



Australian Government
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

ASBESTOS SAFETY

AIM: **ASBESTOS**
TO ELIMINATE
ASBESTOS-RELATED
DISEASE IN AUSTRALIA

Annual Report
2019-20

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Australian Government
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

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The Hon Christian Porter MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

It is my pleasure to present to you the Annual Report of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency for the 2019–20 year.

The report has been prepared in accordance with section 70 of the *Public Service Act 1999* and section 46 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, which requires the agency to submit a report to the Minister on its operations for the year ending 30 June 2020. The report must be given to the responsible Minister by the 15th day of the fourth month after the end of the reporting period for the entity.

The report contains the financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2020. These statements were prepared in accordance with the Finance Minister's orders and as required by section 46 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The financial statements also accord with applicable accounting standards.

I certify that the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency has a fraud control plan in place which complies with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines.

Yours sincerely

Justine Ross
Chief Executive Officer
17 September 2020

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1. Overview

Chief executive officer's year in review

I am very proud to report that we have continued our forward trajectory set out in 2018–19 in the midst of a global pandemic. We started the first half of 2019–20 with a clear direction when the Australian Government officially launched the *National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management 2019–2023* (NSP 2019–2023) at our 2019 Asbestos Safety Conference in Perth. I was pleased to announce that all governments have committed to working together to implement NSP 2019–2023 which builds on NSP 2014–2018 by including nine national targets to help us measure our progress over the next five years.



At the start of 2020, we initiated the development of the data analysis and reporting framework for NSP 2019–2023 and developing resources to support jurisdictional implementation. Only a few months later, it became apparent that priorities in government and non-government bodies were starting to change, responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic. In April 2020, a number of agency staff were temporarily redeployed to support the Australian Government's response to the pandemic. Many of our stakeholders were also experiencing disruption of their normal activities. Under these circumstances, we reprioritised our work to focus on awareness-raising initiatives, the redesign of the agency website and the review of existing research and communication material.

As a result, we responded to the trend of homeowners undertaking home improvements during the COVID-19 pandemic by developing social media messages, producing new animation videos and publications to raise community awareness about asbestos exposure risks in the home.

We also completed an analysis of the recommendations from research commissioned under our first NSP 2014–2018. This showed that many of the recommendations have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. The analysis also highlighted areas where further action and research is needed, and we have included this work as part of our 2020–2021 research plan.

In relation to permits for importing, exporting, analysing or disposing asbestos, a total of 23 permissions were granted during 2019–2020.

This year has also seen new appointments to the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council with the appointment of a new Chair John Williams and new members David Cains, Tracy Mackey and Chris Wicks. I am grateful for the advice and support received from all our current and former Council and Committee members as well as the stakeholders that assist us in achieving the objectives of NSP 2019–2023.

Like COVID-19, asbestos is a serious public health issue that requires coordinated action and consistent messages to ensure the right action is taken to prevent exposure. Unlike COVID-19, asbestos does not have the immediacy of health effects and can be easily disregarded. Even though the implementation of NSP 2019–2023 has been slowed due to the current global pandemic we are motivated to keep forging ahead to eliminate asbestos-related diseases in Australia and help the nations in our region do the same.

Who we are

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (ASEA) was established in 2013 to coordinate the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness (NSP). The NSP aims to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres in order to eliminate asbestos-related disease in Australia.

ASEA is a non-corporate entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The chief executive officer is appointed under the *Asbestos Safety and Eradication Act 2013* and performs functions in accordance with that Act. ASEA staff are engaged under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

Our aim

To assist the prevention of exposure to asbestos fibres in order to eliminate asbestos-related diseases in Australia by coordinating the implementation of the NSP.

We also seek to ensure asbestos issues receive the attention and focus needed to drive action across all levels of government and in the non-government sector.

Our functions

ASEA coordinates national actions to improve asbestos awareness and the effective and safe management, removal and disposal of asbestos. ASEA is not a regulator.

Our key functions under the *Asbestos Safety and Eradication Act 2013* (the Act) are to:

- encourage, coordinate, monitor and report on the implementation of the NSP, as well as reviewing and amending the plan as required and publishing and promoting it
- liaise with Commonwealth, state, territory, local and other governments, agencies or bodies about reviewing and implementing the NSP and asbestos safety
- commission, monitor and promote research about asbestos safety.

ASEA's functions are performed in accordance with our corporate and operational plan, which is agreed to annually by the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations.

The National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness explained

The NSP facilitates a nationally consistent and coordinated approach to asbestos awareness, management and removal.

NSP 2019–2023 contains four national priorities:

- Improve asbestos awareness to influence behavioural change
- Identification and effective legacy management
- Safe prioritised removal and effective waste management
- International collaboration and leadership

NSP 2019–2023 also contains nine targets to measure progress against the national priorities.

Organisational structure

ASEA is responsible through its chief executive officer (who is the accountable authority) to the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations and for financial purposes, operates under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). Justine Ross has held this appointment since 23 August 2018.

As at 30 June 2020, ASEA was structured into two teams aligned to the agency's key function of coordinating the implementation of NSP 2019–2023.

Our Council

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council (ASEC) is established by Section 29 (1) of the *Asbestos Safety and Eradication Act 2013*.

The Council's key functions relate to the NSP and involve monitoring its implementation by Commonwealth, state and territory and local governments, providing advice and making recommendations.

Council's other function includes providing advice and making recommendations to ASEA's chief executive officer and providing advice to the Minister about asbestos safety.

