

## Welcome to the fourth ASEA newsletter, winter edition

Issue 4, Winter 2016

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

We are pleased to announce the details of our 3<sup>rd</sup> conference in November 2016, this time in Adelaide and we hope that you can be with us again. The agency will release more details over the coming months so keep an eye out.

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 2016 conference over the next few months.

Peter Tighe, CEO



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## 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Asbestos Awareness and Management



The agency is pleased to announce registrations are now open for the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Asbestos Awareness and Management being held at the Adelaide Convention Centre, starting with a welcome reception on Sunday 13 November then running the 2 days on 14-15 November 2016.

Held in the week before National Asbestos Awareness week, this conference will once again bring together well-known local and international experts in asbestos management, health, advocacy and governance to look at what is best practice in managing the dangers of asbestos in our community and abroad.

The agency will be building on the successes of the 2014 Melbourne conference and 2015

Brisbane conference in taking this very important national issue to the various capital cities to help maximise participation from everyone across the country.

We have once again secured award winning ABC journalist Matt Peacock to facilitate the conference and tease out the ideas from participants.

Registrations are now open through the [conference website](#) and programme details will be available soon. Please keep an eye on the website and [Twitter](#) for updates.

The agency is looking for sponsors and exhibitors for this event so if you are interested, or know someone who might be, send an email to [events@asbestossafety.gov.au](mailto:events@asbestossafety.gov.au) and a prospectus can be forwarded to you.

### 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](#)





## New Research Portal on agency website

A new research portal has been added to the agency website containing key research the agency has commissioned or developed as well as important research undertaken by external organisations.

This portal was a key recommendation from the Research Advisory Committee which was established in 2015 to advise the agency on the development of a strategic research plan and provide advice on the operation of the



research strategy. The membership of this committee is broad, including experts in public health, workplace health and safety and research.

Any work undertaken to improve asbestos management and awareness needs a strong evidence base. There has been a significant amount of research and information regarding asbestos and asbestos-related diseases conducted in Australia and internationally.

Under section 8(f) of the [Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Act 2013](#), one of the agency's roles is to commission, monitor and promote research about asbestos safety. This supports the agency's role to coordinate the [National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness](#), which includes a research strategy and the ultimate aim to eliminate asbestos-related disease in Australia.

This research portal will grow over time to include further research conducted by the agency, other government and research bodies in Australia and leading international research projects.

## Agency funding

The agency has been reallocated \$3.4 million over the next two years to continue its important work on implementing the National Strategic Plan.

In the budget delivered on 3 May 2016, the agency was allocated \$2 million for 2016-17 and \$1.4 million for the 2017-18 financial years.

This reallocation of the unspent budget from 2013-14 and 2014-15 will provide the agency with much needed funding for the range of current and planned projects needed to implement the goals and outcomes in the National Strategic Plan.

I would like to thank all stakeholders for their ongoing support since the agency was established on 1 July 2013 and look forward to working with you all in the future.

Peter Tighe, CEO

## Bronze award for 2014-15 annual report

The agency was pleased to receive a [bronze award](#) for the [2014-15 Annual Report](#), announced on 8 June 2016.

These awards from the Australasian Reporting Awards assess annual reports from all over Australia and New Zealand, recognising quality in reporting, accuracy and responsiveness to stakeholders.

## Engaging with Customs Brokers and Forwarders to help prevent illegal asbestos imports

The CEO and staff of the agency travelled to the major capital cities over the past 3 months to speak about illegal importation of asbestos-containing materials at the Customs Brokers and Forwarders Council of Australia forums.

The importation of asbestos-containing materials has become a much bigger problem over the years, not just for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection but also for importers and the customs brokers and forwarders that help to import goods into Australia.

One recent example is the importation of children's crayons containing ACMs. Border Force has seized over 370,000 crayons since commencing action in stopping certain brands from entering into the Australian market.

The critical information delivered at these forums was that the importers and potentially the customs brokers and forwarders will be liable if they import ACMs into Australia without an exemption that can only be granted by the Minister for Employment.

Potential importers and their Customs Brokers and Forwarders are encouraged to contact the agency

before importing goods into Australia that could contain asbestos-containing materials.



Agency Director, Nick Miller speaking at the Melbourne forum



## Lack of awareness and limited disposal options contributing to national illegal dumped asbestos problem

A report commissioned by the National Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency has shone a light on the cost to the community of illegal dumping of asbestos.

The report, undertaken by consultants ACIL Allen, found a significant lack of awareness among DIY home renovators about the dangers associated with the illegal behaviour to themselves, the community and the environment.

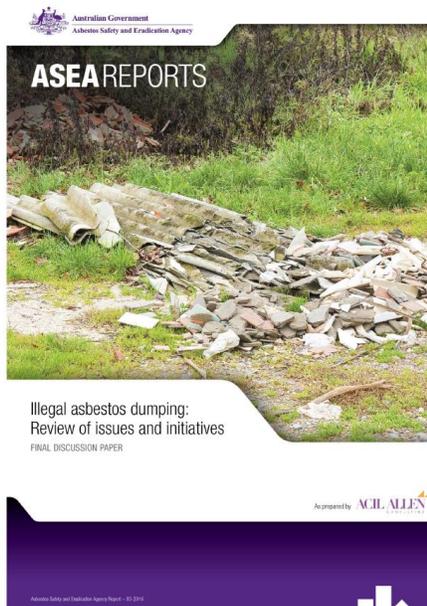
It estimates there are around 6,300 tonnes of asbestos containing materials illegally dumped across Australia every year, with a conservative estimated cost of cleaning up the illegally dumped waste at around \$11.2 million per annum.

