



Australian Government

Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Council

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Communique

Meeting 4 – 31 July 2024

The [Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Council](#) (the Council) held its fourth meeting on 31 July 2024 on the traditional Country of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri country (Canberra). Council members welcomed the appointment of incoming Council members, Jennifer Low (member representing the interests of employers in Australia) and Zachary Smith (member representing the interests of workers in Australia).

Council members considered the outcomes of a review of its committee structure following the changes made to its functions to include silica. Members agreed to establish an Asbestos Advisory Committee and Silica Advisory Committee and tasked the agency to develop draft terms of reference, committee workplans and proposed membership for review by the Council.

Council members noted the former Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon Tony Burke, MP sent letters to his state and territory counterparts, seeking their governments' agreement to implement the third phase Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024-2030 (ANSP) and inaugural Silica National Strategic Plan 2024-2030. Each plan must be endorsed by at least 6 of the 9 Australian governments to be considered an agreed national plan.

Priority 2 of the ANSP includes an action for governments to develop incentives to encourage the safe removal of asbestos-containing materials from residential and commercial properties, including housing of Indigenous Australians. Members noted the agency's extensive research of Australian and international incentive programs and considered a draft report that outlines five main types of government-supported incentives, including examples, risks and mitigations.

Council members also discussed additional research that has commenced to investigate homeowners' willingness to pay for asbestos remediation, which aims to inform the design of government incentives. Council members noted the agency will provide the draft report to jurisdictional coordinating committees for further comment and input.

The agency reported on a successful training program developed for health professionals in South-East Asia on how to diagnose and treat asbestos-related diseases (ARDs), especially mesothelioma. The program was delivered in partnership with the Asbestos and Dust Diseases Research Institute (ADDRI) and Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA. In May 2024, a delegation from the agency, ADDRI and APHEDA travelled to Laos and Vietnam to deliver the training, which focused on expertise required in pathology, radiology and oncology. Information on the incidence of ARDs in each country was also presented, highlighting that immediate action is needed to stop using asbestos to avoid the same trajectory in ARDs that Australia is experiencing. The agency continues to support Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA in its campaign to ban asbestos manufacture and use in South-East Asia.

Council members congratulated the agency on the very successful results of the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign for 2023-24.

The next Council meeting will be held in Canberra on 20 November 2024.