

Welcome to the seventh ASEA newsletter, Spring edition

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

We are pleased to update you on the planning of our 4th annual event, the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Summit in Canberra as part of direct engagement with our stakeholders on planning for Australia's next 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 more information about the 2017 summit over the next few months.

Peter Tighe, CEO



Issue 7, Spring 2017

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Asbestos Safety and Eradication Summit update



The agency has been working to organise the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Summit 2017 at Old Parliament House Canberra from Sunday 26th to Tuesday 28th November 2017.

This year's summit style event will be different from previous international conferences, with major focus on engagement and debate in preparation for developing Australia's next National Strategic Plan beyond 2018.

Although we hope to once again have an international focus, the focus of the summit will primarily be what Australia needs to do to manage the legacy issues of asbestos into the future, including removal and disposal.

The summit will now commence with a forum at 5.30pm on the Sunday afternoon, inviting

members of the Parliamentary Group on Asbestos-Related Disease and other interested Members of Parliament and Senators to provide their input into the next NSP.

Registrations are still open with early bird rates available until 20 October 2017 so please keep an eye on the agency e-news messages, [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) for updates. You can download the [summit flyer](#) here.

The agency is still looking for sponsors for this event so if you are interested, send an email to events@asbestossafety.gov.au and a prospectus can be forwarded to you.

The agency looks forward to seeing as many of you in Canberra in November to continue this important debate.

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](#)





Agency work recognised through recent awards

The agency has received two awards recently acknowledging the great work the agency has delivered over the past 12 months.

In June 2017, the agency was again presented a Bronze Award from the [Australasian Reporting Awards](#) for the 2015-16 Annual Report. This follows the Bronze Award received for the agency 2014-15 Annual Report received last year.

The Australasian Reporting Awards are open to all organisations in Australia, New Zealand and countries in the Asia-Pacific region that produce an annual report. This includes the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

In September 2017, the agency was received an [Australian Event Award](#) in the *Best Charity or Cause- Related Event* category for its [3rd International Conference on Asbestos Awareness and Management 2016](#), held in Adelaide.

The *Best Charity or Cause- Related Event* award is given to an event that best raises awareness, promotes engagement and benefits a charity or cause.

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency would like to thank everybody who attended and participated in the 2016 conference and helped make this an award winning event!

We look forward to seeing you in Canberra for another great event in November!



The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency team in Adelaide, November 2016.

National Asbestos Exposure Register

2016-17

The number of people registering their details on the National Asbestos Exposure Register (NAER) continues to increase each year of operation, with the total number of registrations reaching 5776 from June 2013 to 30 June 2017. Other statistics include:

- 1770 registrations in total for 2016-17
- WA overtook NSW as the jurisdiction with most registrations with 491 in total – the first time NSW is not the largest number of registrations
- 77% or registrations were male, 23% female
- 70% of registrations were a result from occupational exposure compared with 64% the previous year
- Male registrations – 80.32% occupational, 19.68% non-occupational
- Female registrations – 34.64% occupational, 65.36% non-occupational
- 31% of registrations were employer driven referrals
- Pleural plaques was the most reported disease

For more information, to register and to access the statistical summaries, visit the [register page](#) on the agency website.

Australian asbestos removalists health study – call for volunteers

Researchers in WA and Victoria are recruiting people who are currently, or who have ever, worked in asbestos removal to be part of an asbestos removalist register.

The register will be used to track the health of removalists and to conduct studies to ensure the safety of workers is continually being assessed.

Asbestos removalists are a group of workers who are potentially at high-risk of asbestos exposure by virtue of their

occupation. Despite this, very little is known about the health of these workers.

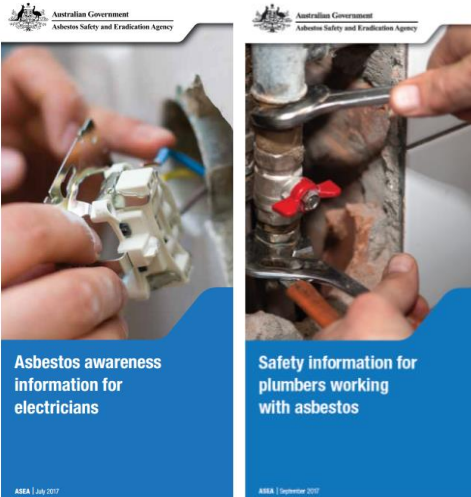
This initiative is funded and supported by the Cancer Council of Western Australia.

For more details of the project call Nita Sodhi Berry (08) 6488 1312 (Mon-Wed), Dr Peter Franklin (08) 6488 7091 (Mon-Tues) or Ms Deborah Olow (08) 6488 1286 (Wed-Fri).



Guidance for plumbers and electricians now available

The agency has teamed up with peak employer and employee groups and industry associations to produce specific materials on asbestos awareness for electricians and plumbers.



For electricians, the agency has teamed up with the National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA), the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) and the Master Electricians Australia (MEA) to produce a [leaflet](#) aimed specifically at small business or single operator electricians whose work may cause them to encounter asbestos.