The Council is comprised of 10 members representing various interests:

- the chair
- one member representing the Commonwealth
- four members representing state, territory and local government
- one member representing the interest of workers
- one member representing the interests of employers
- two other members who are selected for their experience and expertise with asbestos safety, public health, corporate governance or the representation of people with asbestos-related diseases and their families.

During 2019–20, ASEC had four observers representing an otherwise unrepresented group of stakeholders or attending to provide support and assistance to a full member.

The ASEC members and observers as at 30 June 2020 are described in Table 1.

Table 1: ASEC members and observers as at 30 June 2020

Position	Appointee	Position appointed	Appointment date	Expiry date
Chair	Mr John Williams	Chair	17 April 2020	16 April 2023
Member	Mr David Cains	Member representing the Commonwealth	17 April 2020	16 April 2023
Member	Ms Tracy Mackey	Member representing state, territory and local governments	17 April 2020	16 April 2023
Member	Mr Chris Wicks	Member representing state, territory and local governments	17 April 2020	16 April 2023
Member	Ms. Melina Sehr	Member representing state, territory and local governments	3 April 2019	2 April 2022
Member	Mr. Tony Circelli	Member representing state, territory and local governments	20 August 2018	19 August 2021
Member	Mr. Liam O'Brien	Member representing the interests of workers in Australia	18 March 2019	17 March 2022
Member	Ms. Tracey Browne	Member representing the interests of employers in Australia	17 April 2020	16 April 2023
Member	Ms. Nancy Milne OAM	Other	17 April 2020	16 April 2023
Member	Ms. Carolyn Davis	Other	17 April 2020	16 April 2023
Observer	Ms Vicki Hamilton OAM	Representing an otherwise unrepresented group of stakeholders (Support Groups)	5 July 2017	NA
Observer	Dr Robert Walters	Representing an otherwise unrepresented group of stakeholders (Tasmania)	5 May 2017	NA
Observer	Dr Peter McGarry	Representing an otherwise unrepresented group of stakeholders (Queensland)	9 March 2018	NA
Observer	Ms Simone Stevenson	Representing an otherwise unrepresented group of stakeholders (Victorian Asbestos Eradication Agency)	14 March 2018	NA

Our committees and working groups

Under section 24(1) of the *Asbestos Safety and Eradication Act 2013*, the chief executive officer may establish committees to assist in the performance of their functions or the functions of ASEC. Four committees operated in 2019–20:

- Research and Evaluation Committee (REC)—first established in 2015 to provide expert advice to the agency on technical research projects, strategies and methodologies to achieve the aim of the NSP
- Management and Removal Committee (MRC)—first established in 2014 to provide advice to the agency on issues relating to the management of asbestos in the building, construction and demolition sectors and implementation of the NSP
- Water Pipes Working Group (WPWG)—first established in 2018 to provide a forum to discuss and develop an agreed approach on the management of water pipes containing asbestos and best practice guidelines for safe removal, transport and disposal of water pipes containing asbestos
- Asbestos Awareness Committee (AAC)—first established in 2020 to guide the development of behaviour change programs.

ASEA provided secretariat support in 2019–20 for:

- Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities (HWSA) Imported Materials with Asbestos Working Group—established to deal with incidences of asbestos-containing materials being imported into Australia in contravention of the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956. The working group meets on an ad hoc basis to determine a course of action when asbestos-containing materials have been imported into Australia and detected in more than one jurisdiction, as outlined in the rapid response protocol.
- Asbestos Support Group Network (ASGN)—a coalition of all community-based asbestos-related disease support groups across Australia who are mainly funded by charitable donations, grant funding and fundraising events. These groups provide assistance and support to members of the community who have been diagnosed with an asbestos-related disease and their families and friends.

2. Our performance

Annual performance statement

I, Justine Ross, as the accountable authority of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, present the ASEA's 2019–20 annual performance statement, as required under paragraph 39(1)(a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). In my opinion, the annual performance statement is based on properly maintained records, accurately reflects the performance of the entity and complies with subsection 39(2) of the PGPA Act.



Justine Ross
Chief Executive Officer

17 September 2020

Our performance framework

Our performance is measured in accordance with Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) 2019–20, our Corporate Plan (which is the National Strategic Plan) and our Operational Plan 2019–20.

How our Portfolio Budget Statement, Corporate Plan and Operational Plan interrelate

As stated above, the National Strategic Plan is our corporate plan. The portfolio budget statement links the performance criteria with the National Strategic Plan. The operational plan lists the activities we will undertake during the year in order to fulfil our function. There is a high degree of overlap between the measures in the portfolio budget statement and the operational plan. Operation plan activities for 2019–20 were either delivered or now form part of on-going work.

Our 2019–20 portfolio budget statement outlines our single outcome and program, and our performance criteria.

Our outcome:

Assist the prevention of exposure to asbestos fibres and the elimination of asbestos-related disease in Australia through implementing the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management in Australia.

Our program:

We deliver outcomes by encouraging, coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the National Strategic Plan. We also collaborate with the Commonwealth, state and territory and local government agencies about asbestos safety and commission and promote research about asbestos safety.

