

Welcome to the first ASEA monthly newsletter

Issue 1, Spring 2015

Welcome to this new monthly newsletter service issued by the agency.

We hope to keep you well informed on the projects the agency is working on and the implementation of the national strategic plan.

We also hope to reach out to all stakeholders, organisations and groups

involved in the asbestos space through this newsletter.

Please feel free to contact the agency with information or stories that you'd like to share with others.

Stay tuned for more newsletters in the future.

Peter Tighe, CEO



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International Conference

22-24 November, 2015 □ Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre

International Conference on
**ASBESTOS AWARENESS
AND MANAGEMENT 2015**
Towards an asbestos-free Australia
22-24 November 2015
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre



The International Conference on Asbestos Awareness and Management is on again as part of the National Asbestos Awareness Week in November.

After last year's success in Melbourne, the conference will be held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on Brisbane's Southbank.

With Matt Peacock again as facilitator, the event is bringing together well renowned local and international experts in asbestos management, health,

advocacy and governance to look at what is best practice in managing the dangers of asbestos in our community and abroad. The conference will feature a focus on how Australia can play an influential role in reducing the reliance on asbestos in South East Asia.

International guest speakers include Chair of the Health and Safety Executive United Kingdom, Judith Hackitt and Environmental Consultant and long time asbestos activist from the US, Barry Castleman and more.

Early bird registration remains open until 2nd September - visit the [agency website](#) for more details.



Community Events and awareness opportunities

If your organisation has an event you would like the agency to publicise, send the details through to the [events email address](#)



National Strategic Plan launched by Minister

The revised National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2014-2018 was launched by the Minister for Employment, Senator the Hon Eric Abetz on Friday 28 August 2015 at a meeting of State and Territory Ministers.

The Minister said that this is the first time a plan of its type has been endorsed by state, territory and commonwealth governments.

“As one of the biggest users of asbestos in the world until the mid-1980s, the legacy of this substance in Australia is tragic, with consequences over the coming decades still to come.”

Minister Abetz

Preventing the risk of asbestos exposure is important to all Australians.

While the states and territories have taken steps to minimise exposure, predominantly in the workplace, this is the first time a national approach to asbestos eradication, handling and awareness is being pursued.

The plan is a high level forward looking document with six headline goals of:

- Awareness
- Best practice
- Identification
- Removal
- Research
- International leadership.

This plan is part of a phased strategy for asbestos management and awareness that will encompass three stages.



Phase one of 2014-2018 continues to support the existing risk management of asbestos and complement this by identifying evidence and information to reduce risks.

Phase two will apply the knowledge and information developed in the first phase to inform goals that can be achieved.

By phase three, a practical approach will be identified to address the ongoing risks posed by the remaining ACM in the built environment, and to support the removal of all remaining asbestos in poor condition or likely to pose a risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

The plan is available at on the [agency website](#) or a hard copy can be ordered by email at enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au

ASEA Corporate Plan 2015-2016 released

The agency was pleased to release its first Corporate Plan 2015-16 on Monday, 31 August 2015.

This corporate plan is designed to outline the operation of the agency and how its work supports the [National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness](#), setting out how the work will be done and how performance will be measured over the next four years.

The agency will work in partnership with experts in asbestos, industry and employer groups, unions, governments at all levels, researchers, medical experts and health professionals, community groups, and victims of asbestos-related diseases.

In working with these stockholders, the

agency will coordinate collaboration and consultation to:

- build evidence to inform practical approaches to asbestos management and awareness
- raise awareness about the risks posed by asbestos in the built environment
- contribute to the coordination of asbestos issues across all levels of government in Australia to reduce the risks of asbestos exposure
- monitor and track progress towards eliminating asbestos related diseases in Australia
- Identify and address future challenges posed by asbestos containing material in the built environment.





Baseline awareness survey shows work to be done

A large-scale national research project commissioned by the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency revealed there is considerable work to be done to raise the levels of awareness about the dangers of asbestos and how to manage it safely.

