hampering you to achieve what you need in relation to this work?
6	What is the policy framework in place in response to asbestos in these communities?
7	Do you operate an asbestos register? • If yes, how has the register been used? • How useful is it, to help community members or contractors working on communities? • Who had access to it? • Are there any drawbacks to having a register?
8	Do you know of any OH&S programs run in communities which include training on the removal of asbestos materials?
9	Do you have any employment programs running in communities which involve employing local people to remove and build community awareness about asbestos?
10	Do you know of any organisations running any preventative health programs in relation to exposure to asbestos?
11	From your perspective, how well do the communities understand asbestos? How do you communicate information about asbestos in the communities? What sort of information do you provide? How do you let the community know about asbestos without them panicking?
12	Are there any other challenges you may be experiencing to do with communicating to communities and property owners, funding for programs, or training etc?
13	What aspects of your program have been done well?
14	Is there anyone else you think I should speak to in relation to this matter?

Set D - Private contractors who carry out work on remote communities

	Question
1	Can you recall any remote Indigenous communities, in recent years, where you have come across asbestos either in renovation or demolition jobs? Which communities are they?
2	Do any communities stand out has having piles of building waste lying round ie, cement pipes or old wall panels?
3	When you have been in communities, have you ever heard any community members recounting stories about seeing asbestos in the community or kids playing around asbestos?
4	Do you or have you ever referred to an asbestos register in the renovation or demolition work you've done on communities? • If yes, how useful is it for you?
5	If asbestos was found, or a product you thought was asbestos was found in the community, what is the process you would currently go through to identify it and remove it?
6	How do you dispose of asbestos waste if the nearest approval facility is hundreds of kms away?
7	Have you seen landfill sites or dumps where asbestos hasn't been buried properly or the asbestos hasn't been bagged properly, if yes, which communities?
8	Have you ever trained up local people to do some of the removal etc. Do you know of other communities which have training programs? If so which ones?
9	In the NT and WA communities you have worked in, how well do you think communities understand what asbestos is and understand the safety issues etc?
10	Have you ever come across any buildings which contain ACM, but the community is hesitant for the building to be demolished due to its cultural or community significance?

Appendix D - Location of remote communities consulted

Appendix E - Program documentation

Women's Asbestos Removal Program

Asbestos specific training and employment program partnering with the Yuendumu CDP Program.

Indigenous Women Asbestos Removal Program for Women mentored by Women

Women are required for an Asbestos Removal Training Program which will be delivered in this community for Indigenous Women of the community.

This Program includes;

- A free construction white card training course (delivered by Office of Women's Policy)
  Commencement Date: 1-7 February 2016 (for 10 Women Applicants)
- A free Class B Licence Asbestos Removal training course .
  Commencement Date: Mid February 2016 TBA (for 10 Women Applicants)

This program ensures that you will be mentored by women training officers, Indigenous Women Interpreters, Licenced Women Hygienist and a Licenced Women Asbestos Removal Team Leader.

This is a one off Nationally Accredited course with paid casual employment for the duration of the Program. To register your application please contact your Commonwealth Development Program Officer (CDP Officer)

Flyer supplied by the Northern Territory Government, Asbestos Removal Program.

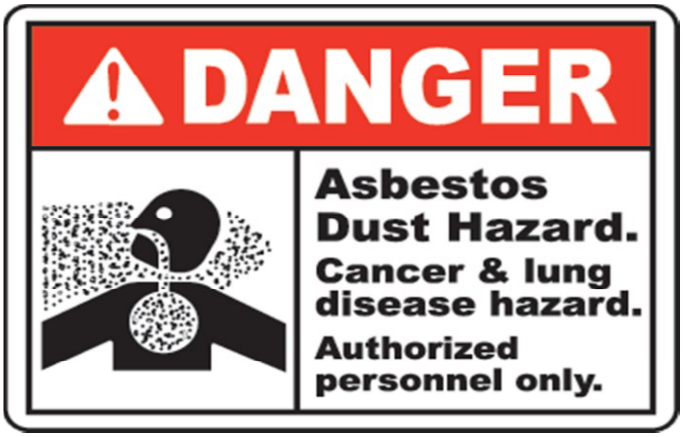
Flyers NTG asbestos removal program

Sample of Safety Information flyers used during ACM removal process on a community.

McMAHON SERVICES AECOM

ASBESTOS REMOVAL IN YOUR COMMUNITY

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY PLEASE DON'T CROSS THE BARRIERS



Flyer supplied by the Northern Territory Government, Asbestos Removal Program

Landfill signage APY Lands

Proposed signage for use at the RASAC (APY Lands Far North South Australia) Landfill sites and for community education.

600mm x 900mm - 1.6mm Alum Sign (CL1Reflective)

Photo documentation from the Indigenous Women's Asbestos Removal Program in the Northern Territory

Photo 1 (3649) attached- Package 7B, is a photo of the first three women who received their statements of attainments for Class B Asbestos Removal licences on International Women's Day, 8 March 2016. Having received their formal licences, the council will employ them as they worked 10 hours a day in Pmara Jutunta receiving $50.00 per hour on the previous Sunday through the McMahons company. Everyone from the CDP and Shire office are impressed with the ladies work ethic.

Photo credit from Northern Territory Government Project Report

Women from Pmara Jutunta participating in the Indigenous Women's Asbestos Removal Program in the Northern Territory