Our performance results

Table 2: Our performance results

Target	ASEA effectively supports NSP 2019–2023 with research, reporting, evaluation and advice
Results	Launched NSP 2019–2023 at the 2019 Asbestos Safety Conference in Perth
	Ministerial approval obtained to expand NSP 2019–2023 to include a 9th target which will develop an evidence based national picture that assesses the likelihood of asbestos containing materials being present in the residential environment
	Developed target measurement and reporting plans for each NSP 2019–2023 target with new sources of data identified and templates to measure progress
	Identified gaps in, and improvements to, asbestos-related training
	Identified gaps in, and improvements to, asbestos-related law
	Developed an International Collaboration and Leadership Strategy to establish the activities required to implement NSP 2019–2023 and to define measurable actions that will be updated annually
	Completed an internal analysis of the findings and recommendations of research conducted under NSP 2014–2018 to inform future research and identify gaps
	Developed a new stakeholder engagement strategy which will be reviewed annually, to assist the agency perform its key function of coordinating the implementation of NSP 2019–2023
	Established the Asbestos Awareness Committee under the ASEA Act to improve asbestos awareness, influence behaviour change and develop nationally consistent awareness messages
	Developed asbestos safety messages for those undertaking do-it-yourself (DIY) during COVID-19 pandemic which were delivered via website and social media channels
	Refreshed the agency's website and built social media presence in order to provide asbestos awareness messages to the public
	Developed an asbestos awareness master language document which will be maintained and developed as a living resource
Assessment	Achieved

Analysis

As reflected in the activities reported against the performance criterion of the 2019–20 Portfolio Budget Statement, we have continued our focus on preventing exposure to asbestos fibres and eliminating asbestos-related disease in Australia through coordinating the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management (NSP). We successfully launched the second phase of the NSP in November 2019, having achieved the commitment of governments around Australia to implement the new NSP 2019–2023. The new NSP includes nine national targets to help us measure our progress over the next five years.

Although implementation of NSP 2019–2023 has been challenging for some during the global pandemic, we were able to collect baseline data from jurisdictions against the national targets. The immature nature of the data highlighted the need for jurisdictions to establish a more coordinated and consistent approach to collecting NSP data, involving all agencies with asbestos related responsibilities. We commenced work on a data analysis and reporting framework and developing resources to provide guidance to governments on implementing and reporting against NSP 2019–2023.

We continued engaging and collaborating with stakeholders during 2019–2020. The 2019 Asbestos Safety Conference in Perth allowed stakeholders to learn from each other and support the successful implementation of NSP 2019–2023. We established the Asbestos Awareness Committee and enhanced our stakeholder engagement and communication strategies.

We also developed a strategy to support the NSP national priority area of International Collaboration and Leadership and continued assisting countries across South-East Asia and the Pacific deal with asbestos challenges.

As many of our stakeholders also experienced disruption of their normal activities due to COVID-19 in the second half of 2019–2020, we reprioritised our work to focus on awareness-raising initiatives, the redesign of the agency website and the review of existing research and communication material. We responded to the trend of homeowners undertaking home improvements during the COVID-19 pandemic by developing social media messages to raise community awareness about asbestos exposure risks in the home.

We completed an analysis of the recommendations in research commissioned under our first NSP 2014–2018. It showed that many of the recommendations have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. The analysis also highlighted areas where further action and research is needed, and we have included this work as part of our 2020–2021 research plan.

As a result of these outcomes, the agency has achieved its target for 2019–2020 of effectively supporting the NSP with research, reporting, evaluation and advice.

The next section highlights our key achievements for 2019–2020.

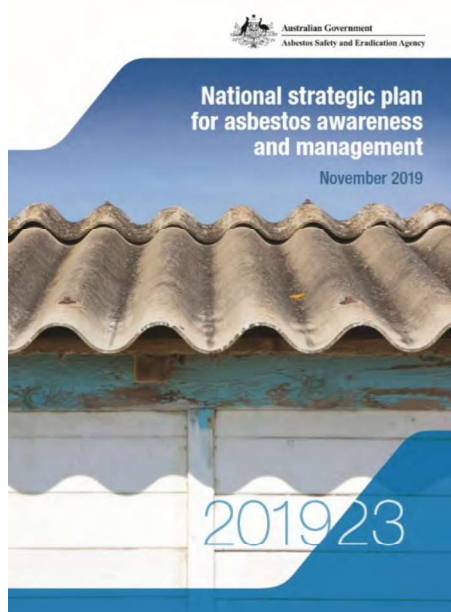


Section 3

Our achievements

3. Our achievements

Highlights from 2019–20



Launch of the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management 2019–2023

The Member for Curtin, Ms Celia Hammond MP, officially launched the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management 2019–2023 (NSP 2019–2023) on behalf of the Australian Government at the 2019 Asbestos Safety Conference held in Perth from 11–13 November 2019.

The conference welcomed over 250 domestic and international delegates and speakers from across the asbestos management system, including work health and safety, public health, communications, advocacy, local government and environmental management and remediation.

The focus of the conference was on jurisdictions working together and learning from each other to ensure the successful implementation of NSP 2019–2023.

Being held in Western Australia, the conference was also able to highlight the unique history and experience of Western Australia's asbestos legacy, from the Wittenoom mine site clean-up to progress in medical research being undertaken at the National Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases.

Holding the event in Perth meant that many delegates were able to attend the 2019 Asbestos Safety Conference for the first time. First time attendees accounted for 49 per cent of delegates (128 people). In addition, 31 per cent of delegates had attended between one and three previous agency events, and 17 per cent of delegates had attended more than three other agency events, showing that the conference still holds interest for long-term attendees. For the first time, we offered a digital registration option so delegates could live-stream the entire conference if unable to attend in person.

There was positive media coverage of the conference and of the launch of NSP 2019–2023 across print and radio. This helped to further awareness of asbestos health risks in the community.

The 2019 conference featured the largest program offered by our conferences to date, with 50 speakers from across Australia and internationally. There were featured sessions on the International Ban Asbestos campaign, asbestos awareness and communications, waste disposal and clean up, the role of local government in asbestos management and the challenges local government faces, and work being undertaken in the non-government sector. Eleven plenary sessions, two featured panels and six track breakout sessions meant that each section of the asbestos management cycle was covered in detail.

