



Australian Government

Asbestos and Silica Safety
and Eradication Agency

Operational Plan

2024–25

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CEO Message

Introducing Our Operational Plan

I am pleased to present the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency's (ASSEA) Operational Plan. This plan serves as the Agency's commitment for delivery of key actions for the 2024-25 operating year.

Over 4000 Australians are estimated to die annually from asbestos-related diseases, and an estimated 584,000 Australians are being exposed to respirable crystalline silica. These impacts and the opportunities to eradicate diseases, drive ASSEA's operations.

We operate on principles of best practice, efficiency, transparency, partnerships, and coordination. Our functional operating approach is designed to ensure that our actions are not only effective but also aligned with the highest standards of best practice and accountability.

The heart of our operational plan lies in collaboration. With the advice and guidance of the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Council (ASSEC) and sub-committees, the work we undertake is held up to the light, enabling critical thinking and reflection. Our Audit and Risk Committee ensure our strategic corporate risk and audit responsibilities are at the required standard, providing assurances that our performance goals are managed and achieved.

We recognise the critical role of our partnerships with jurisdictions, other government departments, industry bodies, unions, support groups, and experts in asbestos and silica. These collaborations enable us to navigate complexities, deliver actionable results, and drive real change.

Moreover, those with lived experiences provide invaluable insights into the devastating impacts of asbestos and respirable crystalline silica exposure.

Our organisation is recognised for a strong set of capabilities, driven by our dedicated people. We invest in ensuring they are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to address the challenges ahead. This commitment extends to fostering an innovative, healthy, and safe environment where new ideas can flourish, adding value to our initiatives.

Our values guide decisions and actions we take. We remain committed to looking toward the future. We should not restrict our thinking or rely solely on what the existing frameworks mandate, the technology that is now available, the groups who currently influence or the processes that support efficiency at this time.

By fostering a culture of curiosity, experimentation and fail-safe, we aim to not only meet but exceed our mandate.

Together, let us create the path toward a safer, healthier future. I encourage you to delve into the details of our operational plan, be inspired by our collective goals, and join us in our mission to eradicate the harm of asbestos and respirable crystalline silica exposure.

Sincerely,

Jodie Deakes

CEO

Asbestos and Silica Safety
and Eradication Agency

Compliance statement

I, as the accountable authority of the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency, present the Annual Operational Plan 2024-25, which covers the period 2024-28, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013. (Section 42(4) of the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency Act 2013 states that the annual operational plan is taken to be a corporate plan for the purposes of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.)

Jodie Deakes

CEO

Asbestos and Silica Safety
and Eradication Agency

Introduction

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency was first established in 2013 to oversee national actions to improve asbestos awareness and the effective and safe management, removal and disposal of asbestos.

On the 15 December 2023, the agency's functions were expanded to include silica through the [Amendment of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Act 2013](#). The agency's name was also changed to the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency (ASSEA).

Our Operational Plan 2024-2025 (Plan) has been prepared as required under section 42(4) of *Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Act 2013* (Act) and is taken to be the corporate plan for the purposes of subsection 35(1) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA). This Plan is provided to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations for approval prior to commencement of 1 July 2024.

This Plan provides clarity on our mandated functions and how collectively they align to our strategic intent to enable the prevention of exposure to asbestos fibres and respirable crystalline silica and ultimately elimination of related diseases.

Finally, this Plan provides detail on ASSEA's performance measures which meet the requirements of section 16EA of the PGPA Rule, noting the Agency performance results are reported in the annual performance statements.

Purpose

ASSEA was established in 2013 following the Asbestos Management Review (AMR) in 2012. We were established with a clear purpose to coordinate the implementation, monitoring and reporting against two national strategic plans (NSPs):

- the Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024-2030 which aims to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres in order to eliminate asbestos-related diseases in Australia, and
- the Silica National Strategic Plan 2024-2030 which aims to prevent exposure to respirable crystalline silica in Australian workplaces so we can eliminate silica-related diseases.

Our mandated functions are:¹

- to encourage, coordinate, monitor and report on the implementation of the NSPs
- to review, amend or replace, publish and promote the NSPs
- to provide advice to the Minister about asbestos safety, asbestos-related diseases, silica safety and silica-related diseases

¹ Federal Register of Legislation (2024), [Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency Act](#), Federal Register of Legislation website, accessed 31 May 2024.

