

ASBESTOS SAFETY AND ERADICATION AGENCY

# A guide for local government to combat illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos

DRAFT AUGUST 2022



HEARTWARD

STRATEGIC

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	4
Why is asbestos an issue for local government?.....	4
How can local governments make a difference? .....	4
What does this guide cover? .....	5
Who is this guide for? .....	5
<b>2. The Guide</b> .....	7
<b>2.1 Laying the foundation for interventions</b> .....	7
How to develop a coordinated intervention strategy .....	7
Principles for intervening with impact .....	12
Understanding barriers to safe and lawful asbestos disposal .....	13
Understanding the asbestos waste journey .....	14
<b>2.2 Opportunities for local government interventions</b> .....	15
Intervention opportunities in the awareness zone .....	15
Intervention opportunities in the asbestos removal zone.....	19
Intervention opportunities in the asbestos disposal zone.....	23
Asbestos interventions in specific contexts.....	30
<b>3. Research</b> .....	35
<b>4. Resources</b> .....	39

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge First Nations peoples of the continent and islands of Australia and the Torres Strait. We honour and respect their culture, ongoing connection to and custodianship of country over millennia. We appreciate that there is a much to learn and much healing to be done on country and understand that asbestos and the risks it poses to people, and the environment are a part of this.

This guide is a vehicle to share knowledge. It has been created for use by local governments across Australia, but it could not have been created without input from representatives of local government bodies across all jurisdictions, cooperation from local government bodies, and in partnership with the project managers at ASEA. The guidance it provides is based on the creativity, cumulative knowledge and experience of hundreds of people working in waste, the environment, and health and safety in local government who are working hard to ensure that council staff and the community are kept safe from exposure to asbestos. Thank you to all who contributed.

# 1. Introduction

## WHY IS ASBESTOS AN ISSUE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

Asbestos causes cancer. The World Health Organisation says there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos. The greater the exposure, the greater the risk of developing an asbestos-related disease.

The people at greatest risk of exposure are those that undertake repairs, maintenance, renovations and other work on older buildings and infrastructure which contain asbestos materials. Asbestos is a risk to public health and the environment, particularly when it is improperly disposed of or illegally dumped.

For local government, asbestos and asbestos containing materials from residential properties are part of the broader picture of managing waste services, hazardous waste and illegal dumping.

Asbestos is a growing concern for councils, particularly from smaller-scale domestic construction and demolition, because waste management workers and residents may risk exposure to asbestos fibres and local government bears the costs of asbestos clean-up.

Across Australia, local government is working to manage asbestos-related risks to workers, residents, and country, in a complex regulatory environment.

## HOW CAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Councils are a trusted source of information and services for the community and have an important role to play in minimising risks and harms caused by asbestos.

There are steps that all councils, no matter how small or limited in resources, can take to help reduce the impacts of asbestos. Every action taken at a local level is a positive step in supporting the health and safety of staff and residents and saving lives, whether through awareness and training, or implementation and enforcement of regulations.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT CURRENT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASBESTOS INTERVENTIONS?

*This guide is based on extensive research with local government bodies across Australia<sup>1</sup> which found:*

1. 71% consider asbestos to be a significant issue for their council
2. 20% currently have no active asbestos-related interventions
3. How councils are currently intervening does not align with what they most commonly perceive as effective (namely awareness and education activities)
4. Current interventions are focussed on surveillance, enforcement and clean up, leaving a missed opportunity to intervene earlier to prevent the problem happening in the first place
5. Councils report the greatest success where interventions target multiple parts of the problem

## WHAT DOES THIS GUIDE COVER?

This guide brings together the experiences of individual local governments and regional collaborations across Australia, to share information, best practice and lessons learned when it comes to minimising asbestos risks, by:

- offering a step-by-step process to design a strategic intervention program
- introducing important principles to follow when designing interventions
- providing guidance on why and when councils should intervene
- suggesting specific ideas for how to support asbestos safety and prevent the problem of illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos.

## WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide has been developed for use by local governments across Australia and their staff who have some role in preventing and addressing asbestos exposure risks. This includes people working in roles that more broadly deal with hazardous materials and illegally dumped waste, and environmental and community health and safety.

Seasoned local government representatives might recognise or have implemented some of the ideas and examples shown here, but may find this guide prompts reflection on previous interventions, their success and what can be learned.

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Research' section of this guide for detailed description of and findings from the research.

For those new to such roles, this guide may be a starting point for understanding asbestos-related interventions at the local government level and provide encouragement and inspiration for future interventions.

***STILL UNSURE IF THIS GUIDE IS FOR YOU?***

**Your council is very remote or has limited resources...**

Even small, low-cost actions can have positive impacts – see ‘Asbestos Interventions in Specific Contexts’ for more information and ideas.

**Your council does not operate a waste site licensed to accept asbestos...**

Supporting residents to make safe and lawful choices, especially for small pieces of asbestos which can end up in residential bins, is even more important where there are limited local disposal options.

**Your council does not provide waste services but contracts them out...**

Protecting health and safety is important because there are risks of exposure for waste workers, trades and the wider community, not just council staff.

**Your council does not have a problem with illegal dumping of asbestos...**

Unsafe removal and handling of asbestos and improper disposal of asbestos such as in kerbside recycling pose risks to health and safety that could be supported through council intervention.

We hope this guide strengthens your existing commitment to addressing this issue and supports and encourages you to consider new ideas and explore opportunities that have worked elsewhere.

The resources list at the end is a jump-off point for those seeking further information or guidance.

## 2. The Guide

### 2.1 Laying the foundation for interventions

In this section you will find:

- » Step-by-step guidance to develop a coordinated intervention strategy that includes asbestos
- » Principles for impactful interventions to reduce illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos

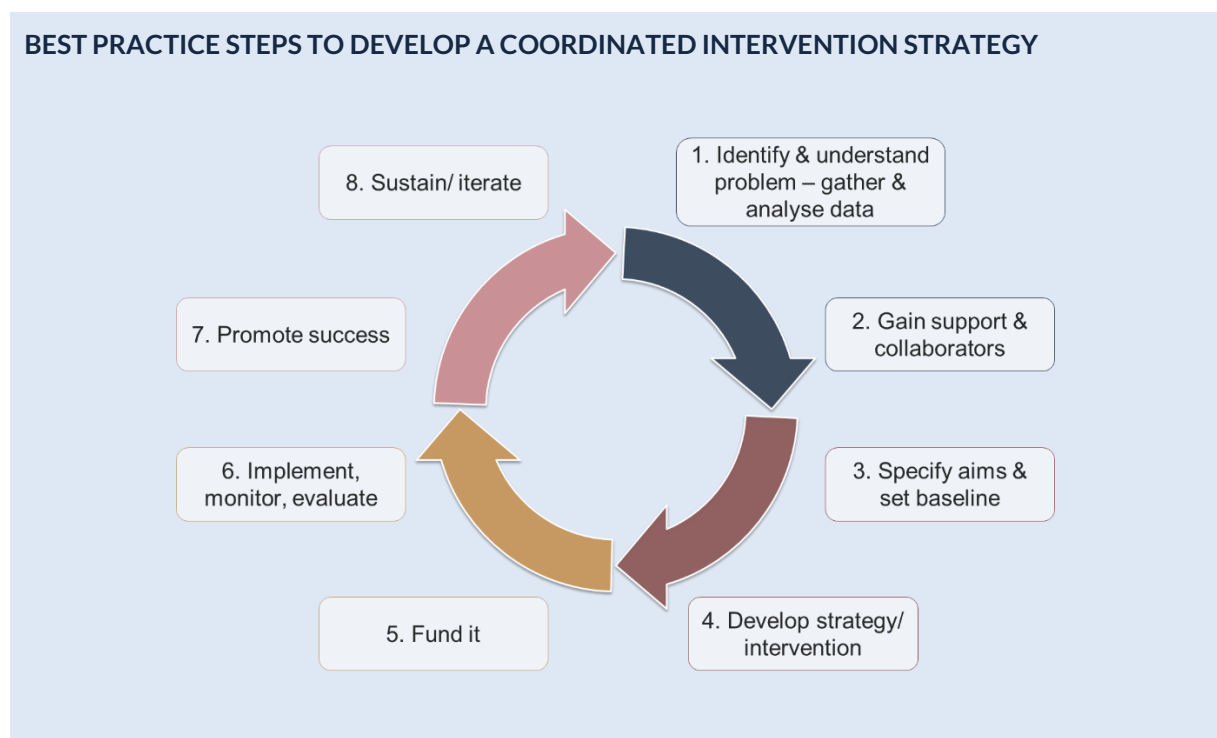
#### HOW TO DEVELOP A COORDINATED INTERVENTION STRATEGY

Interventions to reduce illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos are more successful over time if they form part of a **coordinated strategy**, rather than existing as isolated or short-term activities.

