



Australian Government

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

# Action on illegal disposal of asbestos

**A Guide for Local  
Government**



**This document has been prepared by:**



**Australian Government**

**Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency**

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (ASEA) encourages the dissemination and exchange of information provided in this guide.

The Commonwealth owns the copyright in all material produced by this agency.

All material presented in this report is provided under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International – external site licence](#), with the exception of:

- the Commonwealth Coat of Arms
- this agency's logo
- content supplied by third parties.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the [Creative Commons – external site](#) website, as is the [full legal code – external site](#) for the CC BY 4.0 license.



#### **Attribution**

Material obtained from this report is to be attributed to this agency as: © Commonwealth of Australia 2022.

#### **Third party copyright**

Wherever a third party holds copyright in material presented in this report, the copyright remains with that party. Their permission may be required to use the material.

This agency has made all reasonable efforts to:

- clearly label material where the copyright is owned by a third party
- ensure that the copyright owner has consented to this material being presented in this report.

#### **Using the Commonwealth Coat of Arms**

The terms of use for the Coat of Arms are available from the [Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet – external site website](#).

#### **Disclaimer**

The material in this guide is of a general nature and should not be regarded as legal advice or relied on for assistance in any particular circumstances or emergency situation. In any important matter, you should seek appropriate independent professional advice in relation to your own circumstances.

The Commonwealth accepts no responsibility or liability for any damage, loss or expense incurred as a result of the reliance on information contained in this guide.

This guide does not indicate the Commonwealth's commitment to a particular course of action. Additionally, any third-party views or recommendations included in this guide do not reflect the views of the Commonwealth, or indicate its commitment to a particular course of action.

#### **Links to external websites**

This guide contains links to websites that are external to the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency's website. The Agency takes reasonable care in linking websites but has no direct control over the content of the linked sites, or the changes that may occur to the content of those sites. It is the responsibility of the user to make their own decisions about the accuracy, currency, reliability and correctness of information contained in linked external websites.

Links to external websites do not constitute an endorsement or a recommendation of any material on those sites or of any third party products or services offered by, from or through those sites. Users of links provided in these guidelines are responsible for being aware of which organisation is hosting the website they visit.

# Who is this guide for?

**This guide is for the local government sector, specifically council workers who have a role in preventing and addressing illegal asbestos disposal.**

**This includes people working in roles that more broadly deal with hazardous materials and illegally dumped waste, asbestos safety management as well as environmental and community health and safety.**

**Councils are a trusted source of information for the community they service and have an important role to play in eliminating or minimising the risks caused by illegal asbestos disposal, as one of the first places the community will turn to for help.**

**The focus of this guide is largely to reduce illegal disposal of asbestos waste from households, but the principles and actions can also apply to illegal asbestos disposal from the commercial sector.**



# What is this guide about?

**Illegally disposed asbestos is a risk to public health and the environment. This guide has been developed to assist councils manage and control the risks that arise from illegal asbestos disposal in a complex regulatory environment where work health and safety, public health, environment protection, as well as planning and development laws apply.**

The World Health Organisation says there is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos. No threshold has been identified below which cancer will not occur. The risk of developing an asbestos-related disease increases with more exposures.

This guide provides examples of practical actions councils can take to prevent illegal asbestos disposal, based on best practice examples of what councils are already doing. It brings together the experiences of individual councils, and regional collaborations between councils, across Australia.

There are actions that all councils should take, no matter how small or limited in resources, to prevent illegal asbestos disposal. Actions will vary from council to council depending on a range of factors, such as geography, the extent of the asbestos legacy, the density of the population, and the socio-demographics of an area.

Every action taken at a local level is a positive step in ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable the health and safety of their workers and the community, whether through awareness and training, or the effective enforcement of laws.

# Strategies to prevent illegal asbestos disposal can be:

**1**

Incorporated into the broader asbestos management strategy

**2**

Incorporated into the broader illegal dumping strategy

**3**

Contained in a dedicated illegal asbestos disposal strategy



# Why has this guide been developed?

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

71%

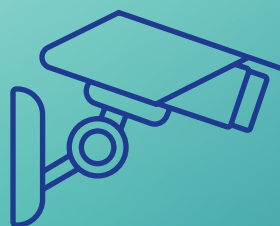
consider illegal asbestos disposal to be a significant issue for their council

20%

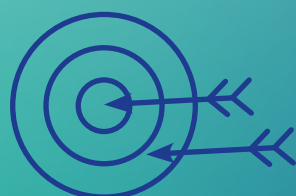
do not currently report having active illegal asbestos disposal-related interventions



Actions councils are taking to combat illegal asbestos disposal do not always align with what they most commonly perceive as effective (namely, awareness and education activities)



Current actions are focused on surveillance, enforcement and clean up, leaving a missed opportunity to intervene earlier to prevent illegal asbestos disposal happening in the first place



Councils report the greatest success where actions target multiple parts of the problem

<sup>1</sup> See the separate 'Supporting information' document for a detailed description of the research method and findings.