Due to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now planning for an event in late 2021 as the mid-point for the five-year NSP 2019–2023, highlighting achievements to date and what will still need to be done to implement the plan successfully.

Asbestos Awareness Week 2019: 'Asbestos lurks in more places than you'd think.'

For the first time, we coordinated centralised campaign materials for the National Asbestos Awareness Week held in November each year, disseminating resources to jurisdictions and non-government organisations around the country.

This approach meant that the awareness messaging (both language and images) was consistent and harmonised around Australia.

The message that 'Asbestos lurks in more places than you'd think' sought to address the lack of knowledge that most Australians have about how much asbestos is in the built environment, and where it might be located.

Using 'retro-look' images of Australian homes (particularly bathrooms and kitchens) from the 1960s to the 1970s era, the campaign sought to prompt nostalgia but also trigger that asbestos was likely present in the rooms featured.

The campaign focused on the residential setting and rooms that are often targeted for home improvement, speaking to both those doing DIY jobs and tradespeople working in homes.

Stakeholders gave positive feedback about the resource pack and we plan to undertake this model again in the future, incorporating suggestions from stakeholders.

We also delivered a media campaign throughout the week to highlight the issue of asbestos exposure and worked with the Parliamentary Group for Asbestos Related Disease (PGARD) to hold a successful event at Parliament House, Canberra.

Communications strategy for 2020: Public health focus

The communications strategy for 2020 has focused on public health outcomes and working to meet Priority 1 and Target 1 of NSP 2019–2023.

Specifically, we focused on changing attitudes and behaviours, by providing accurate and timely information about the potential health risks of asbestos-containing materials to workers and the community.

Early in 2020, it became clear that our normal program of events and public-facing stakeholder and community engagement activities would not be possible. We therefore realigned our activities to focus on the digital space and working with targeted cohorts.

This has included producing targeted, comprehensive and nationally consistent asbestos awareness advice and information (Priority 1 strategic action) and producing additional practical information material on asbestos safety in the home, workplace and the environment (Priority 1 strategic action) through better targeting of messaging and communications during national crises and events including natural disasters or the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 response, we were aware of an increase in DIY projects, home repairs and maintenance being initiated. In order to ensure the message of asbestos safety was communicated during this time, we worked with the Asbestos Support Group Network to run a public health communications project to both spread the asbestos safety message online, and also to test different messages for cut through and resonance.

We also worked to establish or maintain trusted sources of asbestos-related information at the national and jurisdictional level (Priority 1 strategic action) by establishing the Asbestos Awareness Committee, with representatives from all jurisdictions and a variety of non-government organisations. The Committee is focused on coordinating national public-health messages and reducing unnecessary duplication by allowing shared campaign and research resources.

Figure 1: Example image from the public health communications project, tranche 1



National Asbestos Exposure Register

The National Asbestos Exposure Register records details of suspected or actual asbestos exposure for anyone who knows or thinks they have been exposed, whether at work, in the home or in the community.

The register captures information about where and when potential exposure occurred and whether the individual has been diagnosed with an asbestos-related disease. The data is stored securely and can be accessed by the individual in future as a record of the exposure event.

Using data recorded in the register, we can report trends in potential asbestos exposure based on age, gender, location, type of exposure, frequency of exposure and where the potential exposure occurred, see Figure 2 and Figure 3.

However, as the register is voluntary and the information recorded is based on each registrant's recollection of events, the data does not provide a precise picture of asbestos exposures or asbestos-related disease in Australia.

This report provides a snapshot of registrations for the reporting period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 and shows trends in registrations over the past six years.

The total registrations from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2020 were 10,533.

Figure 2: National Asbestos Exposure Register registrations 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2020