The issue can be part of a broader **illegal dumping strategy** or can be tackled more comprehensively through a local government **asbestos safety strategy**.

This section sets out the **best practice steps** to develop a coordinated strategy.

Even if your council is not able to put in place a coordinated strategy for dealing with asbestos, this best practice process also works to design individual activities addressing targeted issues.



## 1. Identify and understand the problem at the local level

It is important to know:

- how common asbestos materials are in local building stock
- volumes of asbestos waste disposed of properly and improperly in the local area
- clean up and remediation costs of illegal dumping and improper disposal
- likely levels and points of exposure in the community
- what existing and recent past council activities have addressed this issue.

### ○ Gather data

To avoid making assumptions that underestimate risk or misdirect resources, it is important to rely as much as possible on evidence and data, rather than anecdotal evidence or individuals' observations. Before designing new ways of collecting data, audit and analyse existing sources of robust and objective sources, such as:

- resident reports/complaints
- incident records
- ranger patrol records and notes
- penalty and clean up notices
- local court records of cases and convictions
- clean-up costs
- mapping of dumping hot spots
- waste site records
- community and stakeholder research/surveys
- council demographics
- surveillance footage
- photographs and statistics and information from publicly available reports (e.g. from ASEA, state governments and other bodies).

### ○ Analyse data

Well-analysed and clearly presented data showing the extent of identified asbestos-related issues in the local area can support a business case for developing an asbestos safety strategy and the allocation of resources to implement it.

## 2. Gain support and collaborators

Early engagement with all relevant stakeholders can ensure ongoing support for intervention and access to information and resources to sustain a program over the longer term. Consider conducting a simple stakeholder mapping exercise and develop a plan to engage stakeholders.

Many councils suggest that strong collaborative partnerships, within and across council functions, with neighbouring councils and with local and regional organisations, leads to more successful interventions that benefit from:

- in-kind contributions
- idea and intelligence sharing
- reduction in duplication of efforts
- cost-reduction or cost-sharing.



### 3. Specify the aims/objectives and set a baseline

Work with internal and external stakeholders to define the objectives of the strategy (or specific intervention), spelling out what it aims to achieve. Objectives that are SMART (simple, measurable, realistic, achievable and timely) are more likely to be achieved and enable the strategy to be effectively evaluated (Step 6, below).

Step 1 provides a clear baseline of the problem against which changes can be measured to determine if the strategy (or specific intervention) is achieving its objectives. If available data does not align with the objectives, it may be necessary to gather more specific baseline data

### 4. Develop the strategy/intervention

The outcome of this step is a documented strategic plan or intervention plan that clearly identifies:

- the asbestos-related issue being addressed
- the relevant audience/s for activities under the strategy (e.g. residents, ratepayers, trades, waste site users)
- at what parts of the asbestos waste journey the strategy is aimed
- what audience behaviours need to be changed and/or reinforced and how the strategy or intervention will do this (i.e. what behavioural barriers/levers the strategy/intervention will address)
- how it will be implemented, how long will it take, how much it is expected to cost and who will implement and monitor it.

This guide provides ideas, suggestions and case studies that could be adopted or adapted as specific interventions or under an asbestos safety strategy. Co-creating strategies and interventions with stakeholders, collaborators, and even members of the target audience, can be very effective.

### 5. Fund it

Funding of local government asbestos-related activities and interventions can be achieved through grants from state environmental agencies. Councils suggest successful, long-term initiatives tend to form part of a holistic strategy with a sustainable, secure funding base and dedicated staff resources. Councils assert that positive outcomes can be achieved with a modest resource investment. Examples of funding approaches and sources include:

- rebalancing funding priorities across clean up, enforcement and prevention
- redirecting infringement or other council income to fund prevention activities
- reinvesting income from interventions that generate income (e.g. RID squads)
- forming partnerships, including multi-council regional collaborations, to fund and implement waste-related activities requiring larger investments
- receiving local business donations and in-kind support.

Other cost-effective approaches include adapting existing concepts and materials available from government agencies or other councils, and amplifying wider state-based asbestos campaigns. Councils do not need to 'reinvent the wheel' as far as targeted awareness materials are concerned – the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency has developed [materials](#) for a variety of audiences that are ready to use and tailor to your council's needs.

## 6. Implement, monitor and evaluate

Implementing the strategy or specific intervention means putting documented plans into action, while maintaining some flexibility to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. Ongoing monitoring helps to:

- identify and respond to change in a timely way
- ensure the plan remains on time and budget
- ensure that it is achieving what it set out to do.

Monitoring is important because it helps demonstrate outcomes and value delivered by strategies and intervention, which enables success to be promoted and assists in building a case for further roll-out, funding and support.

Evaluation should look at whether the activity **met its objectives** (evaluating the outcomes) and also **how well it was delivered** (evaluating the process) by asking:

1. Did it meet its objectives? To what extent?
2. Was it delivered on time and on budget?
3. What went well and what didn't?
4. What could be done better in future and/or what should be done next?

Independent evaluation is best practice for determining if a strategy, policy, plan or intervention has achieved its goals, but this can be too much for council resources. Evaluation is not necessarily costly if monitoring/data collection is built into the strategy or intervention design.

Note that any intervention is likely to reduce exposure-related harm and save lives and estimating the impact of a specific strategy or intervention on this is not possible.

## 7. Promote success

Once we understand whether the strategy or specific intervention has performed against its objectives (and where and why it hasn't) we can celebrate any successes and promote this to stakeholders and through local media and on the council website to;

- acknowledge and motivate staff
- increase the chance of further resources being made available to sustain the program
- communicate key messages to the local community, increasing consideration of asbestos and safe and lawful removal, handling and disposal

Others facing similar challenges can learn from your experience, particularly if shared through professional networks and events.

#### **8. Sustain/iterate**



The final step is to incorporate learnings from the monitoring and evaluation to ensure the impact of activities is sustained through further roll-out of the activity, with adjustments if needed, or through additional or new interventions that build on the improved baseline that has been reached.

## PRINCIPLES FOR INTERVENING WITH IMPACT

- 1. Do something, no matter how small**  
Any action to reduce and manage asbestos risk is better than no action.
- 2. Increase the local focus on asbestos**  
Raise the priority placed on asbestos safety and risk prevention. For most audiences, this issue currently competes with other more immediate tasks or concerns.
- 3. Build into business-as-usual**  
In the community's mind, local government is well-placed and expected to be a source of knowledge, guidance and solutions on hazardous waste including asbestos.
- 4. Be strategic**  
Start with a cohesive strategy and clear objectives, so all intervention activities have purpose.
- 5. Address known barriers to behaviour** *[see breakout box, p13]*  
Make sure interventions target the actual things getting in the way of safe and lawful behaviour.
- 6. Consider all stages of the asbestos waste journey** *[see breakout box, p14]*  
Though clean-up and enforcement efforts are important, also invest in interventions to raise awareness and support proper handling and removal of asbestos, which helps prevent illegal dumping and improper disposal from occurring downstream.
- 7. Dedicate staffing resources to the issue**  
Allocate responsibility and oversight for asbestos-related interventions to ensure the issue remains a priority and activities build on learnings over time.
- 8. Be alert to unintended consequences**  
Consider possible unintended risks and consequences of interventions that may shift asbestos waste problems elsewhere, such as confusing instructions leading to unsafe waste preparation, or physical barriers diverting dumping elsewhere.
- 9. Be consistent and persistent**  
Simple and consistent approaches and messaging minimise confusion or ambiguity that can drive improper or illegal behaviour. Persisting with strategies will enable momentum to build and impacts of an intervention to increase.

## UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO SAFE AND LAWFUL ASBESTOS DISPOSAL

- Even though people are motivated to stay safe, they do not always act safely and lawfully when dealing with asbestos due to powerful barriers that get in the way.
- Applying behavioural frameworks helps to identify these barriers:<sup>2</sup>

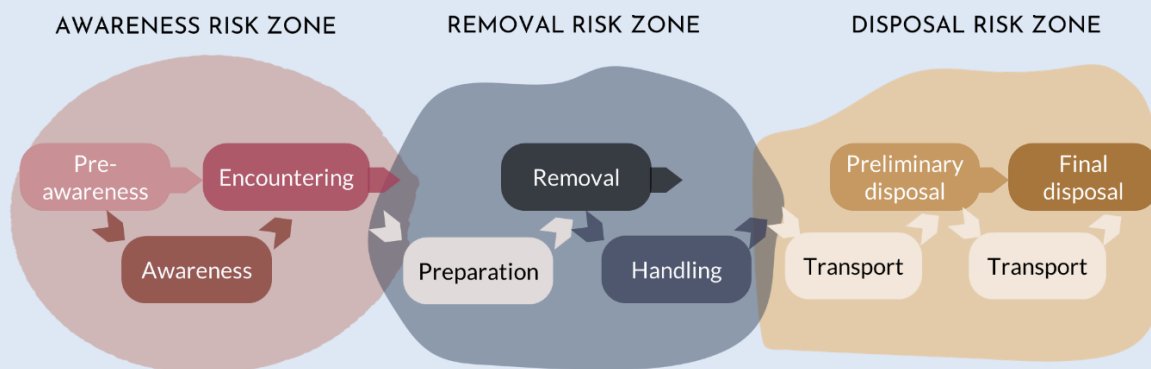
 <h3>CAN I DO IT?</h3> <p><b>Capability</b> barriers exist when people do not have the awareness, knowledge and skills to act safely and lawfully</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge about asbestos</li><li>• Awareness of prevalence, location &amp; risks</li><li>• Awareness of handling &amp; disposal requirements</li><li>• Practical skills to identify &amp; safely deal with asbestos</li></ul>
 <h3>AM I SUPPORTED TO DO IT?</h3> <p><b>Opportunity</b> barriers exist when the physical and social context doesn't support people to act safely and lawfully</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removal &amp; disposal costs</li><li>• Lack of opportunities to safely &amp; quickly dispose of asbestos (including small pieces)</li><li>• Lack of social, workplace &amp; media focus on asbestos risks &amp; safety</li><li>• Lack of need to prove safe &amp; lawful disposal</li></ul>
 <h3>DO I WANT TO DO IT?</h3> <p><b>Motivation</b> barriers exist when people are not consciously or unconsciously propelled to act safely and lawfully</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overconfidence in knowledge &amp; capabilities when it comes to asbestos</li><li>• Mistaken or incorrect attitudes &amp; beliefs about risks, requirements &amp; likelihood of being caught improperly disposing of or illegally dumping asbestos</li></ul>

### CONSIDER THAT:

- Barriers combine to lead to unsafe actions. For example, lack of knowledge about asbestos can lead to incorrect beliefs about personal risk, lack of public discussion of asbestos can lead to lack of knowledge.
- Addressing single barriers can positively impact other barriers, though this approach may not sustainably shift behaviour over time.
- Addressing multiple barriers consistently will have the greatest impact.

*Taking a multifaceted approach to intervention, and being consistent and persistent in implementing it, can help to gain real traction on this issue over time*

## UNDERSTANDING THE ASBESTOS WASTE JOURNEY



### CONSIDER THAT:

- Zones along the asbestos waste journey differ in the risks they pose and the benefits of focusing interventions in that area (see next section).
- People's choices and behaviour early in the asbestos waste journey greatly determine the choices available to them in later stages of its journey.
- Actions and strategies put in place by councils early in the journey may prove more effective over the long term in terms of behaviour change and cost and harm reduction.

*What happens early on has a downstream impact on how asbestos is disposed of, including whether or not it is dumped*

- The asbestos waste journey can help pinpoint local issues and where solutions are needed:
  - **IF** there is a lot of degrading asbestos in local housing stock, or **IF** asbestos is being accidentally disturbed during renovations or developments **THEN** awareness zone interventions may be needed
  - **IF** asbestos waste is consistently being poorly prepared for disposal **IF** it then arrives at waste sites unwrapped and unsealed **THEN** removal zone interventions may be needed
  - **IF** improper disposal in household bins is an issue, or **IF** there is illegal dumping of hazardous / asbestos waste **THEN** disposal zone interventions may be needed

<sup>2</sup> Michie, S., van Stralen, M., and West, R. (2011) The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. Implementation science, 6 (42)

## 2.2 Opportunities for local government interventions

In this section you will find:

- » The benefits of intervening at each of the three risks zones of the asbestos waste journey (awareness, removal and disposal), and what needs to be considered in each zone
- » Opportunities for intervening at each risk zone, with specific example tactics gathered through the research that informs this guide

### INTERVENTION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AWARENESS ZONE



The awareness zone starts prior to awareness of the asbestos and runs up to when it is encountered. There is some risk of direct exposure to asbestos fibres in this zone where asbestos is accidentally disturbed. A lack of consideration of and planning for asbestos also creates sizeable *downstream* risks, with asbestos less likely to be handled, removed and disposed of safely in later zones.

#### BENEFITS OF INTERVENING IN THE AWARENESS ZONE

- People are less likely to accidentally disturb asbestos and be exposed to its fibres.
- By encouraging the community to consider, plan for and identify the presence of asbestos, early decisions are more likely to support safe and lawful behaviour in later risk zones.
- Those further along the asbestos waste journey (such as council rangers, waste collection staff and waste site workers) who are negatively impacted by poor decisions, also benefit.
- Social norms are changed, and a social expectation to behave safely and lawfully with asbestos is fostered.

#### CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DESIGNING AN INTERVENTION IN THE AWARENESS ZONE

##### 1. Who should we target?

Consider the characteristics of your local community and who has the greatest chance of coming across asbestos, is least focused on this issue currently, or has the poorest understanding of what actions to take if they do encounter asbestos.

A combination of whole-of-community and specific audience interventions will have most impact. Whole-of-community communications spread general messages about asbestos across all audiences. Specific audience communications allow more targeted messages to be delivered directly to specific audiences, with impacts often more immediate and measurable.

**2. How should we deliver our messages?**

The communications approach will be dictated by the characteristics of your community and the audience you target. For example, local government areas with high cultural and language diversity may need to produce translated materials or deliver messages through community groups or leaders, bilingual media, or places of worship. Demographic information for your local government area is available through [ABS QuickStats](#).

**3. Are there existing materials we can use?**

Communication materials need not be developed from scratch. You can use materials that have already been developed by relevant state/territory or national bodies as they are, or modified to reflect local priorities. Communication efforts are most effective when they coincide with other campaigns occurring at the state/national level. An easy option is sharing existing campaign content via social media or on relevant council webpages, making printed campaign materials available for residents, or installing campaign signage or displays on council premises. See [National Asbestos Awareness Week 2021 Stakeholder Campaign Pack](#).

**INTERVENTION APPROACHES AND EXAMPLE TACTICS**

Approach	Tactics councils have used
<p><b>Expand capability</b> (boost awareness and skills) by increasing community understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what asbestos is and the risks of exposure</li> <li>• how common asbestos is in residential housing</li> <li>• places in the home where asbestos may be</li> <li>• difficulties in identifying asbestos and role of assessors and testing</li> <li>• risks associated with 'free fill' that could contain asbestos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asbestos-related content incorporating key awareness messages and website architecture changed to make information easier to find [<i>see breakout box, p16</i>]</li> <li>• Community awareness campaigns through local media (paid and unpaid) and social media</li> <li>• Residential mail outs/inserts (e.g. with rates notice)</li> <li>• Information included in council newsletters</li> <li>• In-person community information drives at locations relevant to the target audience (e.g. Bunnings)</li> <li>• Community workshops/information sessions in suburbs with high proportion of pre-1990 homes</li> <li>• Asbestos safety training for council staff</li> <li>• Council staff licensed as asbestos assessors</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increase opportunity</b> (support the right action and set expectations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make it easier for members of the community to consider and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free asbestos inspections for residents booked through council, provided in partnership with a contractor</li> </ul>