- to collaborate with Commonwealth, state, territory, local and other governments, agencies or bodies (including international governments, agencies and bodies) regarding the NSPs
- to conduct, commission, monitor and promote research about asbestos safety, asbestos-related diseases, silica safety and silica-related diseases
- to raise awareness of asbestos safety, asbestos-related diseases, silica safety and silica-related diseases, including by developing and promoting materials on asbestos safety, asbestos-related diseases, silica safety and silica-related diseases
- to collect and analyse data required for measuring progress on preventing exposure to asbestos fibres, or respirable crystalline silica, and for informing evidence based policies and strategies, and
- to promote consistent messages, policies and practices in relation to asbestos safety, asbestos-related diseases, silica safety and silica-related diseases.

ASSEA is a non-corporate entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and therefore operates within all relevant APS legislative requirements, frameworks and directions.

In 2024-25, ASSEA will continue its approach of retaining and developing in-house core capabilities essential to delivering its functions in line with the APS Strategic Commissioning Framework² while partnering with external partners to ensure ongoing growth and transparency.

2 APSC (Australian Public Service Commission) (2024), [APS Strategic Commissioning Framework](#), APSC website, accessed 31 May 2024

ASSEA Operating Environment

Driving outcomes

Our outcomes and those agreed to within the National Strategic Plans, are driven by the need to shift the current state of asbestos and respirable crystalline silica harm, to a position of where exposure is prevented, where workers and our communities are not impacted by the devastating impacts of related disease.

ASBESTOS

An estimated **4,000** Australians die annually from asbestos-related diseases³



Approximately **6.4 million tonnes** of asbestos materials remain in our built environment⁴

6.4m

Asbestos is in one in three homes across Australia⁵



Increased asbestos removal from buildings can prevent up to **28,000** deaths by **2100**⁶



Time and cost to recover from a disaster increases significantly if asbestos is present⁷



Every dollar spent on increasing the rate of asbestos removal can return a positive net benefit to the Australian economy⁶



Asbestos materials are degrading, increasing the risk they pose⁷



128 countries still use asbestos, although worldwide consumption halved in the past decade, decreasing to **1.3 million tonnes** in 2022⁸



RESPIRABLE CRYSTALLINE SILICA (RCS)

A 2022 study estimated **584,000** Australian workers are exposed to RCS in 2016⁹



If uncontrolled, this exposure could result in up to **103,000** silicosis cases and **10,000** lung cancers⁹

103k

RCS particles are typically **100** times smaller than a grain of beach sand^{10,11}



Exposure to RCS can cause serious lung disease leading to permanent disability and death¹²



Globally, silicosis accounts for **90%** of all pneumoconiosis cases and is a serious public health issue¹³

90%

Silica-related diseases are preventable¹²



Crystalline silica is a common, naturally occurring mineral found in most rocks and soils¹⁴



RCS is generated when crystalline silica products are subjected to **mechanical processing**¹⁴



Principles of Operation

ASSEA is a small agency with big ambition and capabilities. When established in 2013 the ambition included national coordination of a decentralised national model where asbestos prevention was governed by each jurisdiction and other relevant organisations. Progress has been made but a coordinated approach still needs to be front of mind.

At the heart of the AMR was to ensure those outside of government were able to access information, build prevention capabilities, be supported through diagnosis and treatment, and ultimately be protected from harm. This requires ongoing diligence, respect and collaboration across Australia by all governments, agencies and partners, to prevent the risk of duplication and confusion once again.

The following principles of operation, not only guide what we deliver but our intentions on how we deliver the best possible standard aligned to our mandated functions. The ability for ongoing growth that supports the design of effective programs requires the insight and collaboration from others, along with efficient and effective governance arrangements all focused on outcomes delivered to the community.

Evidence and information that is accessible and transparent enables credibility and belief along with opportunities for others to innovate and influence real change.

By sharing, leveraging and encouraging the creation of one national, standardised approach reduces duplication while supporting consistency across the community.



Consultation, collaboration and cooperation

We work with all tiers of government as well as non-government groups to gain insight and to ensure consistent and coordinated awareness messages and asbestos and silica management approaches.



Evidence-informed decision making

We identify, analyse, transform and actively release accessible Australian and international evidence to influence behaviours, and where gaps exist, commission national research and data collection.



Transparency

We undertake our activities in an open and transparent way that ensure the community have access to all relevant information, enabling credibility, trust and commitment.