It found those responsible for most incidents of illegally dumped asbestos containing materials to be household renovators, some building contractors and asbestos removalists.

The report would guide a national response to the challenge.

Illegal dumping of asbestos poses serious risks to people’s health and to the environment. Responding to the problem requires a national approach.

There is a worrying lack of awareness of the risks of dealing with asbestos among DIY home renovators and tradespeople.



Compounding that is the fact that correct disposal can be costly and inconvenient. In some cases, the fines and penalties for illegal dumping aren’t sufficient enough to act as a deterrent.

The report points to measures to address the challenge, including:

- a reduction in the cost associated with legal asbestos disposal
- an education campaign to ensure that new generations understand the problem
- measures to provide information on how and where to dispose of ACMs legally
- larger fines and clean-up costs for make illegal dumping more expensive, with larger fines and clean-up costs, and media coverage.
- an increase in the availability of local disposal facilities

With little in the way of reliable national data on the issue, this report provides evidence that can help state and local governments begin to address the problem in a consistent way.

## International Workers’ Memorial Day 28 April 2016

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency staff attended the International Workers’ Memorial Day commemoration ceremony at Darling Harbour, Sydney on 28 April 2016.

Asbestos has had a major impact on the lives of workers and their families and friends over many decades in Australia since it started being mined in Western Australia in the mid 1930s and continues to cause the deaths of approximately 1,500 people each year from asbestos-related diseases.

Despite the total ban on asbestos being introduced on 31 December 2003, there remains a considerable legacy of asbestos-containing materials in the community and the agency will continue to raise awareness about the risks posed by exposure to asbestos to help prevent new cases of ARDs in the future.



Agency staff: Julian Farrugia, Nick Miller, Alison Rubie, Merrin Hambley, Michaela Jiraskova, Sally Mussellwhite and CEO Peter Tighe.



## Recent global announcements in asbestos management

There have been two recent announcements by national governments to introduce bans on asbestos or asbestos products.

### New Zealand

On 15 June 2016, the New Zealand Minister for the Environment, Dr Nick Smith announced that a ban on the importation of asbestos-containing materials into New Zealand will come into force as of 1 October 2016.

Dr Smith said that exposure to asbestos is the single biggest cause of work-related fatalities, at 170 per year.

New Zealand will be introducing a permit system like Australia to grant permission for the importation of goods containing asbestos, in very limited circumstances, but only if there is genuinely no alternative product available or the alternative would be disproportionately expensive.

In addition, an importer would have to be able to show that any risk of asbestos exposure can be safely managed.

An inventory released by the Ministry for the Environment in 2014 shows asbestos is still

imported for a limited number of specialist products, such as gaskets, seals and brake linings.

Dr Smith said this ban is part of the Government's programme of reducing exposure to harmful products and will bring New Zealand into line with overseas jurisdictions such as Australia.

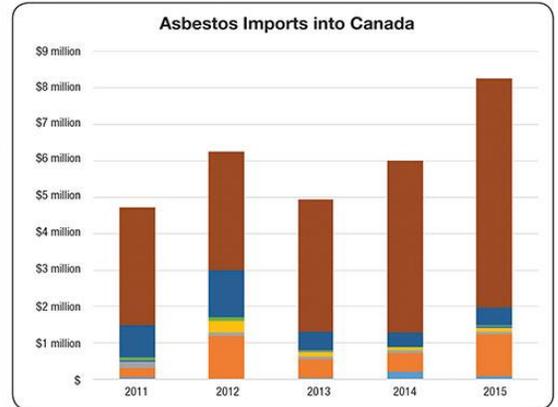
For more information, see the [media release](#) issues by Minister Smith.

### Canada

Until only recent years, Canada was an active supporter of the continued mining and production of asbestos products but this changed on 10 May 2016 when the Canadian Prime Minister announced a national ban on asbestos would be implemented.

Speaking at Canada's building trades union policy conference in Ottawa on Tuesday 10 May, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was asked by a union representative if Ottawa was moving to ban asbestos, which is still imported to Canada from international manufacturers.

Trudeau said the Canadian Government have actually made a commitment to move forward with a ban in Canada as they know that the impact of asbestos on workers far outweighs any benefit that it might provide.



Many government buildings across Canada contain asbestos. In April 2016, Ottawa officially banned asbestos use in new construction and renovation projects at buildings operated by the government.

Labour and health groups in Canada have been calling for a blanket ban for years, similar to ones already in place in Europe and Australia. The Canadian Labour Congress, which represents 3.3 million Canadian workers, is calling on the Trudeau government to implement a ban before the House of Parliament rises for the northern hemisphere summer.

(source: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2694450/justin-trudeau-federal-government-moving-to-ban-asbestos/>)

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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](http://asbestossafety.gov.au/national-strategic-plan)