

Welcome to the third ASEA newsletter, Autumn edition

Issue 3, Autumn 2016

Welcome to the third *ASEA matters* newsletter issued by the agency.

We hope to keep you well informed on the projects the agency is working on and the implementation of the national strategic plan.

Please feel free to contact the agency with information or stories that you'd like to share with others through this newsletter.

Stay tuned for announcements about the 2016 conference over the next few weeks.



Peter Tighe, CEO

Asbestos imports continue despite ban



Example of Switch room with asbestos flooring found in NSW

The agency has provided information to a Senate inquiry that shows asbestos materials continue to be imported into Australia despite it being illegal since 31 December 2003.

At the public hearing of the Senate Economics References Committee Inquiry into non-conforming building products, agency CEO Peter Tighe confirmed a number of illegal importation events over the past 18 months and said more needs to be done to stop them being brought into Australia.

This supports written submissions the agency provided the Inquiry committee in August 2015 outlining instances of building materials being imported into Australia containing asbestos despite assurances by the manufacturers the materials were asbestos-free.

The building materials imported into Australia included high density boards installed in 64 new facilities in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Northern Territory. This material which

was imported illegally and used as flooring needs to be removed.

This has the potential to put the health and safety of contractors and tradespeople at risk if they are unaware that asbestos is present in their work environment.

Importers need to be vigilant when bringing goods in from other countries, particularly China, as they will be liable if asbestos is detected in goods they import into the country. Fines of up to \$170,000 can be imposed on importers found to be in breach of the customs regulations that result in asbestos being brought into Australia.

Visit the agency website to read the [transcript](#) of Mr Tighe's contribution to the Inquiry, specifically in regards to asbestos-materials being imported into Australia.

Visit the [Australian Parliament website](#) for more information on the Senate enquiry

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Community events and awareness opportunities

If your organisation has an event you would like the agency to publicise, send the details through to the [events email address](#)





Building, Construction and Demolition Sectors Committee established

The agency has established the Building, Construction and Demolition Sectors (BCDS) Committee to provide advice on issues relating to the management of asbestos in those sectors and the implementation of the [National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2014-18](#).

The BCDS committee membership is comprised of industry, employer and employee representatives from the building, construction and demolition sectors, all having a

strong commitment to workplace safety and the elimination of exposure to asbestos.

Under s24(1) of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Act 2013, the CEO may establish committees to assist in the performance of their functions and the functions of the council.

The BCDS committee has met four times since it was established with the next meeting scheduled in March 2016.



The BCDS Committee at their inaugural meeting, 11 December 2014

Membership of the Building, Construction and Demolition Sectors Committee

- ▶ Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU)
- ▶ Master Builders Association (MBA)
- ▶ Electrical Trades Union (ETU)
- ▶ Housing Industry Association (HIA)
- ▶ Plumbing Trades Employees Union (PTEU)
- ▶ National Fire Industry Association (NFIA)
- ▶ Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA)
- ▶ Demolition Contractors Association (DCA)
- ▶ Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)
- ▶ National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA)
- ▶ Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors' Association of Australia (ACMCAA)
- ▶ Australian Constructors Association / Australian Industry Group (ACA/AIG)
- ▶ Australian Workers Union (AWU)
- ▶ Master Plumbers (MPMSAA)
- ▶ Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU)
- ▶ Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI).

National Asbestos Exposure Register data for 1 July to 31 December 2015 released

The agency has released the latest statistics for registrations on the National Asbestos Exposure Register (NAER) showing the increasing importance of reporting exposure to asbestos. Between 1 July to 31 December 2015, 922 people registered their details on the NAER with key facts including:

- NSW again has the greatest proportion of the 922 registrations at approximately 30%
- a growing interest in the register for females with the proportion of male to female registrations for the period being approximately 66% to 34% compared to 74% to 26% for the full period of the register
- an increase in reporting of exposures outside the workplace which was approximately 37% possibly indicates a growing understanding that asbestos exposure may occur in a number of different settings
- Exposure to loose-fill asbestos was reported by 20.72% of registrants (191 out of 922 registrations) of whom 63.35% reported exposure in the ACT.
- 26% of registrants responded they found out about the register from their employer, a further 16.5% stating they found out about it through a union and 15% say they found out from family and friends
- There were 25 reported disease diagnoses among registrants for the period under review.

Between June 2013 to 31 December 2015, 3,449 people have registered their details on the NAER providing important statistical data to the agency

Visit the [agency website](#) to access the register and enter your details.

Note: All personal data remains confidential and does not appear in any public reports issued by the agency.