# Barriers to safe and lawful asbestos disposal

**People do not always act safely and lawfully when dealing with asbestos-containing materials (ACMs), due to powerful barriers that get in the way.**

Taking action to overcome these barriers is part of council's duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, worker and community health and safety.

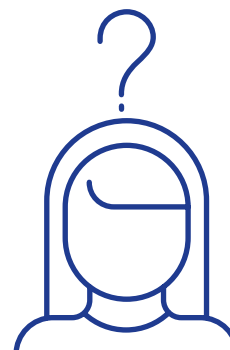
**Applying behavioural frameworks helps to identify and understand these barriers:<sup>2</sup>**

---

## Can I do it?

**Capability** barriers exist when people do not have the awareness, knowledge and skills to act safely and lawfully

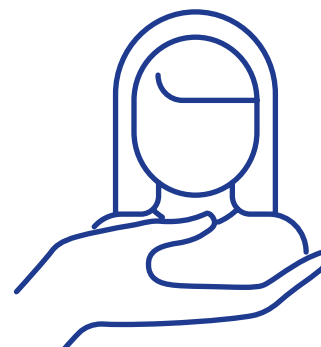
- Knowledge about asbestos
- Awareness of prevalence, location and risks
- Awareness of handling and disposal requirements
- Practical skills to identify and safely deal with ACMs



## Am I supported to do it?

**Opportunity** barriers exist when the physical and social context doesn't support people to act safely and lawfully

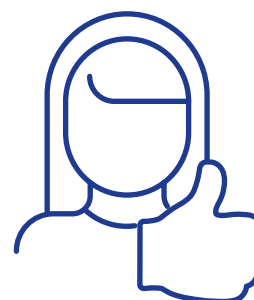
- Removal and disposal costs
- Lack of opportunities to safely and quickly dispose of ACMs (including small amounts)
- Lack of social, workplace and media focus on asbestos risks and safety
- Lack of need to prove safe and lawful disposal



## Do I want to do it?

**Motivation** barriers exist when people are not consciously or unconsciously propelled to act safely and lawfully

- Overconfidence in knowledge and capabilities when it comes to ACMs
- Mistaken or incorrect attitudes and beliefs about risks, requirements and likelihood of being caught illegally disposing ACMs



---

<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)



## Consider that:

- Barriers combine to lead to unsafe behaviour. 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.

---

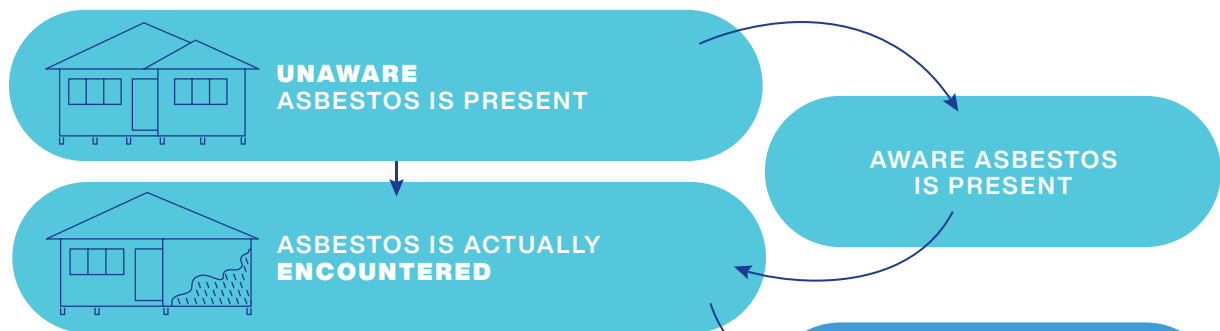
**Taking a multifaceted approach to intervention, and being consistent and persistent in implementing actions, can help to gain real traction on illegal asbestos disposal over time**



# Understanding the asbestos waste journey

This diagram maps how asbestos travels through our communities, showing how and where risks can occur. It divides the journey into three zones:

## AWARENESS RISK ZONE



## REMOVAL RISK ZONE



## DISPOSAL RISK ZONE



---

**What happens upstream  
(early on) in the journey  
has a downstream impact  
on how ACMs are disposed  
of, including whether or not  
they are illegally disposed**

Taking action in the

# Asbestos Awareness Zone



**Risk of exposure to asbestos fibres if ACMs are accidentally disturbed. Absence of planning in this zone leads to significant risks in later zones.**

The awareness zone starts prior to someone knowing that they will encounter ACMs, and ends when it is actually encountered.