Sharing best practice

Our actions and resources are aimed at reducing duplication across jurisdictions, encouraging innovation and driving continuous improvement in asbestos and silica awareness and management.



Precaution

We take a proactive and precautionary approach to how we consider and address the risks of exposure to asbestos and respirable crystalline silica, while being ambitious towards future challenges that create real value.

Functional Operating Approach

The following diagram represents the operational relationship between ASSEA's:

Mandated functions
 Research, evaluation, and data at the hub of our intelligence guiding coordination, awareness, international which are supported by organisational capability and governance.

- Key focus areas**
- Coordinated actions, monitoring, partnerships.
 - Awareness channels, campaigns, and guidance.
 - International capabilities, leadership, and advocacy.
 - People, process, and system capabilities.
 - Governance over planning, performance, compliance and oversight.

- Key outcomes**
- Coordinated National Strategic Plan Outcomes.
 - Safe asbestos and silica behaviours.
 - International standards and health.
 - ASSEA performing and conforming as a Commonwealth non-corporate entity.
 - A high performing culture.



ASSEA Plan on a Page

2024-25

Our Outcome

Assist in the prevention of exposure to asbestos fibres and respirable crystalline silica, to eliminate asbestos and silica related disease in Australia through coordinating the implementation of the Asbestos National Strategic Plan and the Silica National Strategic Plan.

Strategic Objectives

- 1** Commence the design and implementation of ASSEA lead actions against both National Strategic Plans.
- 2** Design and implement national coordination, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of new National Strategic Plans.
- 3** Transition ASSEA and its governance structures to include silica functions.
- 4** Promote and continually enhance ASSEA capabilities and wellbeing.

Our Enablers

Influence Government action



Drive behavioural change



Innovate through technology



Collaborate for value and insight



Our Performance Measures

National policies and standards developed and research commissioned

Targeted asbestos and silica awareness campaigns successfully delivered

Access to a range of data sets secured

International leadership is fostered by supporting efforts to prevent asbestos and silica exposure

Silica National Strategic Plan developed, and implementation commenced

Commencement of the implementation of the third phase Asbestos National Strategic Plan

Our National Strategic Plan Lead Actions

Our national strategic plan actions for 2024-2025 are drawn from the following:

Asbestos National Strategic Plan ASSEA lead actions 2024-25

Silica National Strategic Plan lead actions 2024-25

Asbestos National Strategic Plan ASSEA lead actions 2024-25

Aim	Eliminate asbestos-related diseases (ARDs) in Australia
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ANSP PRIORITIES



Accurate identification and consistent assessment



Risk control and prioritised removal



Safe and effective transport and disposal

ASSEA LEAD ACTIONS

- Deliver National Asbestos Awareness Campaign and evaluate awareness levels.
- Promote consistency in ACM risk assessments.
- Support improvement of real-time asbestos detection technologies.
- Maintain and promote the National Residential Asbestos Heatmap.
- Scope jurisdictional asbestos stocks and flows profiles.
- Develop best practice approach for government-funded asbestos removal programs.
- Research low-level asbestos exposures.
- Develop guidance on asbestos contamination in construction and demolition waste and on emergency response.
- Research improvements to asbestos waste framework, including updating waste data estimates and monitoring alternative asbestos waste technologies.

Aim

Support workers & others who are affected by asbestos-related diseases

ANSP PRIORITIES



Early diagnosis of ARDs so that appropriate care and treatments can be provided



People with ARD, their family and carers are able to access and navigate the care and support system with ease and dignity



Continued improvements in diagnostic, therapeutic and other treatment methods

ASSEA LEAD ACTIONS

- Continue to build awareness amongst medical and health professionals on diagnosis and care for people with asbestos-related diseases (ARDs).
- Continue to support the work of advocacy and support groups around Australia.
- Support the development of clinical practice guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of mesothelioma and other ARDs.

Aim

International Leadership

ANSP PRIORITIES



Capacity building in South-East-Asia



Promoting asbestos bans



Preventing and responding to illegal importation of ACM

ASSEA LEAD ACTIONS

- Continue to:
- support awareness raising, training and capacity building programs in South-East Asia and the Pacific countries (targeted countries)
 - share best practice approaches on asbestos identification, risk control and disease detection
 - improve the evidence on the burden of ARDs in targeted countries
 - promote reforms to multi-lateral trade, health, economic and environmental agreements
 - manage asbestos import/export permits.