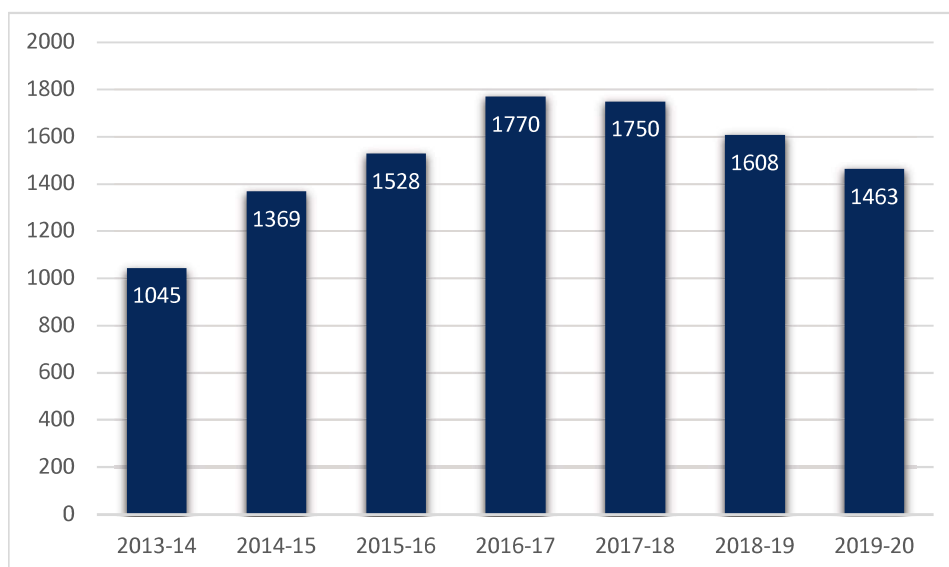
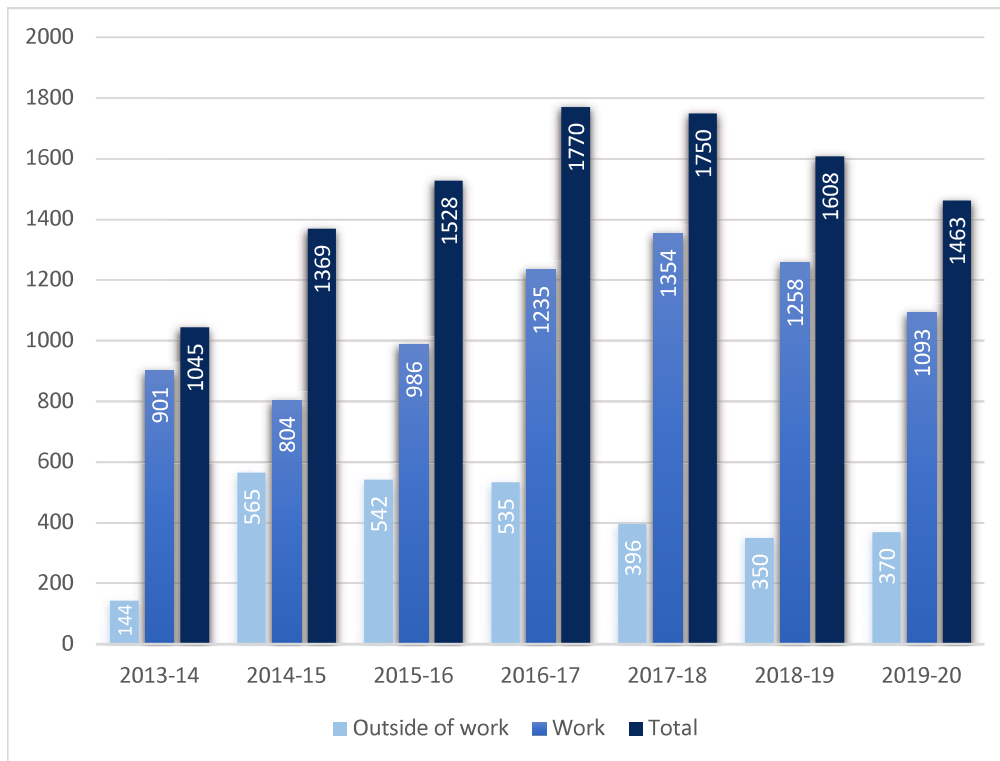


Figure 3: National Asbestos Exposure Register breakdown of exposure settings 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2020



Review of the National Asbestos Exposure Register

During 2019–20, we undertook a review of the National Asbestos Exposure Register to clarify its role in reporting and recording potential asbestos exposure for the Australian community.

The review found that due to limitations in data accuracy and completeness, the register was not able to identify areas of potential risk to the community and cannot be relied upon to do so.

Data limitations relate to the voluntary nature of the register, the ability of individuals to correctly identify asbestos and their ability to accurately recall a potential exposure event at the time of registration.

The review concluded that the enduring purpose of the register is to serve as a record for members of the community who believe they have been exposed to asbestos, so they can refer to the details of the potential exposure in the future.

4. Management and accountability

Management and accountability

During 2019–20 we quickly adapted to new ways of working as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We activated our business continuity plan in the early stages of the pandemic. By mid-March 2020 all agency staff were working from home. We continue to invest in staff development by identifying training and other development opportunities. We undertook a major review of our records management practices and developed an agency-specific Records Authority in collaboration with the National Archives of Australia. This means that significant documents relating to Australia's asbestos legacy will now form part of the national archives. This will greatly improve our compliance obligations relating to the keeping of records and will significantly reduce the time involved creating, storing and retrieving documents.

As a micro agency, our corporate governance structure and processes are streamlined and include weekly meetings with all staff and the executive who oversight the risk management system and corporate compliance. Regular reporting on ASEA's risk profile is provided to the Audit Committee.

In June 2020, the agency commenced a project to review and revise the entire suite of corporate policies in consultation with staff.

Our people

During 2019–20 our organisational structure remained stable and aligned to our key function of coordinating the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management 2019–2023. Our organisational chart is shown in Figure 4.

Our employees

As at 30 June 2020, 13 staff were employed, comprising nine ongoing and four non-ongoing. We were within our Average Staffing Level (ASL) limit as not all staff are full-time.