<p>plan for asbestos in renovation, demolition, building and landscaping works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make it easier to identify asbestos on local residential properties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free or low-cost Household Asbestos Testing Kits (being mindful of the need to maximise compliance to ensure exposure risk is reduced)</li> <li>• Revise demolition and development approvals processes for homes built before 1990 to include asbestos information and requirement to check for asbestos</li> <li>• Asbestos awareness information for new residents provided through real estate agents or with transfer of rates - relevant factsheets are available from ASEA: <a href="#">Disclosure of asbestos in residential property – information for buyers and sellers</a> and <a href="#">Arranging a residential asbestos assessment</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Build motivation</b> (reduce enticements and excuses):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase the focus on asbestos safety in the local community</li> <li>• challenge community and professionals' beliefs that hinder consideration, planning and identification of asbestos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistent communications with key messages:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ asbestos safety is a significant issue facing local communities</li> <li>○ you cannot accurately identify whether a material is/contains asbestos by sight</li> <li>○ knowing about asbestos early (e.g. when you move in) creates safer, more cost-effective options</li> <li>○ assessments are easy to obtain and not cost prohibitive</li> <li>○ it is safest to leave asbestos removal and disposal to an asbestos professional</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### TIPS FOR WEBSITE COMMUNICATIONS

- **Make it current**  
Ensure any links provided to external bodies or resources are up-to-date and unbroken
- **Make it everywhere**  
Include asbestos information on all relevant webpages, including waste, public health/ community safety, demolition, building and other trades e.g. plumbing and electrical
- **Make it comprehensive and consistent**  
Ensure residents access the same set of comprehensive asbestos information, no matter which council webpage they access it on
- **Make it easy to find**  
Seek to minimise the number of clicks required to find asbestos-related information, and search engine optimisation should aim for asbestos to come up in web searches by locals
- **Make it engaging**  
Ensure content is simple, clear and well laid-out. Consider using icons and simple graphics to aid those with low English literacy
- **Make it last**  
Consider including downloadable material that residents can keep and refer to

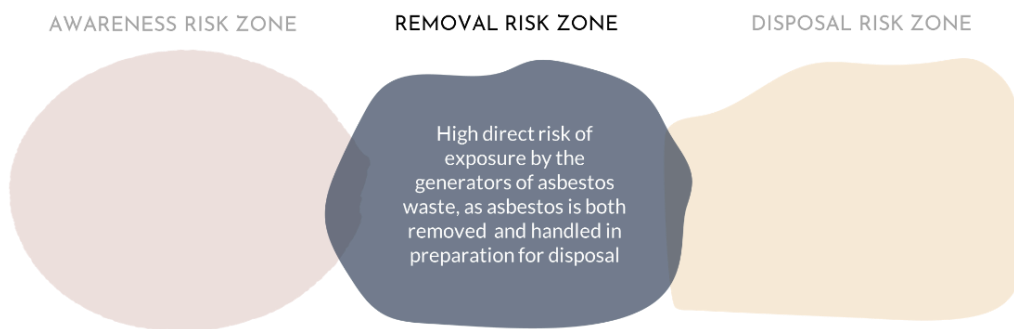
### CASE STUDY – Boosting awareness in the community

This metropolitan council describes itself as being in an ‘asbestos belt’, with many homes built prior to 1990 and containing asbestos.

Promoted most heavily during National Asbestos Awareness Week, the council offers a free household asbestos inspection service, where it arranges for a contractor to attend a resident’s property for a 45-minute verbal consultation (to minimise costs, written reports are not provided).

The council also periodically runs information nights. These professionally facilitated 2-hour sessions provide comprehensive and practical information to residents on how to handle any asbestos that could be on their property, with an expert invited to talk. These sessions are well attended.

## INTERVENTION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ASBESTOS REMOVAL ZONE



The removal zone covers the active period when decisions are made, preparation for dealing with the asbestos happens, and the asbestos is actually removed and handled in preparation for transport and disposal. If decisions and actions in this zone are not safe and lawful, the risk of direct exposure to asbestos fibres is high. Crucially, decisions and actions in this zone have downstream impacts on how it is transported and where it ultimately ends up.

### BENEFITS OF INTERVENING IN THE REMOVAL ZONE

- People are less likely to handle asbestos unsafely and expose themselves or others to asbestos fibres.
- Ensures asbestos is safely and lawfully removed, handled and prepared for disposal, and helps protect those who come into contact with it downstream in transportation and disposal.
- Community members already expect councils to be providers of waste information and services and anticipate dealing with council when lodging development or building applications.

### CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DESIGNING AN INTERVENTION IN THE REMOVAL ZONE

#### 1. Who should we target?

Owners (or more broadly residents) of properties where asbestos may need to be removed, are the most obvious targets.

Professionals – those working in construction, demolition or trades who may encounter asbestos through their work – are also worth targeting. Increasing knowledge and skills among this group will not only keep these workers safe but will also have positive impacts on the wider community when professionals include safe and lawful removal in job quotes, model appropriate removal behaviour, provide accurate general advice and information on asbestos to their clients, and recruit asbestos specialists where required.

**2. How can we be clear and consistent in our messaging across channels?**

Previous research<sup>3</sup> suggests that community members can struggle to understand rules about asbestos removal, preparing it for disposal and when an asbestos professional is required.

When unclear about which agency or jurisdiction to consult, people turn to building professionals to assist, but many lack the knowledge, skills or experience to do so.

Council websites are a logical place for clear and comprehensive information on these topics. Helping residents in this way can protect against illegal dumping and improper disposal downstream.

**3. How do we reduce disincentives (like cost and inconvenience) to safe and lawful actions?**

Community members can perceive the cost of professional asbestos removal to be high, and the rules around removal to be inconvenient. It is worth considering how your council might help to remove these barriers to safe and lawful asbestos removal, which can counteract the impact of other interventions (such as awareness raising or deterring illegal dumping).

**INTERVENTION APPROACHES AND EXAMPLE TACTICS**

Approach	Tactics councils have used in the removal zone
<p><b>Expand capability</b> (boost awareness and skills) by increasing community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of requirements for safe and lawful handling and removal of asbestos, including when professional removalists are needed</li> <li>• capability to safely prepare asbestos for disposal</li> <li>• awareness of the need to obtain tip/waste site receipts for asbestos removed from one’s property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asbestos-related content incorporating key messages about removal and handling, and website architecture changed to make information easier to find <i>[see breakout box, p18]</i></li> <li>• Community awareness campaigns through local media and social media</li> <li>• Residential mail outs/inserts</li> <li>• Harnessing existing neighbourhood champions in local CALD communities</li> <li>• Some councils have obtained asbestos removal training and licenses for staff</li> <li>• Community information and training on preparing small amounts of asbestos waste for disposal</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Heartward Strategic (2021) Asbestos Safety Part 1: Household Renovation and Maintenance. NSW EPA. Heartward Strategic (2021) Asbestos Safety Part 2: Asbestos Waste. NSW EPA.

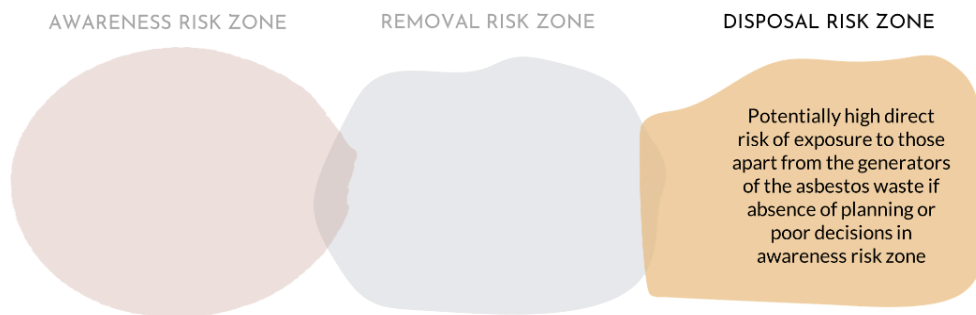
<p><b>Increase opportunity</b> (support the right action and set expectations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make it easier for residents to remove small pieces of asbestos from their property and prepare it safely and lawfully for disposal</li> <li>• challenge the lax safety culture of some building professionals and empower the community to identify poor behaviour and hold contractors to account</li> <li>• increase council requirements to demonstrate that asbestos has been professionally removed and disposed of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asbestos removal kits containing instructions, personal protective equipment for removing and handling asbestos and materials for preparing asbestos waste for disposal <i>[Exercise caution to avoid suggesting unlicensed community members can remove asbestos beyond legally allowable limits and to minimise liability if kits used inappropriately e.g. insurances, disclaimers and information provided]</i></li> <li>• Campaigns encouraging residents to report any unsafe removal/ demolition practices they witness</li> <li>• Increase council capacity to respond to reports of unsafe removal/ demolition practices</li> <li>• Include or strengthen requirements/reminders/checks for licensed asbestos removal and clearance certificates in relevant development applications</li> </ul>
<p><b>Build motivation</b> (reduce enticements and excuses):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• challenge community and professional beliefs that it is safe and easy to remove asbestos oneself</li> <li>• challenge beliefs that licensed asbestos removal is very expensive and/or difficult and time-consuming to obtain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prominent communication with key messages:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ asbestos is dangerous and can cause serious harm/death</li> <li>○ discourage removal of asbestos by non-licensed people</li> <li>○ benefits of asbestos being treated/managed by licensed professionals taking correct precautions</li> <li>○ guidance on how to find and engage licensed removalists</li> <li>○ mention costs of asbestos removal may not be as much as expected/ are worth it for peace of mind</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## REMOVAL ZONE COMMUNICATION TOPICS RELEVANT FOR ALL AUDIENCES