There is a risk of exposure to asbestos fibres in this zone when ACMs are accidentally disturbed. A lack of consideration of and planning for asbestos also creates sizeable downstream risks, with ACMs less likely to be handled, removed and disposed of safely in later zones.

## Benefits of taking action in the awareness zone

- People are less likely to accidentally disturb ACMs and be exposed to asbestos fibres.
- By encouraging the community to consider, plan for and identify the presence of ACMs, the decisions they make are more likely to result in safe and lawful behaviour in later zones.
- Those further along the asbestos waste journey (such as council rangers, waste collection and waste site workers) whose safety is put at risk due to poor decisions by members of the community also benefit.
- Social norms are changed, and a social expectation to behave safely and lawfully with ACMs is fostered.



## Considerations when designing an intervention for the Awareness Zone

### 1. Who should we target?

Consider the characteristics of your local community and who is likely to disturb ACMs, is least aware of the likelihood of doing so, or has the poorest understanding of what actions to take if they do encounter ACMs.

Important groups to target are homeowners, tradespeople, designers, architects and builders, to ensure asbestos removal and disposal costs are considered upfront or factored in as a contingency.

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

The communications approach will be dictated by the characteristics of your community and the audience you target. Demographic information for your local government area is available through [ABS QuickStats](#).

Asbestos risk communication guidelines are available from ASEA. These guidelines are for anyone who has to communicate about asbestos risk with the public, and include principles for producing clear, consistent and complementary communication messages.

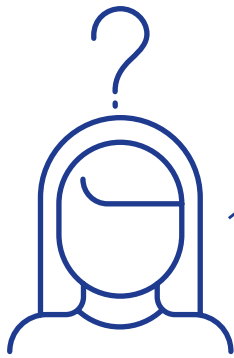
### 3. Are there existing materials we can use?

Communication materials need not be developed from scratch. You can use information and materials developed by relevant state/territory or national bodies by providing links to relevant webpages on council's website. Communication efforts are most effective when they coincide with other campaigns occurring at the local or 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 2022 Stakeholder Campaign Pack](#).

### 4. Be mindful of possible unintended consequences

The increased use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by the community in recent years has revealed that this can result in improper application, such as incorrectly worn face masks. This signals the need for any asbestos action that might require the use of PPE by members of the public to focus on correct usage by highlighting all relevant safety instructions.

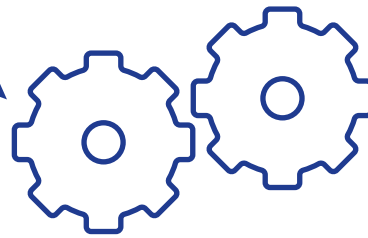
## Actions to overcome barriers



### EXPAND CAPABILITY

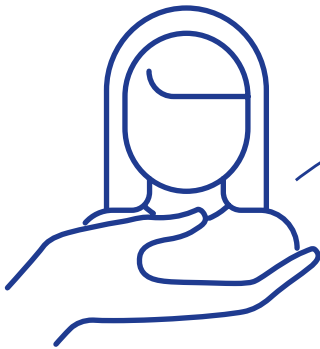
Boost community understanding of:

- what asbestos is
- asbestos health risks
- how common ACMs are in residential housing
- places in the home where ACMs may be present
- the role of licensed asbestos assessors and removalists
- risks associated with 'free fill' that could contain asbestos



### ACTIONS

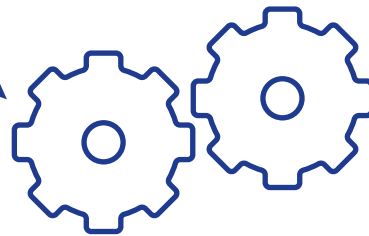
- Adding a link on council website to the relevant asbestos website for your state or territory
- Building on existing community relationships through residential direct mail/electronic direct mail/inserts (e.g. with rates notice)
- Harnessing existing neighbourhood champions in local culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- Providing asbestos-related online content incorporating key awareness messages and changing website architecture to make information easier to find
- Community awareness campaigns through local media (paid and unpaid) and social media
- Information included in council newsletters
- In-person community information drives at locations relevant to the target audience (e.g. Bunnings)
- Community workshops/information sessions in suburbs with high proportion of pre-1990 homes
- Training for council workers in asbestos awareness
- Council workers licensed as asbestos assessors



### INCREASE OPPORTUNITY

Support the right action and set expectations:

- make it easier for members of the community to consider and plan for ACMs in renovation, demolition, building and landscaping works
- provide information that directs people to professionals who can assist with identifying asbestos