Figure 4: ASEA Organisational Chart

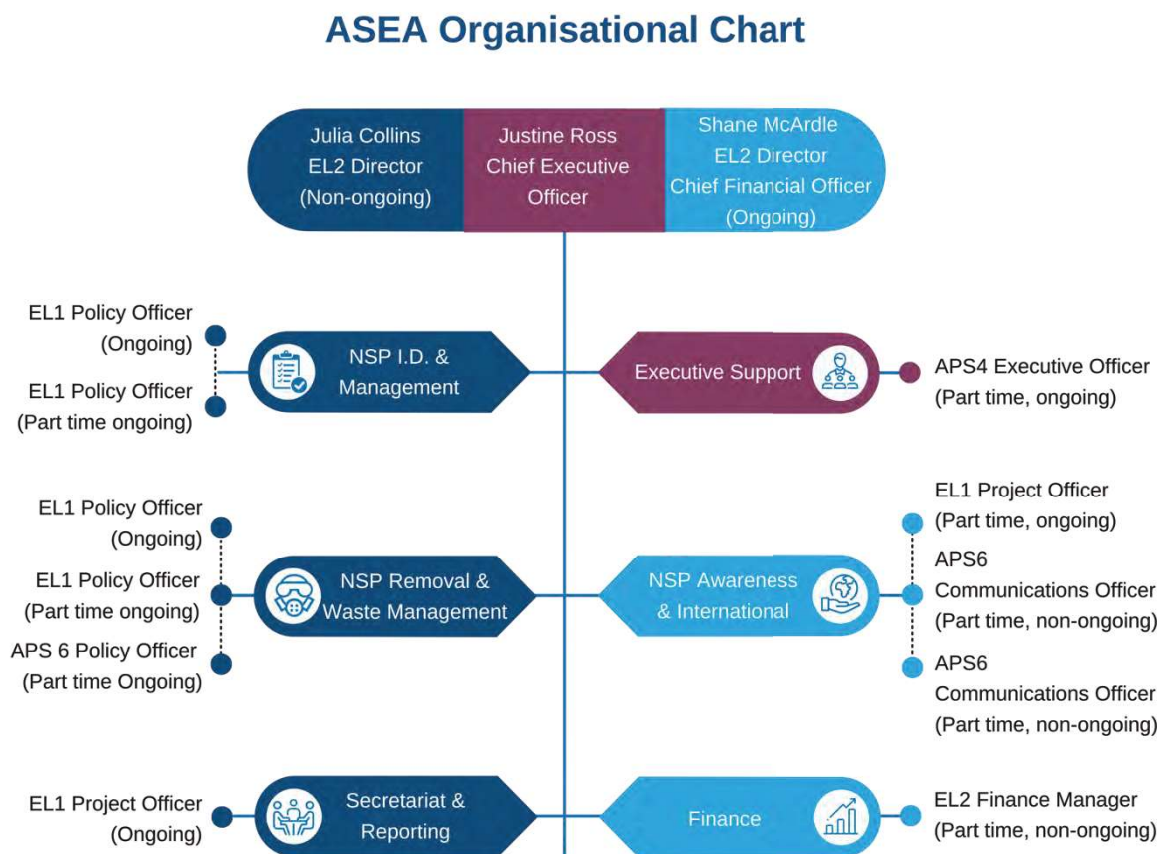


Table 3: ASEA APS employee statistics as at 30 June 2020

Agency staff as at 30 June 2020	Numbers		Employment status			
	Male	Female	Ongoing full-time	Ongoing part-time	Non-ongoing full-time	Non-ongoing part-time
APS4	-	1	-	1	-	-
APS6	-	3	-	1	-	2
EL1	-	6	3	3	-	-
EL2	2	1	1	-	1	1
Total	2	11	4	5	1	3

ASEA supports part-time and flexible working arrangements with 54 per cent of staff working part-time. There are no employees who identify as Indigenous Australians.

Statistics on gender

Female representation at ASEA is 85 per cent, which is higher than the Australian Public Service (APS) as a whole.

Location

ASEA has offices in three locations – Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane. As at 30 June 2020, seven staff were located at its New South Wales office at 255 Elizabeth Street, Sydney with two staff members in Queensland and four in the Australian Capital Territory.

Terms and conditions of employment including remuneration

Executive remuneration

The remuneration of the chief executive officer and the chair of ASEC is set by determinations made under the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973* (Cth). ASEA do not have any senior executives or other highly paid staff.

The chief executive officer, Ms Justine Ross, was appointed on an acting basis from 23 August 2018 and full-time basis on 19 November 2018 for a period of five years, and is the accountable authority.

The chair of ASEC, Mr John Williams, was appointed on a part-time basis on 17 April 2020 for a period of three years.

Table 4: Executive Remuneration Information about remuneration for key management personnel

Name	Position title	Short-term benefits			Post-employment benefits	Other long-term benefits		Termination benefits	Total remuneration
		Base salary	Bonuses	Other benefits and allowances	Superannuation contributions	Long service leave	Other long-term benefits		
Justine Ross	Chief Executive Officer	269,333	-	-	42,721	10,266	-	-	322,320

Table 5: Details of Accountable Authority during 2019–20

Name	Position title/position held	Period as the accountable authority or member within the reporting period	
		Date of commencement	Date of cessation
Justine Ross	Chief Executive Officer	1 July 2019	30 June 2020

Employee remuneration

As at 30 June 2020, all non-senior executive service (SES) employees were covered by the terms and conditions of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Determination 2019/01 which was determined by the Chief Executive Officer on 14 February 2019 under subsection 24(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*. Table 6: Australian Public Service Act Employment salary ranges by classification level (Minimum/Maximum) Current Report Period (2019–20)

	Minimum Salary	Maximum Salary
SES 3	NA	NA
SES 2	NA	NA
SES 1	NA	NA
EL 2	124,368	149,287
EL 1	105,687	116,806
APS 6	85,947	94,513
APS 5	76,451	81,733
APS 4	69,242	74,052
APS 3	63,654	66,301
APS 2	57,000	60,739
APS 1	48,530	53,061
Other	29,118	44,163
Minimum/Maximum range	29,118	149,287

Performance pay

Employees do not receive performance bonuses or performance pay. Annual performance ratings provide non-SES employees with the possibility of pay points advancement.

Allowances and non remuneration benefits

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Determination 2019/01 contains a number of allowances and non-remuneration benefits including:

- Workplace Responsibility Allowance
- School Holiday Care Allowance
- pay point advancement for meeting performance criteria
- access to flexible working conditions
- temporary performance loading for performing work at a higher classification
- flexible remuneration and salary packaging
- Christmas close down from 12.30 pm on the last working day before Christmas Day until the first working day in January
- time off in lieu for executive level employees
- maternity, maternal, supporting partner, primary carer, parental, adoption and foster care leave
overtime meal allowance
- travel allowance and motor vehicle allowances
- relocation assistance
- access to an employee assistance program
- support for professional and personal development.