For Plumbers, the agency has teamed up with the Master Plumbers Association and the Plumbing and Pipe Trade Employees Union to produce a leaflet aimed specifically at small business or single operator electricians whose work may cause them to encounter asbestos.

Both these professions have an extremely high chance of encountering asbestos if they are contracted to work on older residential properties so need specific advice tailored to their needs.

The agency intends to produce similar leaflets for other industries over the coming 12 months.

Workers exposure to asbestos at Sydney Opera House highlights need to shift focus from managing to removing asbestos

After 25 workers on a building project at the Sydney Opera House were unacceptably exposed to asbestos for over a week, the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency called for an urgent national program of removal of high risk asbestos.

Agency CEO Peter Tighe highlighted the problem at the time saying while there were regulations in place to manage asbestos in buildings and avoid risk to human health, the management regime clearly failed on this and other occasions to protect people from harmful exposure.

“There is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos. It is unacceptable that 25 workers were exposed for a week before authorities were informed and steps put in place to protect the workers.

“The regulations to protect people working in buildings require an asbestos register, a management plan, appraisal of areas where asbestos is identified, and removal of high risk asbestos before workers go in.

“There is clearly a breakdown of the system and it has failed in the duty of care for workers at the Sydney Opera

House this week. Next week, it will be somewhere else.

“Our concern is that with the levels of asbestos present in Australian buildings, we will continue to see instances where workers and home renovators are exposed.

“We really need to move from management of asbestos to a proactive program of removing high risk asbestos from Australian buildings.

“We need to instigate removal programs right across the board – from homes and both Government and privately owned buildings.

“A study we commissioned projected that mesothelioma rates from exposure through home renovation and workers in the building industry have not yet peaked.

“The time is up for asbestos in Australia. All levels of Government and the community must face the challenge of removal of asbestos from our built environment” said Peter Tighe.

Asbestos halts Opera House upgrade

KEELY McDONOUGH

ELECTRICIANS working on the \$200-million renovation of the Sydney Opera House have downed their tools after asbestos was detected on the site.

The Electrical Trades Union yesterday imposed a stop work after tests confirmed the presence of the deadly fibres that are cap-

able of being inhaled by workers. Builder Laing O'Rourke and electrical contractor Downer were reportedly notified of the possible presence of asbestos last Monday.

The NSW government-funded project is the biggest upgrade to the iconic landmark since it was opened in 1973. It began in May this year and is expected to be completed by December.

A Sydney Opera House spokeswoman said yesterday “safety is a top organisational priority” for the landmark.

“Like thousands of buildings around the country built around this time, the Opera House has strict processes in place to monitor and manage the presence of asbestos-containing materials,” the spokeswoman said.

Daily Telegraph, 2 August 2017

Working with South East Asian nations on banning asbestos



Australian Government
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

Peter Tighe and Nick Miller from the agency travelled to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in July 2017 to take part in workshops and met relevant government officials as part of an international delegation of asbestos experts.

With the assistance of Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA, the workshops and meetings were very successful in progressing potential asbestos bans in the three countries, which will both assist in a global ban on asbestos and lead to less imported goods in Australia containing asbestos.

The trip focussed on sharing the lessons learnt from the development of, and evidence gathered, for the *National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2014-18* (NSP).

In **Cambodia**, the five day workshop from 10-14 July 2017 involved 50 participants including representatives from the 13 ministries on the Cambodian Asbestos Working Group who are charged with developing Cambodia's National Asbestos Profile due for completion in 2018.

By the completion of the workshop participants were in a better position to both complete their National Asbestos Profile and focus on an achievable date for an asbestos ban. Cambodia imported over US\$4 million of asbestos-containing products in 2013.

In **Laos**, meetings were held on 17 July 2017 with government and union representatives and a workshop on 18 July with some 50 participants attending.



Peter Tighe addressing the forum with Phillip Hazelton from APHEDA

ASEA's presentation again focussed on lessons learnt in Australia, as well as countering common misinformation and claims by the chrysotile industry. At the workshop the Vice-Minister of Health, Associate Professor Dr Phouthone Mounpak stressed the usefulness of the six goals outlined in the NSP and the desire to ban asbestos in Laos by 2024. Laos has imported up to 9,000 tonnes of ACMs annually, mainly for roof sheeting.

In **Vietnam**, meetings were held on 19 July 2017 with Dr Tran Anh Thanh, Head of Occupational Health and Injury Prevention Division, Health Environment Management Agency, Ministry of Health who stressed the need to improve capacity to measure asbestos-related diseases in Vietnam and on 20 July with the organisation Vietnam Ban. The Hanoi workshop on 21 July 2017 was hosted by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) with over 80 participants from relevant ministries. VGCL Vice President Mr Mai Duc Chinh called for Vietnam to move forward with a roadmap to ban chrysotile asbestos by 2020.



Workshop participants in Siem Reap, Cambodia



Peter Tighe with Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, Angela Corcoran

Vietnam imports over 60,000 tonnes of asbestos per year, mainly from Russia.

ASEA will have further engagement with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the work they are undertaking on asbestos awareness in South East Asia, as well as with the Department of Environment and Energy on preparations for the 2019 Rotterdam Convention consideration of listing chrysotile asbestos in Annex III to the Convention.

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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* 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