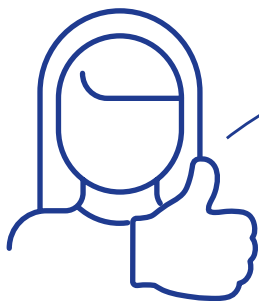
### ACTIONS

- Free asbestos inspections for residents booked through council, provided in partnership with a contractor
- Free or low-cost Household Asbestos Test Sample Kits (being mindful of the need to promote safety to prevent exposure<sup>3</sup>)
- Revising demolition and development approvals processes for homes built before 1990 to include asbestos information and requirement to check for ACMs
- Providing asbestos awareness information for new residents through real estate agents or with transfer of rates – relevant factsheets are available from ASEA<sup>4</sup>: [Disclosure of asbestos in residential property – information for buyers and sellers](#) and [Arranging a residential asbestos assessment](#)
- Provide information on arranging for an asbestos assessment and link to relevant state website

<sup>3</sup> Taking of samples needs to be in line with the national code

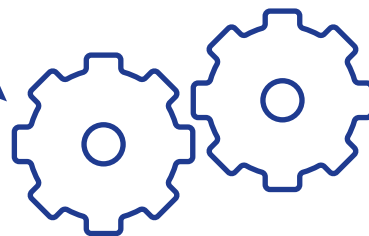
<sup>4</sup> ASEA resources can be freely used and adapted - there are no copyright issues or need for attribution



**BUILD MOTIVATION**

Reduce enticements and excuses:

- increase the focus on asbestos safety in the local community
- challenge beliefs that hinder consideration, planning and identification of asbestos

**ACTIONS**

- Persistent communications with key messages:
  - ‘many homes built before 1990 contain asbestos’
  - ‘you cannot tell if a material contains asbestos just by looking at it’
  - ‘asbestos can be anywhere inside or outside the home’
  - ‘think twice about asbestos when planning home renovation work’
  - ‘it is best to leave asbestos removal and disposal to an asbestos professional’
  - ‘asbestos waste must be disposed of at a site that is licensed to accept it’

# Tips for website communications

## 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

Minimise the number of clicks required to find asbestos-related information, and aim for asbestos to come up in web searches by locals through search engine optimisation

## Make it current

Ensure any weblinks to external bodies or resources are up-to-date and unbroken

## Make it relevant

Link prominently to your state or territory's asbestos website e.g. [www.asbestos.nsw.gov.au](http://www.asbestos.nsw.gov.au)

## 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.

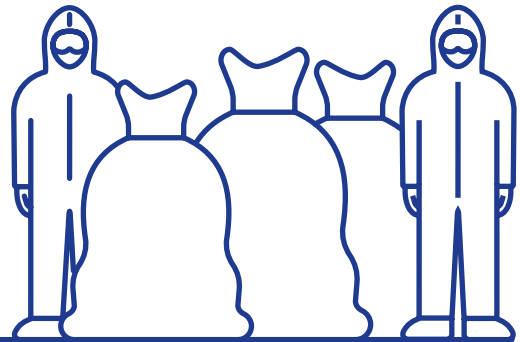
Promoted most heavily during National Asbestos Awareness Week, the council offers a free household asbestos inspection service, where it arranges for a professional contractor to attend a resident's property for a 45-minute verbal consultation (to minimise costs, written reports are not provided).

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 ACMs that could be on their property. These sessions are well attended.



Taking action in the

# Asbestos Removal Zone



## High risk of exposure to asbestos fibres as ACMs are removed and prepared for disposal.

The asbestos removal zone starts when preparation is being made for removal, and ends when asbestos waste is being prepared for transport for disposal.

If decisions and actions in this zone are not safe and lawful, the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres is high for workers and the community. Crucially, decisions and actions in this zone have downstream impacts on how ACMs are transported and where they ultimately end up.

### Benefits of taking action in the removal zone

- People are less likely to handle ACMs unsafely and expose themselves or others to asbestos fibres.
- Helps protect workers who encounter ACMs downstream in transportation and disposal.
- Enhances council reputation as community members have an expectation that council will provide information on waste services, and anticipate dealing with council when lodging development applications.

## Considerations when designing an intervention for the Removal Zone

### 1. Who should we target?

Owners or occupiers of properties where ACMs may need to be removed are the most obvious targets.

Professionals working in construction, demolition or trades who may encounter ACMs as part of their work. 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 advice and information on asbestos to their clients, and engage asbestos professionals where required.

### 2. How can we be clear and consistent in our messaging across different media channels?

Community members can struggle to understand rules about asbestos removal, preparing it for disposal and when an asbestos professional is required. Residents are likely to seek answers to the following questions:

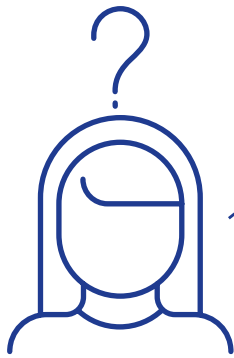
- Who is responsible for asbestos waste at different points in the waste journey?
- What do the laws say about asbestos removal in different circumstances?
- What are the different types of professionals who work with asbestos?
- What can asbestos removal by a licensed professional typically cost?