*Note - Please clarify with the relevant authorities in your jurisdiction before implementing strategies and programs addressing these issues*

- **Who is responsible for asbestos waste?**  
Neither community members nor building professionals are always clear about who is responsible for asbestos at different points in the waste journey, for example whether it is the homeowner, or any contractor doing work on the property
- **What are the laws that pertain to the removal of asbestos?**  
There is uncertainty among most audiences about who is allowed to remove asbestos, under what circumstances, and what steps are involved
- **When are asbestos specialists advisable and required?**  
There is uncertainty about the different asbestos specialists (asbestos assessors, asbestos removalists with different licensing arrangements, and occupational hygienists), and which can assist to assess a property, test for and remove asbestos, monitor asbestos exposure risk, or issue clearance certificates
- **What can removal by a licenced specialist cost?**  
A realistic guide, examples or ranges of the costs of asbestos removal may dispel community perceptions that it is prohibitively expensive when it may not be in all cases

## INTERVENTION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ASBESTOS DISPOSAL ZONE



The disposal zone covers the transportation and disposal of asbestos waste at any preliminary disposal site (improper or illegal, such as stockpiling at a depot, burying in a garden or dumping in bushland) and at its final disposal at a waste facility licensed to accept it.

Risk of exposure to asbestos occurs throughout this risk zone but at this point, may be far removed from those who originally generated the waste. There is high direct risk of exposure to asbestos fibres for anyone coming into contact with poorly handled and prepared, and improperly or illegally disposed of asbestos waste, including council workers.

### BENEFITS OF INTERVENING IN THE DISPOSAL ZONE

- Provides the necessary 'last line of defence' for asbestos exposure risk, providing back-up to all the other interventions that are in place upstream, since interventions that are in place in the awareness or removal zones help minimise the need for interventions in the disposal zone.
- Reducing illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos will directly reduce the cost of clean-up and remediation borne by councils.
- Helps keep safe those who work in this zone, such as skip bin providers, transporters, demolition and waste workers, surveillance rangers, enforcement officers, and waste and resource recovery staff, as well as tradespeople who manage their own waste.
- Provides strong cues that safe and lawful behaviour is socially desirable and taps into the community's innate motivation to avoid experiencing or causing harm. (Without any intervention in this zone, residents or building professionals may observe improperly disposed of or illegally dumped asbestos and perceive that this behaviour is acceptable.)

Interventions in the awareness or removal zones help minimise the need for interventions in the disposal zone

### CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DESIGNING AN INTERVENTION IN THE DISPOSAL ZONE

#### 1. Can we leverage council 'business-as-usual'?

There may be opportunities to communicate about safe and lawful asbestos disposal during regulator communications with ratepayers. Consider

- sending out information with rate notices or when communicating about bulk waste clean-ups
- including mention of asbestos on stickers put on kerbside bins advising what can and cannot go in a bin

- branded waste collection trucks with illegal dumping messaging
- using existing cameras on waste trucks to detect illegal dumping and improperly disposed of asbestos along waste collection routes.

**2. Is our issue with illegally dumped asbestos, or asbestos mixed in with other waste?**

For some councils, illegally dumped asbestos is a major problem. For others, the bigger problem is asbestos hidden in residential kerbside bins or concealed in material taken to waste sites. Different approaches are required for each problem.

Since asbestos may be mixed in with other materials and hard to identify, as a precaution, councils should assume the presence of asbestos when building and demolition materials are dumped, disposed of in kerbside bins, or taken to a waste site.

**3. How can we address the challenge of small pieces?**

Consider how your council might assist its community to dispose of small pieces of asbestos for which cost (given minimum disposal fees) and inconvenience barriers (a lot of 'fuss' for a small amount) may seem particularly high and result in residents and building professionals alike improperly disposing of small amounts of asbestos in kerbside residential waste and recycling bins (causing issues for waste staff and waste sites along the journey), under houses or in gardens.

**4. How can we design an appropriate site-based engineering or technological intervention?**

Site-based interventions that prevent or discourage further illegal dumping at identified hotspots can be effective, but consider:

- **Land ownership and site usage**  
Is it appropriate to completely eliminate vehicular access to the site (e.g. through installing concrete blocks and cabling or by revegetating)? Or do some parties need to access it (in which case signage and cameras, gates that are controlled overnight or bollards with cabling that can be moved, would be more appropriate)?
- **Site accessibility**  
The type of engineering most appropriate to prevent vehicular access will be determined by the characteristics of the site, such as whether it is closed in, confined with natural barriers, or open land with few barriers.
- **Dumping characteristics**  
Some barriers can be effective in blocking off access for standard vehicles with a trailer but have limited efficacy for trucks and 4WD vehicles, so ensure you understand the sort of dumping occurring in your hotspots.
- **Management resources**  
Consider the budget and resources available to design, install, monitor and maintain any measures. For expensive surveillance equipment, will you have the resources to maintain the equipment or make the best use of the data captured (e.g. following up leads with investigation and enforcement, reviewing camera footage, or analysing GPS or GIS data)?
- **Ability to partner**  
Is your council able to use state-based or collaborative resources? For example, some councils have banded together to jointly fund illegal dumping enforcement teams that operate regionally (e.g. [NSW RID](#) squads). Others access footage from state-owned cameras on crown land and from city-wide CCTV networks in metropolitan areas.



**5. How cost-effective are enforcement efforts?**

Some councils note that resources allocated to illegal dumping investigations and the enforcement of penalties can pay for themselves, and even earn additional income for council [see case study p29]. Councils use a range of staff groups to monitor and enforce penalties beyond designated waste investigators, including rangers, environmental health officers and waste facility staff.

**6. How do we pre-empt unintended consequences?**

To avoid unintended negative consequences that can arise from disposal-focused interventions:

- To prevent the dumping simply shifting elsewhere, supplement any interventions that prevent dumping at specific hotspots with other interventions (such as communications).
- If offering free drop off services, ensure you provide residents with sufficient guidance on how to safely handle and prepare the asbestos, to prevent risks of exposure to residents and waste staff.
- A focus on reducing or eliminating the costs of asbestos disposal will not necessarily stop illegal dumping and may result in increased or no cost benefit to councils. As past research has suggested<sup>4</sup>, asbestos disposal costs are not the only driver of illegal dumping so cost reduction measures should be supplemented with other interventions.
- For safety reasons, dumped asbestos may need to be handled differently from other materials. Ensure that cordoning off (taping), notifying nearby residents (flyering) or erecting signage to draw attention to the issue and encourage 'dobbing in', does not increase risks of asbestos exposure to community members and waste staff.

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<sup>4</sup> Heartward Strategic (2021) Asbestos Safety Part 2: Asbestos Waste. NSW EPA.

### SURVEILLANCE CAMERA DOs AND DON'Ts

#### DO

- Understand the different types of cameras and how their advantages and disadvantages match your needs (for example mobile cameras can be moved around to different sites and positions while movement-activated fixed position cameras are not as flexible but require fewer resources to operate).
- Consider technical skills needed to install, operate and maintain different types of cameras.
- Consider how to prevent, and allocate contingency funds in case of, camera theft or damage.
- Seek advice on placement to ensure best quality data can be captured.
- Consider who will monitor footage and how much different types of cameras will generate, for example if they are always-on vs intermittently activated.
- Allocate a dedicated staff member with oversight of the surveillance program.

#### DON'T

- Don't rely on surveillance cameras alone as an intervention to prevent illegal dumping. Surveillance has been found to be more effective when coupled with signage and education.
- Don't forget there are legal responsibilities relating to recording images and their use. Learn about and follow required processes / obtain permissions to set up and use footage legally.