Silica National Strategic Plan lead actions 2024-25

Aim: Eliminate silica-related diseases in Australia

SNSP PRIORITIES

Workplace risk reduction

Education and awareness

ASSEA LEAD ACTIONS

- Examine the availability and visibility of product label and warning information, such as Safety Data Sheets, across the silica supply chain.
- Commence an assessment of industry capacity to manage workplace risk reduction.
- Undertake a stocktake of existing awareness raising activities and guidance material to identify gaps and opportunities.
- Commence behavioural insights research to inform the development of targeted education, awareness, and behaviour change initiatives.

Aim: International leadership

SNSP PRIORITIES

International Collaboration

ASSEA LEAD ACTIONS

- Develop relationships with relevant international organisations, researchers, governments, and industry.
- Identify new opportunities for collaboration and coordination with relevant international organisations, including the WHO and ILO, to encourage participation in global silica-related disease elimination programmes.
- Monitor international developments and share knowledge, research and best practice approaches on prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of silica-related diseases.

Our Risk Management

Risk Management Framework

ASSEA has an integrated risk management framework that ensures that risks can be identified early, assessed thoroughly and actively controlled. The management of risk is incorporated into our day-to-day business activities, discussions and decisions.

The risk management framework ensures that ASSEA actively manages existing and emerging risk, including through regular executive discussions and staff meetings. The agency's Audit and Risk Committee is also provided with regular risk reporting.

ASSEA recognises that it is not possible to eliminate all of the risk inherent in our work and our risk appetite is commensurate to our scale, size, resources and risk profile.

Supporting this we have:

- Risk Management Policy
- Accountable Authority Instructions
- Risk Register
- Risk Dashboard

Our Risk Categories

- Reputation
- Engagement
- Financial
- Governance
- Delivery
- People and security

Strategic Risk Environment

For each of our enterprise-wide risks we have mitigation strategies in place that reduce the residual risk rating to within our risk appetite.

People & Security risk categories

- Work health and safety.
- Loss of capability and corporate knowledge through staff turnover.
- Access to required capabilities aligned to future functional requirements.

- Strategic Plans and/or changes in the external environment.
- Breakdown of cyber security causes National Asbestos Exposure Register (NAER) personal data to be accessed by unauthorised third parties.
- Breakdown of cyber security causes access to agency records in Content Manager by unauthorised third parties.

Reputation

- Provision of incorrect, incomplete or misleading information to Government.
- ASSEC, Audit and Risk Committee and/or committee members lose confidence in ASSEA abilities.
- Stakeholders lose confidence in ASSEA abilities.
- Adverse attention from hotline calls, enquiries, social media, and media.
- Criticism from heightened expectations of ASSEA response to high profile incidents.

Financial

- Financial sustainability.
- Fraudulent activity is not prevented or detected.
- Failure to produce accurate financial statements.

Delivery

- Failure to implement new silica functions.
- Failure to deliver on agency's functions.

Engagement

- Ineffective stakeholder relations.

Governance

- Breach of contract, guidance, rule, policy or law.

Shared Risk

- Failure of contractor and MOU providers to deliver.
- Reliance on other agencies for Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- Reliance on the Service Delivery Office (SDO) for e-invoicing compliance and Government Enterprise Resource Planning (GovERP).

Our Capabilities

Our People

Our people are the force behind our success, who engage with purpose, seek out new ways to solve embedded problems and are dedicated to reducing asbestos and silica related harm.

Provide an inclusive, healthy, and safe cultural environment:

- ensure work related physical and mental hazards and risks are controlled and those impacted by a work-related injury or illness are supported
- use multiple engagement techniques to involve our people, and provide the opportunity to influence our direction
- design an ASSEA Reconciliation Action Plan with community leaders and our people
- co-design Agency values, behaviours and norms with our people.

Secure and promote a high-performance approach aligned to ASSEA outcomes.

- Undertaking workforce planning to ensure the employee life cycle enables full potential and attracts highly skilled and diverse people to ASSEA.
- Embed performance and development conversations as business as usual focusing on accountability, recognition, and growth.
- Ensure all performance and development plans have a clear line of sight to the ASSEA Operational Plan and National Strategic Plans.
- Invest in whole of agency development aligned to performance needs and objectives engaging multiple learning techniques to improve overall competency.

Our Intelligence

The insight we gain from the intelligence we create and leverage, is at the centre of all we do.