Council websites are a logical place for clear and comprehensive information on these topics. Helping residents in this way can protect against illegal asbestos 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 complex. 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).

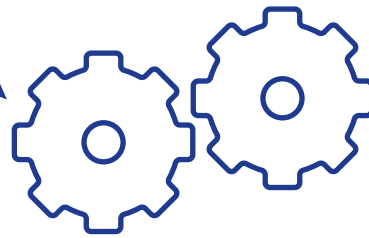
## Actions to overcome barriers



### EXPAND CAPABILITY

Boost community understanding of:

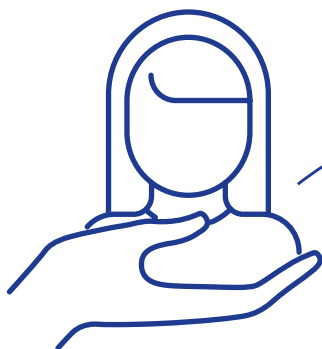
- the requirements for safe and lawful removal of ACMs, including when professional removalists are needed
- the requirements regarding the preparation of ACMs for disposal
- the awareness of the need to obtain tip/waste site receipts for ACMs removed from one's property



### ACTIONS

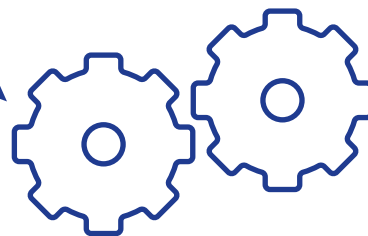
- Providing asbestos-related content incorporating key messages about removal and handling, and changing website architecture to make information easier to find
- Community awareness campaigns through local media and social media
- Residential mail outs/inserts on the safe and lawful removal, as well as preparation for disposal, of ACMs
- Harnessing existing neighbourhood champions in local CALD communities
- Asbestos assessment training and licenses for council workers
- Community information and training on safely and lawfully preparing small amounts of asbestos waste for disposal



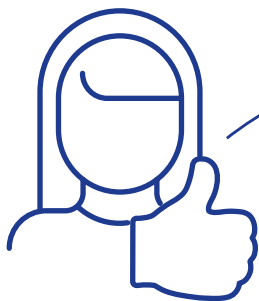
**INCREASE OPPORTUNITY**

Support the right action and set expectations:

- challenge the lax safety culture of some building professionals and empower the community to identify poor behaviour and hold contractors to account
- increase council requirements to demonstrate that asbestos has been professionally removed and disposed of

**ACTIONS**

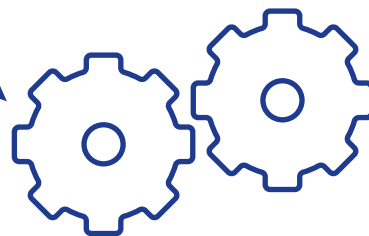
- Campaigns encouraging residents to report any unsafe removal/demolition practices they witness
- Increasing council capacity to respond to reports of unsafe removal/demolition practices
- Including or strengthening requirements/reminders/checks for licensed asbestos removal and clearance certificates in relevant development applications



### BUILD MOTIVATION

Reduce enticements and excuses:

- challenge beliefs that it is safe and easy to remove ACMs oneself
- challenge beliefs that licensed asbestos removal is expensive and/or difficult and time-consuming to obtain



### ACTIONS

- Prominent communication with key messages:
  - ‘The World Health Organisation (WHO) says there is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos’
  - highlighting benefits of ACMs being treated/managed by licensed professionals taking correct precautions
  - discouraging removal of ACMs by non-licensed people
  - providing guidance on how to find and engage licensed removalists
  - mentioning costs of asbestos removal may not be as much as expected/are worth it for peace of mind

## CASE STUDY

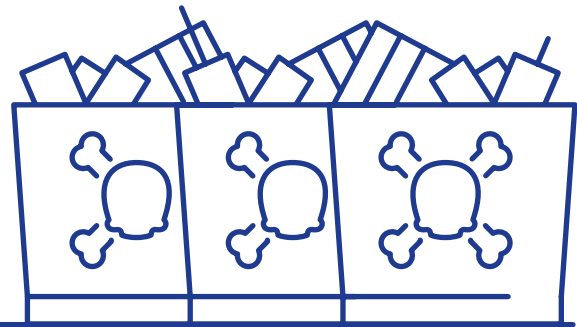
# Collection of ACMs from residential properties

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 safely and lawfully remove legacy ACMs from their properties.

Interested residents were required to complete a pre-qualifying online survey and were subsequently followed-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.