Agency annual report highlights import work during 2014-15

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Annual report 2014-15 has been tabled in Federal Parliament, outlining the activities of the agency for that reporting period. The key achievements of the agency for 2014–15 included:

- revising the National Strategic Plan 2013–18 and obtaining formal endorsement from all state and territory governments in Australia on the revised [National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2014-2018](#) to deliver a truly national approach
- continuing the management of the National Asbestos Exposure Register to monitor emerging asbestos risks and the community’s awareness of potential asbestos exposure risks
- delivering the inaugural International Conference on Asbestos Awareness and Management in Melbourne in November 2014 to very positive feedback and levels of delegate satisfaction and planning for the 2015 event
- working with the Global Alliance Against Asbestos (GAAA) and campaigning to have chrysotile asbestos listed on Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedures of Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.

Peter Tighe, CEO

2014-15 at a glance

25 June 2015	Inaugural meeting of the Research Advisory Committee held in Sydney
19 June 2015	Release of the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2014-2018
16 June 2015	Twelfth meeting of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council held in Melbourne
15 June 2015	Third meeting of the Building, Construction and Demolition Sectors Committee held in Sydney
28 April 2015	Eleventh meeting of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council held in Sydney
1 April 2015	Second meeting of the Building, Construction and Demolition Sectors Committee held in Sydney
25 February 2015	Parliamentary Group on Asbestos Related Disease reception – International collaboration in South East Asia
17 February 2015	Tenth meeting of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council held in Sydney
11 December 2014	Inaugural meeting of the Building, Construction and Demolition Sectors Committee held in Sydney
28 November 2014	National Asbestos Awareness Day memorial day, Sydney
17-18 November 2014	Successful first International Conference on Asbestos Awareness and Management held in Melbourne
14 November 2014	NSW Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation – evidence given at hearing
21 October 2014	Ninth meeting of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council held in Sydney
2 September 2014	Launch of Stans Van (Bernie Banton Foundation) – grant funding from the agency
19 August 2014	Eight meeting of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council held in Sydney
7 August 2014	Australian Contractors Association Safety Initiative, Launch of report (on invitation from the Minister for Employment)
14 July 2014	Parliamentary Group on Asbestos-Related Disease luncheon, Parliament House Canberra

International support for action on asbestos issues

Following the successful conference in November 2015 with delegates from 9 countries attending, the agency has been working closely with international groups to help them fight asbestos in their own back yard.

Countries across Asia like Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and China still allow manufacturing of asbestos-containing materials and it is still used widely for cheap housing and construction materials. The government of Vietnam have committed to banning asbestos production however, there is strong opposition to this ban from some sectors on the government and Industry.

In the first week of March 2016, the agency CEO and staff will meet with a representative of the Local Initiative for OSH Network (LION) based in Indonesia to discuss ways Australia can assist in their campaign to ban asbestos.

For more information on this campaign, visit the [APHEDA-Union Aid Abroad website](#).





Asbestos safety following natural disasters

The agency has spent the summer warning home and building owners to be aware of the dangers of disturbed asbestos after a natural disaster in the wake of the bushfire along the Great Ocean Road in Victoria and mini-cyclone in Sydney's south in December 2015.

It is very important that people in affected areas know what to do in the event their home or business is damaged by a natural disaster.

Around 12 Australians die every week from mesothelioma in Australia, and we have one of the highest rates of asbestos-related disease and death anywhere in the world.

With one third of homes in Australia today contain asbestos products, the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres after a natural

disaster can be very high.

State Government disaster recovery planning regularly includes contingencies and funding to clean up asbestos following an emergency

It is very important that affected communities follow instructions issued by the disaster recovery agencies in their state or territory as they are developed specifically to prevent unnecessary exposure to asbestos fibres caused by damaged asbestos materials.

The safe removal and disposal of asbestos from a damaged property is critical. This may require a building licence or in the case of removal, a building demolition licence, which you can find out about from your local council.

Contacting your local council and state emergency services is a good place to start if faced with building damage from a fire, flood or other natural disaster."

Under the *National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness*, the Australian Government, in



partnership with all states and territories, is taking a national approach to asbestos. This includes supporting Australian communities to manage asbestos risks during natural disasters.

The Agency's November 2015 international conference in Brisbane featured a session on sharing experiences of managing asbestos following a natural disaster from both WorkSafe New Zealand on the Canterbury earthquakes, and NSW Office of Emergency Management on recent recovery events.

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About the agency

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (the agency) was established on 1 July 2013 to provide a national focus on asbestos issues which goes beyond workplace safety to encompass environmental and public health concerns.

The agency aims to ensure asbestos issues receive the attention and focus needed to drive change across all levels of government and reduce the risk of asbestos-related diseases.

The National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2014-18 is the first of its kind and coordinates a national approach to asbestos management, eradication, handling and awareness in Australia. The agency works with all levels of government and stakeholders to implement the goals of the plan.

The plan is available on the agency's website at asbestossafety.gov.au/national-strategic-plan