### INTERVENTION IDEAS AND EXAMPLES

Approach	Tactics councils have used
<p><b>Expand capability</b> (boost awareness and skills) to dispose of asbestos waste safely and lawfully by increasing community understanding and awareness of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how and where to dispose of asbestos waste locally</li> <li>• transportation requirements for asbestos</li> <li>• illegal dumping in the local area and how to make a report</li> <li>• risks posed by small amounts of asbestos and the dangers to self and others of hidden disposal in residential bins and skips (being especially mindful of council's waste management workers who may potentially be regularly exposed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asbestos-related content incorporating key messages about disposal published and website architecture changed to make information easier to find <i>[see breakout box, p18]</i></li> <li>• Community awareness campaigns through local media and social media</li> <li>• Residential mail outs/inserts</li> <li>• Letterbox flyering around illegal dumping sites</li> <li>• Harnessing existing neighbourhood champions in local CALD communities</li> <li>• Signage at hotspots</li> <li>• Surveillance skills training, asbestos detection training and dealing with difficult customers training for council staff likely to encounter improperly disposed of or illegally dumped asbestos waste (such as rangers and waste</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consequences of improper or unlawful disposal (in terms of safety, environmental impact, visual amenity, penalties)</li> <li>• property owners' legal responsibility for any waste dumped on their property</li> </ul> <p>There is also an opportunity to train staff to safely and swiftly detect and collect illegally dumped and improperly disposed of asbestos waste.</p>	<p>workers) or those who are trying to dispose of it improperly.</p>
<p><b>Increase opportunity</b> (support the right action and set expectations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make waste sites/ disposal solutions more accessible by reducing cost and distance barriers</li> <li>• make access to dumping hotspots more difficult</li> <li>• decrease the social acceptability of illegal and improper disposal of asbestos waste</li> <li>• increase the requirements set by council to dispose of asbestos safely and lawfully</li> <li>• equip staff with fit-for-purpose equipment to transport and dispose of asbestos safely</li> <li>• make it easier for workers to detect/ identify improperly disposed of and illegally dumped asbestos waste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install physical barriers to prevent or control access to illegal dumping hotspots and unmanned waste sites (e.g. bollards, fencing, swipe card access)</li> <li>• Free or subsidised/reduced cost asbestos waste disposal</li> <li>• Services to collect/allow drop off of small amounts of appropriately prepared residential asbestos</li> <li>• Regional partnerships to increase options for community asbestos waste disposal</li> <li>• Draw local attention to illegal dumping and improper disposal (e.g. taping and flyering illegally dumped material, signage at hotspots, media releases promoting local community tip-offs/reports)</li> <li>• Build community pride, e.g. 'Adopt-a-Spot' programs</li> <li>• Require offenders to organise and bear the costs of cleaning up illegally dumped material</li> <li>• Include requirements to prove safe and lawful disposal of asbestos in all council-issued demolition permits</li> <li>• Fit-for-purpose trucks to specifically collect illegally dumped waste and transfer asbestos waste between sites</li> <li>• Invest in asbestos detection technology for council rangers and waste sites e.g. Weighbridge cameras, microPHAZIR Asbestos Analyser [<i>provided accuracy limitations of this device are understood</i>] to detect asbestos in illegal dumps</li> <li>• In town planning, consider how to minimise the unintended creation of dumping sites (e.g.</li> </ul>

	<p>minimising alley-ways and back lanes, dead-end roads leading to bushland)</p>
<p><b>Build motivation</b> (reduce enticements and excuses):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● increase the perceived risk of getting caught</li> <li>● reduce perceived rewards of dumping</li> <li>● reduce unconscious cues that dumping is okay</li> <li>● challenge unsupportive attitudes and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Publicise waste disposal options, and ensure options and costs are reasonable and do not communicate that it is more worthwhile to do the wrong thing</li> <li>● Re-framing perceptions of waste facilities, particularly transfer stations, away from “dumps”</li> <li>● Ongoing surveillance (e.g. patrols, mobile and fixed cameras, cameras attached to waste collection vehicles, community reporting drives)</li> <li>● Compliance campaigns/enforcement blitzes</li> <li>● Increase enforcement of penalties</li> <li>● Publicise successful enforcement of penalties</li> <li>● Communicate penalties/increased penalties</li> <li>● Hotspot identification, clean up, landscaping, lighting and beautification</li> </ul>

#### CASE STUDY – Taping and flyering strategy

This metropolitan council was one of the first to introduce a process of taping off illegally dumped items and letterbox neighbouring properties. The aim of this intervention is threefold – to educate on appropriate disposal methods, influence social norms, and prompt clean up and reporting behaviour. In the five years since the intervention launched, data shows there has been an increase in resident reporting of illegal dumping, a halving of the volume of waste and halving of tip costs borne by council.

#### CASE STUDY – Free asbestos drop off days

This regional council undertakes waste processing activities on behalf of several member councils. For many years, it has provided free drop off days at its waste site for up to 165kg of wrapped and labelled asbestos-containing material. The aim has been to prevent illegal dumping of aging asbestos removed by residents from their properties. A sustainable intervention for council and a popular intervention among residents, in recent times this initiative has changed from monthly to weekly. Although not formally evaluated (including as council is not privy to illegal dumping data which is held by member councils), it has been observed that volumes of asbestos being dropped off are now beginning to decrease, presumably as asbestos is successfully removed from the local built environment.

#### **CASE STUDY – Collection of legacy asbestos from residential properties**

This local government collaboration consists of a number of member councils. Pooling resources, it piloted a program aimed at assisting residents within these local government areas to remove legacy asbestos from their properties.

Interested residents were required to complete a pre-qualifying online survey and were subsequently follow-up by phone. During the several-month program, just under one hundred properties participated producing a significant amount of asbestos waste, the cost of which was covered by the councils. The program also had a broader education focus.

#### **CASE STUDY – Investing to ensure enforcement of penalties**

This metropolitan council identified that it had a big issue with illegal dumping, including illegal dumping of asbestos. It invested in seven new live-feed surveillance cameras and created a position for a waste investigator, for a trial period of four years.

The council has found that the amount it *collects* (through fines paid and administrative fees payable by ratepayers on enforcement orders and notices), is *double what it spends* each year on the waste investigator's wages, meaning this intervention actually generates revenue. Additionally, council resources are saved where perpetrators themselves are compelled to bear clean-up costs.

## ASBESTOS INTERVENTIONS IN SPECIFIC CONTEXTS

### DISASTER EVENTS

Extreme weather, catastrophic events or natural disasters such as flood and bushfire, are particularly problematic for councils due to a number of associated challenges:

- Damage may occur to numerous structures that contain asbestos, turning bonded or contained asbestos, into friable or out of place asbestos.
- The event may occur with little warning, restricting the ability to plan, so residents' actions can be reactive, urgent and survival-driven, increasing exposure risk.
- Events occurs at a single time point or over a short period, resulting in local government resources being stretched to the limit. Waste sites can be overwhelmed dealing with the volume of asbestos contaminated waste coming in.
- Many urgent messages from multiple government and aid agencies compete for attention which can make it challenging to communicate about asbestos safety.
- The significant cost of clean-up efforts can be difficult to fund, both by councils in the case of public and derelict buildings, and by property owners where there is underinsurance or no insurance cover.

Opportunities for local government to meet these challenges and reduce asbestos exposure risk in the community in disaster events include:

- Ongoing community education to build a base level of knowledge about asbestos and the possible impact of natural disasters and events on previously undisturbed or bonded asbestos.
- Including management of asbestos in council disaster risk management plans and in community education and supports for disaster preparation (such as kits, checklists and other materials).
- Communicating proactively immediately after an event about avoidance of asbestos risks.
- Consistent messaging to reduce likelihood of negative impacts of alarmist media about asbestos after such events.
- Indirect support from other programs, such as food and garden organics, and recycling, that divert waste from landfill to free up space for asbestos, which cannot go elsewhere.
- Encouraging owners of properties with asbestos in disaster-prone communities to proactively remove asbestos or remediate their property, by messaging (pre-emptive removal is safer and cheaper than clean-up of friable asbestos) or offering free or discounted assessments.

## REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

When planning and implementing interventions to address asbestos exposure risk, councils in regional, rural and remote areas where asbestos is present, face different circumstances than their metropolitan or outer metropolitan counterparts. Councils in such locations note these challenges:

- There may be a relatively high proportion of housing containing fibro asbestos sheeting and other asbestos containing materials.
- The area may have a relatively high proportion of financially disadvantaged residents unable to afford professional asbestos removal or even lawful disposal.
- Waste and resource recovery sites may be vast distances from residents exacerbating the inconvenience of lawful asbestos disposal.
- For local governments spanning vast areas, it can be difficult to maintain surveillance and enforcement activities, including across extensive road networks.
- Lack of resourcing with fewer staff overall and limited staff dedicated to the issue of asbestos.
- Waste sites licensed to accept asbestos may be staffed only on certain times or days or have limited hours of opening.
- There may be less access to asbestos-related training or less regular training leading to inconsistent knowledge and skills levels among waste management staff.
- It may be difficult to produce adequate data on the extent of the existing problem to secure funding.
- Local governments close to state or territory borders can experience non-local waste being disposed cross-border or having waste resources stretched to manage additional volumes.