Taking action in the

# Asbestos Disposal Zone



---

**High risk of exposure to asbestos fibres for workers cleaning up illegally disposed ACMs, or receiving poorly handled and packaged ACMs**

---

The disposal zone starts at the transportation and disposal of asbestos waste, including illegal practices such as dumping ACMs in bushland or stockpiling at a depot not licensed to hold asbestos, and ends with the legal disposal of waste at a licensed facility.

The persons at risk of exposure to asbestos fibres in this zone can be far removed from those who originally created the waste. There is high risk of exposure to asbestos fibres for anyone encountering poorly handled and prepared ACMs (e.g. not double wrapped and sealed), and illegally disposed asbestos waste, including council workers.



## Benefits of taking action 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.
- Reduces the cost of clean-up and remediation.
- Helps keep safe those who work in this zone, such as skip bin providers, transporters, demolition and waste workers, rangers, enforcement officers, and waste and resource recovery workers, 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.

## Considerations when designing an intervention for the Disposal Zone

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

There may be opportunities to communicate about safe and lawful asbestos disposal during regular 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 household bins advising what cannot go in
- branded waste collection trucks with illegal asbestos disposal messaging
- using existing cameras on waste trucks to detect illegal asbestos disposal along waste collection routes.

### 2. Is our issue with illegal asbestos disposal, or asbestos mixed in with other waste?

For some councils, illegal asbestos disposal is a major problem. For others, the bigger problem is ACMs hidden in household bins or concealed in material taken to waste sites. Different approaches are required for each problem.

Since ACMs 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 household bins, or taken to a waste site.

### 3. How can we address the challenge of small amounts of ACMs?

Consider how your council might assist its community to dispose of small amounts of ACMs 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 illegally disposing of small amounts of ACMs in household waste and recycling bins (causing issues for waste workers and waste sites along the journey), under houses or in gardens.

### 4. How can we use engineering controls or technological interventions effectively?

Site-based actions that prevent or discourage further illegal asbestos disposal at identified dumping 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 control 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 disposal 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 illegal disposal enforcement action can pay for itself, and even earn additional income for council [see *Case Study entitled 'Investing in compliance and enforcement'*] through the imposing of fines. Councils use a range of workers to enforce compliance apart from designated waste investigators, including rangers, environmental health officers and waste facility workers.

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

Consider the following to avoid unintended negative consequences that can arise from disposal-focused interventions:

- To prevent the disposal simply shifting elsewhere, supplement any actions that prevent disposal 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 ACMs, to prevent risks of exposure to residents and waste workers.
- A focus on reducing or eliminating the costs of asbestos disposal will not necessarily stop illegal disposal unless supplemented with other actions.

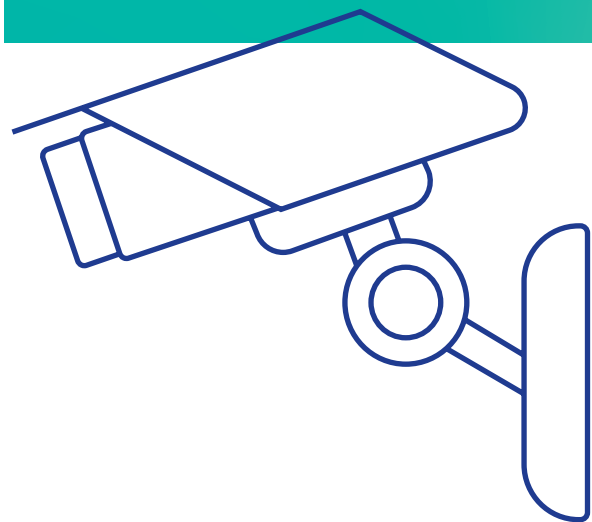
# Surveillance camera Dos and Don'ts

## 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 or intermittently activated
- Allocate a dedicated worker with oversight of the surveillance program

## DON'T

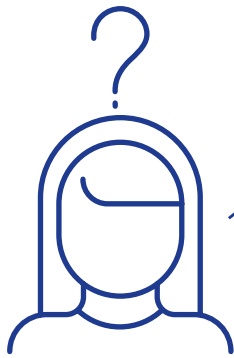
- Rely on surveillance cameras alone as an intervention to prevent illegal disposal. Surveillance has been found to be more effective when coupled with signage and education
- Forget there are legal responsibilities<sup>5</sup> relating to recording images and their use. Learn about and follow required processes/obtain permissions to set up and use footage legally



<sup>5</sup> Check within your state or territory – requirements may differ between jurisdictions