Enable further recognition and credibility of ASSEA's intelligence capabilities by:

- establishing and promoting an Asbestos and Silica Intelligence Hub that sits at the centre of all ASSEA functions, enabling evidence informed approaches across all operations.

Enable evidence informed insights, decisions, initiatives, and measurement by:

- continuing to grow our research, evaluation, and data strategies, capabilities and take up
- leveraging the insights from our people, partners, experts, and community
- actively seeking out opportunities to use behavioural insights and user centred design
- actively disclosing intelligence to support innovation across the community
- designing monitoring, evaluation and reporting approaches to measure progress against national targets and understand the value of National Strategic Plan actions.

As a responsible Australian Government Data custodian, we will:

- continue to improve our data literacy and maturity of our data governance approach
- we will curate responsible new datasets, and forge partnerships with data holders
- work with others to solve asbestos and RCS data gaps, reliability and usability issues.

Our Values

Ensuring our health, safety and wellbeing

Respecting diverse contributions, perspectives and lived experiences

Being fair, honest and transparent

Embedding a culture of integrity

Collaborating to build trust, insight, and value

Continually learning through curiosity, empathy, and humility

Being courageous, tolerant, and accountable

Our Collaboration – The Asbestos and Silica Safety System

Successful implementation of the National Strategic Plans involves collaboration between:

- The implementers:** Commonwealth, state and territory governments are responsible for implementing the actions and achieving the targets of the National Strategic Plans. A range of agencies have an overarching role to develop policy or to enforce compliance with asbestos and silica related laws.
- The partners:** Local governments (including regional and land councils) as well as non-government groups play an important role in facilitating, supporting and influencing action.



Our Performance

A balanced approach to success

Our four areas of performance focus on Our Governance, Our Business Processes and Systems, Our People and Our Customers and Stakeholders. When these four are in sync, collectively achieving, the aggregated value produced will enable the organisation to be successful.

Our Governance

- ASSEA Operational Plan and Annual Plan
- Portfolio Budget Statements
- National Strategic Plans Coordination
- Financial, Risk & Audit Management
- Public Service & Other Compliance

Our Business Process/Systems

- Internal policies, processes and systems that support performance, growth, compliance & review
- Project planning, evaluation & reporting
- Internal oversight, delegation, roles & accountabilities

Our People

- ASSEA Culture & Values
- Work Health, Safety & Wellbeing
- Workforce Planning & Entitlements
- Performance & Recognition
- Growth & Opportunity
- Diversity & Inclusion

Our Customers/Stakeholders

- Accessible & Responsive Focus
- Stakeholder & Partners Engagement
- Advisory Committee insight
- Brand Management & Recognition
- Community Channels, Reach & Uptake
- Awareness, Education & Advice

Performance Measures 2024-25

Outcome

Assist in the prevention of exposure to asbestos fibres and respirable crystalline silica, to eliminate asbestos and silica related disease in Australia through coordinating the implementation of the Asbestos National Strategic Plan and the Silica National Strategic Plan.

Program

Coordinate national actions to improve knowledge and awareness of issues relating to asbestos safety, asbestos-related diseases, silica safety and silica-related diseases. This program contributes by encouraging, coordinating, monitoring, and reporting on the implementation of the National Strategic Plans for asbestos and silica, which are central to the delivery of measures to prevent exposure to asbestos and respirable crystalline silica in Australia.

Measures

- 1** National policies and standards development and research is commissioned:
 - a** 1-2 items by 6 months, and
 - b** 2-4 items by 12 months.
- 2** Targeted asbestos and silica awareness campaigns successfully delivered:
 - a** whole of government advertising campaign benchmarks are met or exceeded, and
 - b** key message recall benchmark is met or exceeded.
- 3** Access to a range of data sets secured:
 - a** minimum 5 data sharing agreements negotiated or data sets sourced.
- 4** International leadership is fostered by supporting efforts to prevent asbestos and silica exposure:
 - a** minimum of 4 engagements or presentations at international asbestos and/or silica forums, and
 - b** 2-4 initiatives developed to promote reforms and/or build capacity in target countries.
- 5** Silica National Strategic Plan developed and implementation commenced:
 - a** at least 6 out of 9 jurisdictions endorse the Silica National Strategic Plan 2024-30.
- 6** Implementation of the third phase Asbestos National Strategic Plan has commenced:
 - a** two forums to assist implementation are held and a report on implementation is published.

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