Opportunities for local government to meet these challenges and reduce asbestos exposure risk in the community outside of cities include:

- Pooling resources, or establishing collaborative partnerships or committees to share knowledge and training and deliver services to the community.
- The relatively small and defined base of residents and businesses within a regional, rural or remote area provides a unique opportunity to communicate in a tailored way.
- Build on the pre-existing social cohesion in small communities to amplify the impact of interventions through word of mouth and close community ties.

### **CASE STUDY – Boosting awareness and skills in a rural area**

This regional/rural council was conscious that local housing stock still contained large volumes of asbestos and felt it could usefully play a role in increasing consideration of asbestos by both residents and those working on residents' properties.

Partnering with a local bakery, this council ran a meat pie drive targeting builders and trades operating locally. Visiting worksites to deliver hot pies and a 'goodie bag' of asbestos-related materials (flyers, checklists etc), council staff created a face-to-face opportunity to discuss working safely with asbestos-containing materials.

At the same time, this council began the process of funnelling information to new tenants and home buyers in the area, via real estate agents, to raise awareness of asbestos in housing stock.

While these low-cost interventions have not been formally evaluated, the council believes they have been of value in helping keep residents safe by increasing knowledge of all the places asbestos-containing materials can be found, and how to deal with asbestos safely. They plan to repeat similar interventions in the future.



## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

Some councils have a high proportion of residents identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Councils, particularly in rural areas, may also include discrete Indigenous communities. In either situation the following challenges may arise:

- Unmaintained structures containing asbestos risk asbestos becoming friable.
- Land may not have been appropriately remediated after demolition of asbestos-containing structures, leading to contamination of soil or waterways, superficially covered with vegetation.
- Resolving asbestos issues in discrete Indigenous communities can involve local government, the land council and traditional owners – requiring an approach that emphasises consultation, respect, self-determination and collaboration in a non-patriarchal manner.
- Waste services provided to Aboriginal communities may be limited if the land is governed by a Local Aboriginal Land Council and is considered a privately owned single lot property by council.
- Relevant policies, such as OCHRE (Opportunity Choice Healing Responsibility Empowerment), Aboriginal procurement policy, Closing the Gap, the Ombudsman, need to be considered.

Opportunities for local government to meet these challenges and reduce asbestos exposure risk in Indigenous communities include:

- Treat asbestos interventions as relationship building opportunities by focused on listening, respect (for significant places, sorry business etc.), sensitivity to community preference and inclusive decision making.
- Establish collaborative partnerships (e.g. waste advisory committees), consulting widely and drawing together representation from all relevant stakeholders.
- Explore whether there may be organisations specifically able to assist with interventions in Indigenous communities, e.g. [WasteAid](#)
- Trial potential interventions in a single discrete community and share findings with other similar local government bodies, effectively pooling resources.
- Design holistic, sustainable strategies that do not focus exclusively on cleaning up legacy asbestos waste – include a community education component.
- Design interventions that provide training, licensing, work experience and/or employment opportunities for members of Indigenous communities (e.g. in relation to asbestos clean-up and licensing, Indigenous advisors/officers).
- Modify and adapt mainstream campaigns, communication materials and messages to be relevant to Indigenous communities, through working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

#### **CASE STUDY – Cleaning up discrete communities**

This regional/remote council was motivated to act to address asbestos, particularly legacy asbestos, in its Aboriginal communities. It enlisted the support of [WasteAid](#) which advised them and also helped secure funding for their intervention.

The first step was setting up a Waste Advisory Committee to bring relevant stakeholders together. They then began cleaning up communities, starting in a single community. Local Aboriginal people were involved both in an advisory fashion and doing clean-up work, after training received through the Ready Scheme.

This work was complemented by a communications program rolled out more broadly educating communities about asbestos and the importance of not disturbing it. Campaign materials incorporated Aboriginal imagery and language and included children's colouring-in books.

The pilot program in a single Aboriginal community was deemed successful and the initiative has since been rolled out to other communities including in neighbouring local government areas.

### 3. Research

In this section you will find:



A detailed description of the method and findings from the research that informed the development of this guide

*This guide is based on information collected on council interventions across Australia and research among 151 local government bodies via:*

- Open online survey - 92 responses from across all states and territories
- Desktop research - websites, materials and resources reviewed from all council websites
- Interviews - 20 local government representatives

Table 1. Estimating the population served by local governments included in the research	Number	% of Australian population
Australian population (Census 2021)	25,422,788	
Population represented by survey respondents (LGAs)	5,707,629	22.4%
Population represented by survey respondents and desktop research (LGAs)	13,147,231	51.7%

The research undertaken to inform this guide provides a snapshot of how councils across Australia are currently meeting the complex issue of asbestos safety and illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos containing materials. Below are key findings<sup>5</sup> from this research.

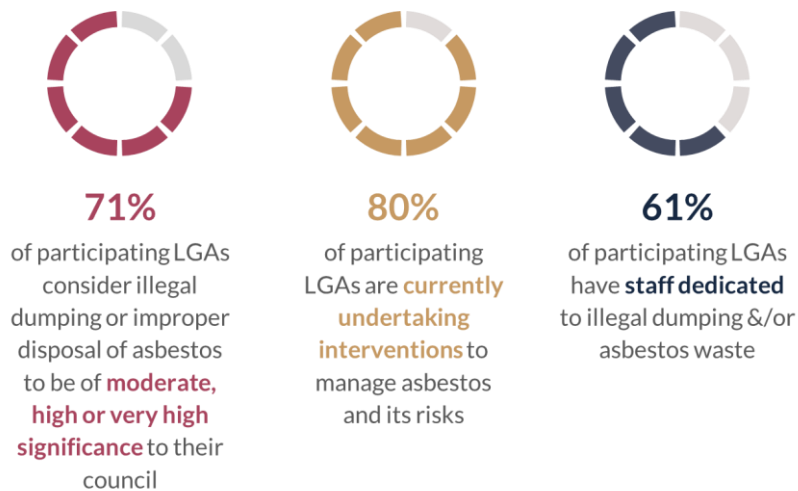
As shown in Figure A:

- **Most consider illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos to be a significant issue**  
Of the 92 local government bodies who responded to the survey, 71% reported it to be of moderate, high or very high significance to their council.
- **Most local government bodies are already acting in this space.**  
Four in five (80%) responding to the survey reported having interventions currently underway to manage illegal dumping and/or improper disposal of asbestos.
- **Three in five (61%) reported having staff dedicated to responding to illegal dumping and/or asbestos waste disposal.** These local government bodies were more likely than those without

<sup>5</sup> Wherever possible, the source of research findings - survey, desktop research, interviews - is noted.

dedicated staff to be undertaking interventions, with some pointing to the availability of dedicated staff as a key success factor in sustained and impactful interventions.

