Asbestos in the Home and DIY

ASEA Conference
November 2014
Renata Musolino

OHS Information and Website Officer
Convener Asbestos Committee
Victorian Trades Hall Council

Asbestoswise Committee of Management Member

Reference documents:
- OHS Regulations 2007, Regulation 4.3
- VWA Compliance Codes and Asbestos Handbook
Background - Asbestos

- Extent
- Deadly legacy
- Dangers - ageing in place, accidental damage, renovations, demolition, removal
- The role of the Union movement
- The law
- Asbestos in the home
Union Role

- Toxicity of asbestos known for hundreds of years - report after report in Australia recommended banning/restricting
- Many unions, individually, campaigned for the ban of asbestos
- The builders’ union - ongoing campaigns
  - Exposure of workers in construction high
- The Plumbers March 1984 Federal Executive Resolution:
  ‘That this union place a total ban of the use of any product containing asbestos, unless it can be proved that there is no alternative product manufactured.’
Union role - continued

- First real control of asbestos in WORKPLACES in Victoria achieved through the joint union/industry Victorian Asbestos Removal Industry Consultative Committee (VARICC) Code in 1987

- First asbestos removal regulations 1992 - including licensing of removalists. Predated all other jurisdictions


- December 2000, the actions of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Maritime Union of Australia (banning imports) pushed reluctant government bodies and industry to the negotiating table
Union role - continued

- December 2000 - trade union movement secured round-table discussions between industry, unions, and the Victorian State government. Outcome: phase-out agreement

- May 2001 other governments were coming on board, and the relevant Federal Minister announced that customs and health and safety regulations would be promulgated to ensure a ban on the importation of chrysotile and asbestos-containing products.

- The Dangerous Goods Order which effected the ban on import and use of asbestos was the outcome.

Workplaces well regulated
The Law – how is asbestos regulated?

1. December 2003: Ban of import, storage, supply, sale, installation or re-use of any product containing asbestos

2. Asbestos in workplaces - Management & Removal - OHS/WHS regulations in every state:
   • Regular audits, registers and assessments
   • Labelling
   • Removal plan
   • Mandated removal if in poor state; prior to refurbishment or demolition
   • Licensed removalists

3. Transport & Disposal also highly regulated overed by the EPA
Removal of asbestos in Workplaces

- Apart from *limited removal*, only removalists with a license can remove asbestos from workplaces.

- Limited removal: only if the asbestos-containing material is less than 10 sq metres and is non-friable;

- Two classes of license:
  - Class B removalists can *only remove* non-friable asbestos (and clean up any dust created)
  - Class A removalists can remove both non-friable and friable asbestos (special requirements)

- Strict requirements are in place, particularly for removal of friable asbestos.
Why this level of control?

Extensive and specific regulation necessary because:

- Asbestos KILLS
- There is no ‘safe’ level of exposure (although development of disease affected by dose and other factors)
- the exposure standard has come down as we have learnt more - it is now at the level at which asbestos can be detected
- High numbers of workers died or contracted lung-related conditions due to exposure
- Long latency period (mesothelioma)
- As controls take effect, numbers of affected workers should decrease
In the home?

The legislation only applies to workplaces - where paid people work (or where there is a PCBU) - eg renovation by a builder; paid removal; contracted plumber/electrician.

The OHS/WHE law does not apply in DIY situations

But is the risk any less for a DIYer?

??
What to do?

Should people do their own removals?

It’s not illegal

Generally - NO - there will always be a risk, in particular to children.

If small amount, and non-friable, tools are available:

- GARDS kit (Latrobe Valley)
- VWA Domestic Asbestos Removal Kit - currently being piloted
- DVDs (see the Asbestoswise “The Third Wave of Asbestos Exposure” in satchels or online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqMf10PJZFY )
VWA Domestic Asbestos Removal Kit Pilot Program

The VWA is currently piloting the Kit.

Objectives:

- To reduce the exposure of homeowners, their families, the general public and workers from unsafe removal and unsafe disposal of asbestos containing material from domestic sources

- To raise awareness of the correct manner to safely remove and dispose of ACM in the domestic environment
Based on Gippsland GARDS initiative running out of Latrobe City Council since 2007

Pilot involves the Victorian WorkCover Authority, Victorian Health Department and the Environment Protection Authority Victoria

Supported by the Municipal Association of Victoria

To date there have been 475 kits distributed to a number of councils, which in turn have distributed 221 of these to ratepayers
The kit
Removing asbestos from your property

This kit is designed to help you safely remove and dispose of up to 10 square metres of asbestos containing material, like:
- flat or corrugated concrete sheeting (fibro sheeting)
- water or flue pipes
- floor coverings (eg vinyl floor tiles)
- roof shingles
- imitation brick cladding

Important things to know:

10 square metres is roughly equivalent to the amount generated when removing a small backyard shed, or renovating a bathroom. As a rule the material removed should easily fit on a 6 x 4 trailer. If your job is larger than this then you should consider engaging the services of a licensed asbestos removalist.

Follow all the instructions in this booklet to ensure you get the job done safely. For more information, we recommend you read Asbestos, A guide for householders and the general public, available from www.health.gov.au
Kit contents

- Two sets of protective gear

**Equipment for safe removal, clean up and disposal of the material**

- Plastic sheeting
- Disposal bags
- Duct tape
- Barrier tape
- Wipe down rags
- Spray mist bottle

**Council arranges disposal advice and instruction**
Councils involved in PILOT

- Hume
- Whittlesea
- Benalla
- West Wimmera
- Yarriambiack
- Horsham
- Hindmarsh
- Latrobe
Pilot

- Evaluation of pilot
  - To be conducted in Feb/March 2015
  - Includes users and council representatives
  - Report to be considered by the agencies involved in the pilot
- Unions and Support Groups have had some concerns (in particular with the EnHealth publication)
So our position?

- Removals best done by professionals
- Asbestos endemic so best to learn about where asbestos might be and in what products - good resource is the VWA Asbestos Handbook
- We are experiencing the ‘Third Wave’ - asbestos will keep putting the lives of the community at risk while it’s in so many public and private buildings
- We need to be active and activists - this is how things can be achieved
Two union/asbestos support group summits (2010 & 2012)

National Declaration: Towards an Australian Safe Asbestos Free Environment

→ Asbestos Management Review, chaired by Geoff Fary (previously ACTU).

→ Establishment of Office of Asbestos Safety & Eradication; and development of National plan (strategy) Now ASEA

Support ASEA and lobby for the implementation of an asbestos removal program across Australia, prioritising the removal of high risk ACMs

Don’t forget our international obligations
Any Questions?
More information

- OHS Reps Website -
  [www.ohsrep.org.au](http://www.ohsrep.org.au)
  Asbestos in the Home
  Asbestos in the Workplace
  Summary of Regulations

- Victorian Government
  Asbestos Website
  Lots of information for homeowners, tradies, etc