In addition, employees are entitled to an annual health related allowance for activities or equipment that helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle.

The determination provides a full list of non-remuneration benefits.

Work health and safety

We are committed to fostering a proactive and collaborative approach to the management of employee health, safety and wellbeing. We have several measures in place relative to the size of the agency, including: access to the employee assistance program provided by Benestar; workstation assessments; health benefit allowance; voluntary influenza vaccinations; and a health and safety representative.

The Employee Assistance Program, incorporating the Manager Assistance Program, is available to all staff to help foster health and wellbeing. The program provides short-term counselling and support services for employees and their immediate family members. We also encourage physical activity to support mental and physical wellbeing through our health related allowance.

Employees also have access to trained first aid officers and first aid facilities and a trained floor warden for emergency evacuation procedures.

No workers' compensation claims were lodged with Comcare in the 2019–20 reporting period.

There were no notifiable incidents in relation to a serious injury of a person and no investigations were carried out under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

Diversity and inclusion

We are committed to a workplace where everyone feels included, valued, safe, respected and supported. We have adopted the Department of Employment's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which contains six action plans that target six identified diverse areas:

- gender equality
- people with disability
- Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- mature age employees
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning (LGBTIQ+).

Ethical standards

We maintained our commitment to high ethical standards in 2019–20 by reinforcing the Australian Public Service (APS) values and APS code of conduct.

Our induction programs highlighted the importance of the APS values and the code of conduct as a vehicle for instilling a positive, collaborative and professional workplace culture with the aim of establishing us as a leading APS employer.

During the 2019–20 reporting period, there were no formal cases involving alleged breaches of the APS values or the APS code of conduct.

Disability reporting

Since 1994, Commonwealth non-corporate entities have reported on their performance as policy adviser, purchaser, employer, regulator and provider under the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. In 2007–08, reporting on the employer role was transferred to the Australian Public Service Commission's State of the Service Report and the APS Statistical Bulletin. These reports are available at www.apsc.gov.au. From 2010–11, entities have no longer been required to report on these functions.

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy has been replaced by the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, which sets out a 10-year national policy framework to improve the lives of people with disability, promote participation and create a more inclusive society. A high-level, two-yearly report will track progress against each of the six outcome areas of the strategy and present a picture of how people with disability are faring. The first of these reports was made available in late 2014 and can be found at www.dss.gov.au.

Internal accountability

To ensure internal conformance and accountability, we have in place:

- financial and human resource delegations
- Accountable Authority Instructions,
- supporting policies, procedures and guidelines.

Audit Committee

ASEA's chief executive officer has established an audit committee. The audit committee's charter determines its functions consistent with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and Rules.

The functions of the audit committee are to review the appropriateness of our:

- financial reporting
- performance reporting
- system of risk oversight and management
- system of internal control.

Information about our Audit Committee, members, meeting attendance and Charter can be found on our website at www.asbestossafety.gov.au/audit-committee

Table 7: Audit committee

Name	Position	Organisation	Expertise	Remuneration	Meeting 19/09/2019	Meeting 06/02/2020	Meeting 18/06/2020
STONE, Joanna (Chair)	Chief Finance Officer, National Manager, Finance, People and Capability	Australian Financial Security Authority	Finance, public administration	\$0	YES	YES	YES
RADKOVIC, Peta	Director (Acting)	Department of Health, Australian Government	Finance, public administration	\$0	YES	YES	YES
McARDLE, Shane	Director	Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency	ASEA representative	\$0	YES	CFO	CFO
HARRISON, Bronwyn	Assistant Director	Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency	ASEA representative	\$0	N/A	YES	N/A
COLLINS, Julia	Director	Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency	ASEA representative	\$0	N/A	N/A	YES

External scrutiny

External audit

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) provides our external audit services. The outcome of the 2019–20 financial statements audit is in Part 5 of this report. We were not subject to any other ANAO audits during 2019–20.

No capability reviews were conducted during 2019–20.

Judicial decisions and decisions of administrative tribunals

No judicial or tribunal decisions that could have a significant impact on agency operations were made during 2019–20 or are pending.

Parliamentary committees

No adverse reports of ASEA's operations by the Auditor-General, a Parliamentary Committee or the Commonwealth Ombudsman were made in 2019–20 or are pending.

Significant issues relating to non-compliance with the finance law

ASEA had no significant issues to report to its minister in relation to non-compliance with the finance law during 2019–20.

Fraud

ASEA complies with section 10 of the PGPA Rule and the Australian Government Fraud Control Policy by minimising the risk of fraud by preventing, detecting, investigating, recording and reporting instances of fraud and corruption through policies, procedures and practices that align with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Framework.

In 2019–20, we developed a new five-year Fraud Control Plan which will cover the life of NSP 2019–2023. It is designed to communicate clearly to staff and contractors the requirements under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. It is a living document and will be updated as necessary during this period. We will ensure that serious non-compliance and fraud is dealt with promptly and effectively, a register of incidents is maintained, and that training opportunities in fraud awareness will be identified and offered to staff.

Freedom of Information

ASEA is covered by the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (FOI Act) and is required to publish information to the public as part of the Information Publication Scheme (IPS). This requirement is in Part II of the FOI Act, and has replaced the former requirement to publish a statement concerning the functions and documents of the agency in the annual report. An agency must display on its website a plan showing what information it publishes in accordance with the IPS requirements. ASEA's current IPS information can be found at www.asbestossafety.gov.au/research-publications.

ASEA received no requests under the FOI Act in 2019–20.

No applications to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal were made in 2019–20 with respect to any decision made by us under the FOI Act.