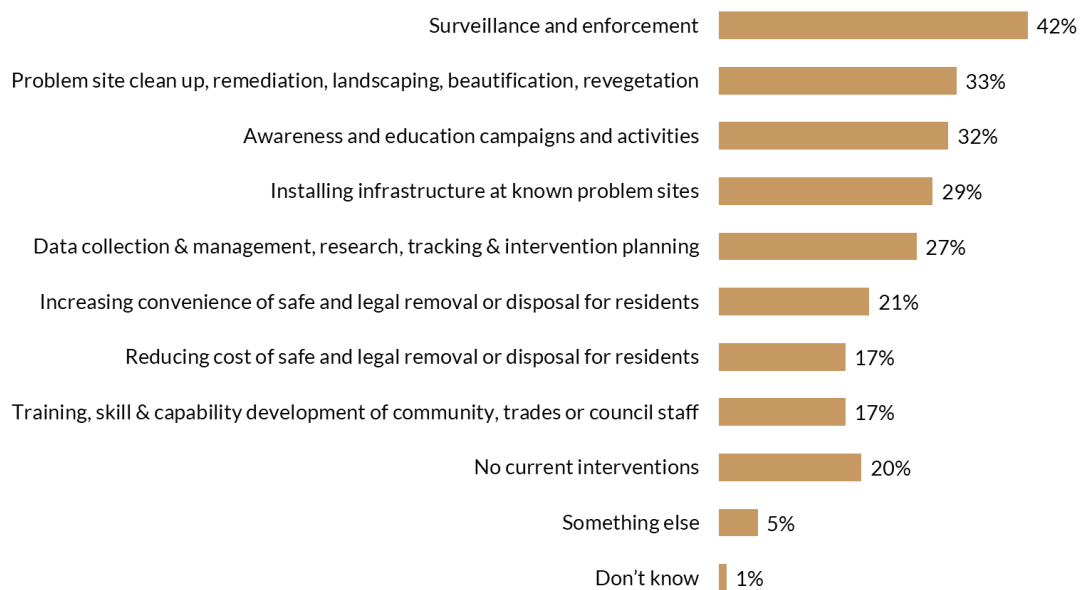
**Figure A. Participating local government bodies' engagement with asbestos interventions**



Representatives responding to the survey reported that their local government bodies are currently engaged in a range of different types of interventions, shown in Figure B. **The three most common interventions included:**

- **surveillance and enforcement** (including cameras, patrols, drones and investigations),
- **clean-up of hotspots** to discourage further illegal dumping, and
- **awareness and education** campaigns and activities.

**Figure B. Participating local government bodies' current interventions**



Although less commonly reported as being currently undertaken, **interventions that make it easier for people to safely and lawfully dispose of asbestos (by increasing convenience or reducing cost) were perceived as particularly effective in managing asbestos and its risks**, as shown in Figure C. The proportion considering awareness and education campaigns and activities to be particularly effective (62%) far outweighed the proportion currently employing this type of intervention (32%, see Figure B).

**Figure C. Interventions perceived as most effective in managing asbestos and its risks**

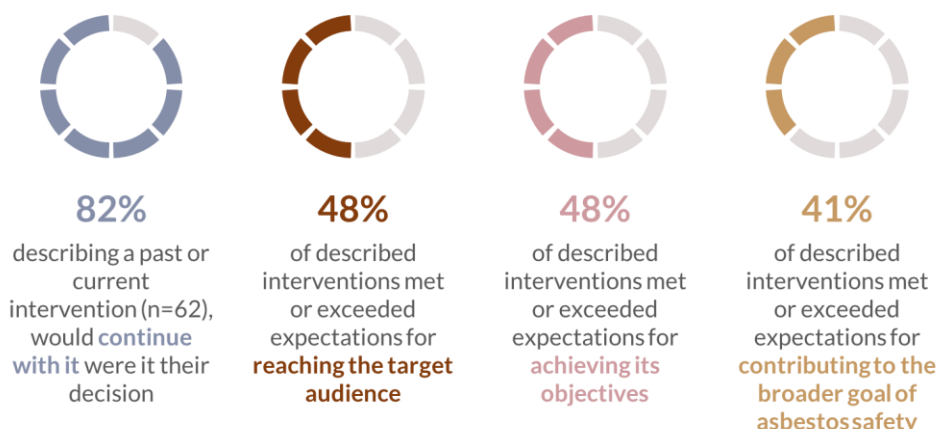


Among the representatives responding to the online survey, 62 chose to share the details of a relevant intervention (current or past) that has been implemented by their local government body. As shown in Figure D, of these:

- Around **half (48%) felt the intervention had met or exceeded expectations** in reaching its target audience and in achieving its objectives, and 41% felt it had met or exceeded expectations for contributing to asbestos safety.
- Just **23% had formally evaluated** their intervention though the vast majority (82%) indicated that they would want to continue this intervention into the future, suggesting they saw clear benefits.

Some representatives were able to reflect on ways that their council's interventions could have been strengthened, or its impact increased through other complementary activities.

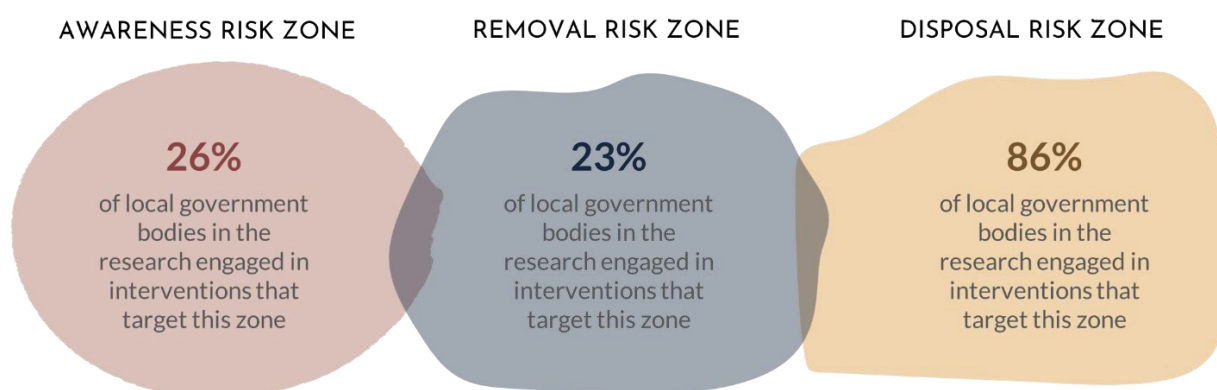
Figure D. Outcomes of described interventions



Of the local government bodies with relevant interventions (identified in the survey or through desk research):

- **The large majority were focused on the disposal risk zone.** Specifically, 86% of the local government bodies with any relevant interventions had activities focused in this zone. Only around one quarter had activities that were focused on the awareness or removal zones of the asbestos waste journey (see Figure E). Most interventions were aimed at addressing:
  - **physical opportunity barriers** by supporting people to engage in the right actions (64% of local government bodies had interventions directed here)
  - **psychological capability barriers** by boosting asbestos-knowledge awareness (53%).
- Attention was less commonly directed towards social opportunity barriers (by setting and reinforcing appropriate expectations, 36%), motivation barriers (by addressing unconscious enticements, 1%, or conscious excuses, 23%) or physical capability barriers (by boosting skills, 9%).
- These findings suggests an opportunity to increase interventions in the awareness and removal risk zones to prevent downstream impacts of illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos.

Figure E. Interventions in each risk zone



## 4. Resources

In this section you will find:



Links to government agencies, local government associations other information sources relating to asbestos management, environmental and workplace safety issues

### *National*

[Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency](#)

[Safe Work Australia](#)

[Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water](#)

[Australian Local Government Association](#)

### *Australian Capital Territory*

[Asbestos in the ACT](#)

[Worksafe ACT](#)

### *New South Wales*

[Asbestos in NSW](#)

[SafeWork NSW](#)

[NSW Environment Protection Authority](#)

[Local Government NSW](#)

### *Northern Territory*

[Asbestos in the NT](#)

[Northern Territory WorkSafe](#)

[Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority](#)

[Local Government Association Northern Territory](#)

### *Queensland*

[Queensland Government – Asbestos](#)

[WorkSafe Queensland](#)

[Queensland Department of Environment and Science](#)

[Local Government Association Queensland](#)

### *South Australia*

[South Australian Government – Asbestos](#)

[SafeWork SA](#)

[Environment Protection Authority SA](#)

[Local Government Association SA](#)

### *Tasmania*

[WorkSafe Tasmania](#)

[Environment Protection Authority Tasmania](#)

[Local Government Association Tasmania](#)

### *Victoria*

[Asbestos in Victoria](#)

[WorkSafe Victoria](#)

[Environment Protection Authority Victoria](#)

[Municipal Association of Victoria](#)

ASEA - Guide for local government to combat illegal dumping and improper disposal of asbestos

### ***Western Australia***

[Western Australia Government – Asbestos FAQs](#)

[WorkSafe WA](#)

[Environmental Protection Authority WA](#)

[WA Local Government Association](#)

### ***Other resources***

#### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

[WasteAid Australia](#) Co-designs and co-implements sustainable waste solutions in Aboriginal communities, creating partnerships that embrace each community's unique skills and expertise to manage sustainable long term solutions with Aboriginal people on their own land.

#### **Local government area demographics**

Demographic information for your local government area is available through [ABS QuickStats](#).

#### **Regional illegal dumping squads**

Some councils have joined together to establish regionally based teams that specialise in combating and preventing illegal dumping through jointly fund illegal dumping enforcement teams, such as [NSW RID](#).