The agency engaged Colmar Brunton to conduct the survey of 2362 tradespeople, DIY renovators, real estate

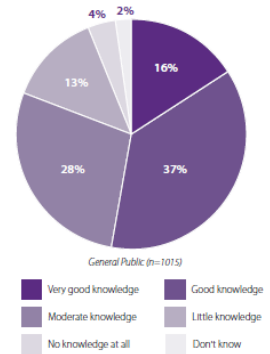
agents, landlords and members of the public to uncover their awareness, attitudes and behaviours towards asbestos.

The survey found only moderate community understanding exists of how prevalent asbestos is in the built environment, with few people confident in their ability to identify asbestos containing materials or situations that could put

them at risk of exposure.

The survey also found that while most understand the danger, few have the practical skills to identify asbestos products and handle them safely. The [results of this survey](#) were released to the public at the first International Conference on Asbestos Awareness and Management in Melbourne on Monday, 17 November

2014 and will be used to develop targeted strategies to increase awareness about the dangers of asbestos.



Managing importation of asbestos into Australia

Asbestos is still widely used in some countries. Despite being a prohibited import in Australia, goods containing asbestos are still being detected as the Australian border.

Also, with the rapid expansion of online shopping, Australia has seen an increase in goods containing asbestos materials arriving in Australia

The Great Wall and Cherry vehicle issue in 2012 was a clear example of

The agency has worked closely with the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities (HWSA) to develop a [fact sheet](#) to assist businesses and importers to be more vigilant about the goods they intend to import into the country.

The agency, through HWSA, has also developed a [Rapid Response Protocol](#) that will

come into play if goods containing asbestos are detected at a border inspection point.

The Protocol will ensure that pertinent information is shared by all government agencies with an interest in a particular incident and enable a nationally uniform compliance and enforcement approach to be undertaken in response to future incidents.



Science vital in fight against asbestos-related diseases

National Science Week was a great opportunity for the agency to remind the community the pivotal role of science in the ongoing fight against asbestos-related disease.

Australia is in the midst of a "third wave" of exposure to asbestos – through the built environment and scientific

research is critical in identifying, managing and preventing exposure to the deadly substance.

Around one third of homes within Australia still contain asbestos, and despite being a prohibited import to Australia, widespread use in developing nations means goods containing asbestos

are still found at the Australian border.

In Australia any level of asbestos in a product is prohibited for import. Australian importers rely on testing by a National Association of Testing Authorities accredited laboratory or international equivalent.

Thorough, informed and ongoing scientific analysis is the only way to ensure policy around asbestos management is effective."

Peter Tighe, CEO



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About the agency

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (the agency) was established on 1 July 2013 to provide a national focus on asbestos issues which goes beyond workplace safety to encompass environmental and public health concerns.

The agency aims to ensure asbestos issues receive the attention and focus needed to drive change across all levels of government and reduce the risk of asbestos-related diseases.

The National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2014-18 is the first of its kind and coordinates a national approach to asbestos management, eradication, handling and awareness in Australia. The agency works with all levels of government and stakeholders to implement the goals of the plan.

The plan is available on the agency's website at asbestossafety.gov.au/national-strategic-plan

Mesothelioma rates still rising

Statistics released recently have shown that deaths caused by asbestos-related diseases and new diagnoses of mesothelioma continue to rise in Australia.

The 2014 Australian Mesothelioma Registry (AMR) report released on Monday 31 August 2015 shows that there were 607 deaths caused by mesothelioma and 641 new notifications of mesothelioma in 2014.

These figures are expected to rise though as new cases and deaths are detected and added to the figures when the 2015 report comes out next year.

Safe Work Australia released the report [Mesothelioma in Australia: Incidence \(1982 to 2013\) and Mortality \(1997 to 2012\)](#) on 22 May 2015 which showing that there was 638 deaths

from mesothelioma in 2012, or just over 12 deaths per week in that calendar year.

The report also stated that there were 584 new diagnosed cases of mesothelioma for the 2013 calendar year.

The AMR is a stand-alone database that contains information about people with mesothelioma. We monitor all new cases of mesothelioma diagnosed

from 1st July 2010 in Australia. In addition, [information about asbestos exposure](#) is collected from people with mesothelioma through the Postal Questionnaire and telephone interview.

The AMR is funded by Safe Work Australia and Comcare.