Asset management, purchasing and grants

Asset management

ASEA's asset management strategy emphasises whole-of-life asset management and seeks to minimise holdings of surplus and underperforming assets.

Our stocktake of fixed and intangible assets in 2019–20 confirmed their location and condition, and emphasised to custodial officers their responsibility to ensure the safe-keeping of assets in their custody.

Details of the assets administered in 2019–20 can be found in our financial statements in Part 5 of this report.

Purchasing

During 2019–20, procurement and purchasing activities (with the exception of any instance reported in its Certificate of Compliance) were conducted in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and we made reasonable enquiries to ensure that the procurement:

- achieved value for money
- encouraged competition and be non-discriminatory
- used public resources in an efficient, effective, economical and ethical manner that is not inconsistent with the policies of the Commonwealth
- facilitated accountable and transparent decision making
- encouraged appropriate engagement with risk
- was commensurate with the scale and scope of our operations.

Australian National Audit Office Clauses

All of ASEA's awarded contracts or Deeds of Standing Offer valued at more than \$100,000 (inclusive of GST) entered into during 2019–20 contained an Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) 'access to contractors premises' clause.

Exempt contracts

There were no contracts in excess of \$10,000 (inclusive of GST) or standing offers that were exempt from the requirement to publish on AusTender during 2019–20.

Small business

We support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by paying providers for goods and services as soon as practicable and within required timeframes, and engaging in ongoing monitoring and improvement to our procurement and contracting practices.

We use the Department of Finance's Commonwealth Contracting Suite for low-risk procurement. This has significantly reduced the length and complexity of most tender processes and contracts by using a set of terms and conditions that are consistent with other agencies that SMEs would be familiar with.

ASEA supports small business participation in the Commonwealth Government procurement market. Small and medium enterprises (SME) and small enterprise participation statistics are available on the Department of Finance's website.

Grants

No grants awarded by ASEA during 2019–20.

Consultants

Due to our size, it is necessary to engage consultants to provide specialist expertise or independent research.

The decision to engage a consultant is made in accordance with finance laws. Prior to engaging consultants, we take into account the skills and resources required for the task, the skills available internally, and the cost effectiveness of engaging external expertise. Legal advice on consultancy arrangements is sought where relevant.

During 2019–20, five new consultancy contracts were entered into involving total actual expenditure of \$51,777.00 (inclusive of GST). In addition, four ongoing consultancy contracts were active during the period, involving total actual expenditure of \$178,032.14 (inclusive of GST).

Annual reports contain information about actual expenditure on contracts for consultancies. Information on the value of contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website at www.tenders.gov.au.

Advertising

As required under section 311A of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, particulars of payments made by the agency during 2019–20 over a certain amount for advertising must be reported.

There was nil expenditure by ASEA during 2019–20.

Ecologically sustainable development and environmental performance

Section 516A of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) requires that government organisations report annually on their environmental performance and contribution to ecologically sustainable development.

We are committed to minimising the environmental impact of our operations and do this by:

- operating a paper, plastic, glass and cardboard recycling program
- effective use of electricity by using energy efficient office machinery
- toner cartridge and waste toner recycling
- using energy efficient computer monitors
- using low wattage lights throughout our offices
- operating lighting via motion sensors to reduce energy consumption
- reducing paper usage by centralising printers and setting them to double-sided printing as a default
- using office paper that is carbon neutral, recycled and/or has an environmental sustainability rating.

5. Our financial performance

Financial Overview

At the end of the 2019–20 financial year ASEA posted a comprehensive loss of \$60,000. Removing depreciation (\$47,000) and the cash impact of applying AASB 16 (\$4,000) meant ASEA had an overspend of \$9,000 in a net cash sense (note 3.2A of the financial statements refers).

ASEA did not and does not have any significant changes in the financial results during or after the previous or current reporting period.

ASEA is not aware of any matter or circumstances, which can be reasonably anticipated will have significant impact on the entity's future operation or financial results.

Independent auditors report



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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Minister for Industrial Relations

Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (the Entity) for the year ended 30 June 2020:

- (a) comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Financial Reporting) Rule 2015*; and
- (b) present fairly the financial position of the Entity as at 30 June 2020 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended.

The financial statements of the Entity, which I have audited, comprise the following as at 30 June 2020 and for the year then ended:

- Statement by the Accountable Authority and Chief Financial Officer;
- Statement of Comprehensive Income;
- Statement of Financial Position;
- Statement of Changes in Equity;
- Cash Flow Statement; and
- Notes to the financial statements, comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which incorporate the Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of my report. I am independent of the Entity in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements for financial statement audits conducted by the Auditor-General and his delegates. These include the relevant independence requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) to the extent that they are not in conflict with the *Auditor-General Act 1997*. I have also fulfilled my other responsibilities in accordance with the Code. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Accountable Authority's responsibility for the financial statements

As the Accountable Authority of the Entity, the Chief Executive Officer is responsible under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the Act) for the preparation and fair presentation of annual financial statements that comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the rules made under the Act. The Chief Executive Officer is also responsible for such internal control as the Board determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for assessing the ability of the Entity to continue as a going concern, taking into account whether the Entity's operations will cease as a result of an administrative restructure or for any other reason. The Chief Executive Officer is also responsible for disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the assessment indicates that it is not appropriate.

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Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objective is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control;
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Entity's internal control;
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Accountable Authority;
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Accountable Authority's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Entity to cease to continue as a going concern; and
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Accountable Authority regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Australian National Audit Office



Peter Kerr
Executive Director
Delegate of the Auditor-General
Canberra
19 September 2020

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