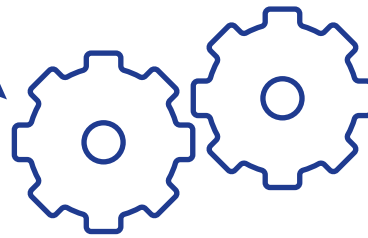
## Actions to overcome barriers



### EXPAND CAPABILITY

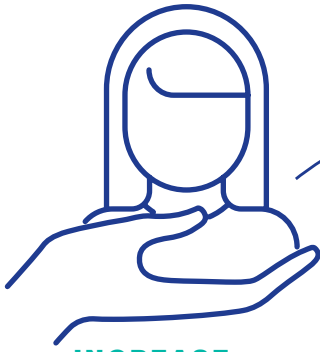
Boost community understanding of:

- how to package asbestos waste
- where to dispose of asbestos waste
- transportation requirements for asbestos waste
- illegal asbestos disposal in the local area and how to report it
- consequences of illegal asbestos disposal (in terms of safety, environmental impact, visual amenity, penalties)
- risks posed by small amounts of asbestos and the dangers of hidden disposal in household and skip bins
- property owners' legal responsibility for any waste dumped on their property
- increase worker capability to safely and swiftly deal with illegally disposed asbestos waste.



### ACTIONS

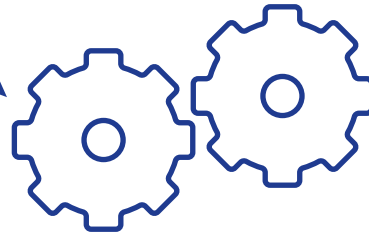
- Asbestos-related content incorporating key messages about disposal published and website architecture changed to make information easier to find
- Community awareness campaigns through local media and social media
- Residential mail outs/inserts
- Letterbox flyers to advise residents of illegal asbestos disposal incidents and locations.
- Harnessing existing neighbourhood champions in local CALD communities
- Signage at hotspots
- Surveillance skills training, ACMs detection training and dealing with difficult customers training for council workers likely to encounter illegally disposed asbestos waste (such as rangers and waste workers) or those who are trying to dispose of it improperly.



### INCREASE OPPORTUNITY

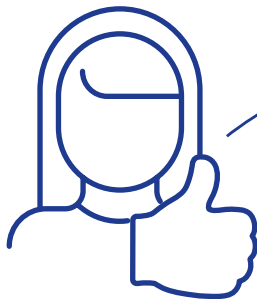
Support the right action and set expectations:

- make waste sites/ disposal solutions more accessible by reducing cost and distance barriers
- make access to dumping hotspots more difficult
- decrease the social acceptability of illegal disposal of asbestos waste
- increase the requirements set by council to dispose of ACMs safely and lawfully
- equip council workers with fit-for-purpose equipment to clean up, transport and dispose of illegally disposed asbestos
- make it easier for workers to detect/ identify illegally disposed of asbestos waste



### ACTIONS

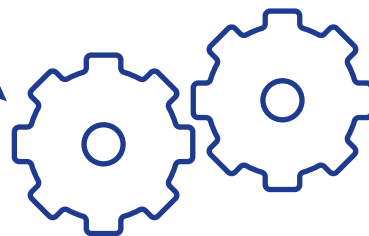
- Providing online information on nearest asbestos waste facility – insert link on website to ASEA asbestos facilities [search tool](#) (and ensure information about facilities is kept updated)
- Free or subsidised/reduced cost asbestos waste disposal
- Installing physical barriers to prevent or control access to illegal disposal hotspots and unmanned waste sites (e.g. bollards, fencing, swipe card access)
- Services to collect/allow drop-off of small amounts of appropriately prepared residential asbestos waste
- Regional partnerships to increase options for community asbestos waste disposal
- Drawing local attention to illegal disposal (e.g. putting up signs about illegally dumped material at hotspots, media releases promoting local community tip-offs/ reports)
- Building community pride programs, e.g. 'Adopt-a-Spot'
- Requiring offenders to pay the costs of cleaning up illegally disposed material
- Including requirements to prove safe and lawful disposal of ACMs in all council-issued demolition permits
- Fit-for-purpose trucks to specifically collect illegally disposed waste and transfer asbestos waste between sites
- Investing in asbestos detection technology for council rangers and waste sites
- In town planning, considering how to minimise the unintended creation of illegal disposal sites (e.g. minimising alley-ways and back lanes, dead-end roads leading to bushland)



### BUILD MOTIVATION

Reduce enticements and excuses:

- increase the perceived risk of getting caught
- reduce perceived rewards of illegal disposal
- reduce unconscious cues that illegal disposal is okay
- challenge unsupportive attitudes and beliefs



### ACTIONS

- Publicising waste disposal options, and ensure options and costs are reasonable
- Re-framing or changing perceptions of waste facilities, particularly transfer stations, away from “dumps” or “tips”
- Ongoing surveillance (e.g. patrols, mobile and fixed cameras, cameras attached to waste collection vehicles, community reporting drives)
- Increasing compliance and enforcement activities
- Raising awareness of penalties for non-compliance and publicising successful enforcement of laws
- Communicating penalties/increased penalties
- Hotspot identification, clean up, landscaping, lighting and beautification

## 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 ACMs. The aim has been to prevent illegal asbestos disposal of ageing materials removed by residents from their properties. A sustainable intervention for council and a popular service 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 asbestos disposal data which is held by member councils), it has been observed that volumes of ACMs being dropped off are now beginning to decrease, presumably as ACMs are successfully removed from the local built environment.

---

## CASE STUDY

# Investing in compliance and enforcement

This metropolitan council identified that it had a big issue with illegal asbestos disposal. 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 required to pay for clean-up costs.





# Regional, rural and remote areas

Councils in regional, rural and remote areas can face different challenges than their metropolitan or outer metropolitan counterparts, for example:

- There may be a relatively high proportion of housing containing fibro asbestos sheeting and other ACMs.
- The area may have a relatively high proportion of financially disadvantaged residents unable to afford professional asbestos removal or even lawful disposal.
- There may be long travel times to licensed waste facilities and the facilities may be staffed only on certain times or days or have limited hours of opening.
- It may be difficult to maintain surveillance and enforcement activities, over vast areas.
- There may be fewer workers overall and limited workers dedicated to the issue of asbestos.
- There may be less access to asbestos-related training and licensed asbestos assessors and removalists.
- Councils close to state or territory borders may experience non-local waste being disposed cross-border, therefore stretching resources.
- It may be difficult to produce adequate data on the extent of the existing problem to secure funding.



## CASE STUDY

# Boosting awareness and skills in a rural area

This regional/rural council identified that local housing stock still contained large volumes of ACMs and that it could usefully play a role in increasing awareness 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 workers created a face-to-face opportunity to discuss working safely with ACMs.

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 ACMs can be found, and how to deal with them 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 with ACMs risk asbestos becoming friable.
- Land may not have been appropriately remediated after demolition of asbestos-containing structures, leading to contamination of soil or waterways.
- 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.
- Councils may have no authority in communities so any involvement in asbestos clean-up, involving risk and costs, relies on good relations between land councils and local government.
- Need to draw on relevant state, territory or national policies, such as state or national Indigenous policies e.g. NSW OCHRE (Opportunity Choice Healing Responsibility Empowerment), Aboriginal procurement policy, Closing the Gap.
- Need to 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 legacy asbestos issues 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.



# Principles for developing actions

**1. Small actions can have a big impact**

Any action taken to reduce illegal asbestos disposal can produce positive outcomes. Doing nothing is not an option.

**2. Increase the local focus on asbestos**

Raising the profile of asbestos safety management will have broader benefits. Currently this issue competes with other more immediate risks.

**3. Build into business-as-usual**

In the community's mind, councils are well-placed and expected to be a source of knowledge, guidance and solutions on hazardous waste including asbestos, and the management of illegal disposal.

**4. Be strategic**

Start with a cohesive strategy and clear objectives, so all actions have purpose and are focused on reducing illegal asbestos disposal.

**5. Address known barriers to behaviour**

Make sure actions target the actual things getting in the way of safe and lawful asbestos disposal behaviour.

**6. Consider all zones of the asbestos waste journey**

Though clean-up and enforcement efforts are important, also invest in actions that raise awareness and support seeking professional help for proper handling and removal of ACMs, to prevent illegal disposal from occurring downstream.

**7. Dedicate human resources to the issue**

Allocate responsibility and oversight for actions that address illegal asbestos disposal, to ensure the issue remains a priority and activities build on learnings over time. Consider harnessing the experience and perspectives of a multidisciplinary team.

**8. Consult and share**

Garner support from all levels, including senior management and elected officials, and promote a culture of knowledge sharing about illegal asbestos disposal by communicating about it and learning with others, internally and externally.

**9. Be alert to unintended consequences**

Consider possible unintended risks and consequences of actions that may shift illegal asbestos disposal problems elsewhere, such as confusing instructions leading to unsafe waste preparation, or physical barriers diverting dumping elsewhere.

**10. Be consistent and persistent**

Simple and consistent approaches and messaging minimise confusion or ambiguity that can drive illegal asbestos disposal behaviour. Persisting with strategies will build momentum and increase the impact of actions.

# 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 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 way to share knowledge. It has been developed 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 workers and the community are kept safe from illegal asbestos disposal. Thank you to all who contributed.



# Collaboration

**This guide is intended to help you consider new ideas and explore opportunities that have worked elsewhere, and is not the last or only word. We aim to refine, update, and further develop the guide as innovation, new actions and best practice examples arise.**

**If you have any comments or contributions to this guide, please email**

**[ASEA-Engage@asbestosafety.gov.au](mailto:ASEA-Engage@asbestosafety.gov.au)**



**Australian Government**

---

**Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency**