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Australians Told 'Stop Playing Renovation Roulette!' Amid Renovation Boom
NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH - FRIDAY 26 NOVEMBER IS ASBESTOS AWARENESS DAY 2021

Amid Australia's multi-billion dollar home renovation boom, the National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign (1–30 November) aims to reduce asbestos-related diseases by urging renovators and tradies to '*Stop playing renovation roulette because it's not worth the risk*' and start to respect the dangers of asbestos just as they respect the dangers of electricity when renovating or maintaining homes.

Now in its tenth year, Australia's longest-running, multi-award winning annual Asbestos Awareness campaign continues to warn homeowners, renovators and tradies of the dangers of asbestos and directs them to Australia's leading, most comprehensive, trusted asbestos information source, asbestosawareness.com.au. Since launching in 2011, the website has had over 2.2 million pageviews and more than 1 million sessions.

Australia has long been a renovation nation, however the popularity of renovating has reached frenzied proportions with the billions of dollars saved during the pandemic now being spent on renovating homes. With one-in-three homes containing asbestos and more than one-in-three homeowners currently undertaking renovations (an increase of 37% according to RateCity.com.au); serious concerns have been raised that DIY renovators and tradies might be risking their lives and the lives of their families if they fail to respect the potentially life-threatening risks posed if asbestos is not managed safely.

Fuelled by savings made during the COVID-19 pandemic due to travel restrictions, Australians have been diverting a record one billion dollars a month into renovating their homes. However research has found that while 40% of DIYers worked on a property containing asbestos, only 5% knew of the high risks to health associated with asbestos compared to 22% being aware of the high risks associated with electricity.

As with electricity, asbestos fibres are invisible and can pose long-term and life-threatening health risks that can be related to the frequency and level of exposure - the higher the exposure, the greater the risk to health. However, even small amounts of exposure can lead to asbestos-related diseases which is why dealing unsafely with any amount of asbestos is likened to playing renovation roulette – there is no known safe level of exposure.

While deaths from exposure to electricity can be immediate, it can take 20-50 years before asbestos-related diseases are detected including malignant mesothelioma, a rare and progressive cancer caused by exposure to asbestos fibres. There is no cure. The average survival time after diagnosis is 10-12 months.

Just as Australians respect the invisible dangers of electricity; equally, we must learn to respect the invisible dangers of asbestos because asbestos fibres were used in the manufacture of more than 3000 building and decorator products that can be in any home built or renovated prior to 1990.

Asbestos-containing products are not just found in fibro homes. They were used extensively in brick, weatherboard, clad homes and apartments. If undisturbed, well maintained and in stable, sealed condition, these products are considered unlikely to pose health risks. However, just as electricity is invisible and can be deadly, asbestos can be equally lethal when invisible fibres are disturbed and inhaled if asbestos is not managed safely during renovations, maintenance, removal or during the demolition of older properties.

According to data from Australia's National Coronial Information System (NCIS) electrocution during home maintenance and DIY renovations causes the deaths of 2.7 homeowners annually, while SafeWork Australia's Preliminary Worker Deaths by Industry of Workplace reports that as at 14 October 2021 there were 3 deaths of workers in the electricity, gas, water and waste services industries this year and zero deaths in 2020.

With a staggering 4000 deaths each year from asbestos-related diseases including asbestosis and lung cancer, and an alarming number of deaths from mesothelioma attributed to both occupational and non-occupational exposure during residential renovations; it's clear that both homeowners and tradespersons must start to respect asbestos risks particularly when working on home renovations.

Because Australia was among the highest consumers of asbestos globally, we also have one of highest incidences of mesothelioma in the world with a steady increase in recorded cases over the past 40 years.

When the Australian Mesothelioma Registry (AMR) published its most recent report in 2020 documenting 724 mesothelioma deaths and 659 newly diagnosed cases, the AMR also predicted the number of recorded deaths will increase as more information becomes available. Of the 1,015 patients who completed the AMR's asbestos exposure survey (from 2010 to 2019), 12.2% said exposure to asbestos fibres occurred during occupational exposure, while 35.9% said it occurred from non-occupational exposure and 51.9% selected both occupational and non-occupational exposure.

Of those surveyed, 47% believed exposure to asbestos fibres occurred while renovating. 39% said they'd been living in a house undergoing renovations and 10% said they'd lived in a house made of fibro built between 1947 and 1987 with the exposure of the latter group possibly occurring during home maintenance.

With experts predicting a continued rise in the third wave of asbestos-related diseases caused from exposure to fibres when renovating or maintaining older properties; the collective data on exposure, together with the data on the current surge in home renovations has raised significant concerns about people renovating homes containing asbestos if the materials are not managed safely by professionals.

Cherie Barber, Australia's Renovation Queen™ and Ambassador for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign is Australia's foremost expert on renovating having featured on many current affairs and lifestyle programs and in international media forums over her 30-year award-winning renovating career.

Having lost her grandfather to asbestos-related disease, Cherie knows personally the devastating impact asbestos can have on health and is a passionate advocate for educating homeowners and DIYers on how to renovate homes with asbestos safely.

"With one third of Aussie homes containing asbestos, people must respect that asbestos is a hidden danger and treat it with the same level of caution as electricity to prevent asbestos-related diseases," Ms Barber said.

"Australians have to stop playing renovation roulette and start to respect the 'invisible' dangers of asbestos by using only qualified professionals for asbestos detection, removal and disposal just as we respect the dangers of electricity and would only use licenced electricians to do electrical work.

"To protect their health and the health of families; homeowners, renovators and tradies must stop being complacent and learn to manage asbestos safely by visiting Australia's most comprehensive, trusted source of asbestos information, asbestosawareness.com.au.

"The bottom line is, if you suspect your home may contain asbestos, before taking up tools engage a licenced asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist to inspect your property and if you need to remove asbestos, only use licenced asbestos removalists because it's not worth the risk!" Ms Barber said.

The importance of continuing the National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign and the asbestosawareness.com.au website in the prevention of asbestos-related diseases cannot be overstated with funding desperately needed to continue both the campaign and website beyond 2021 to help save lives.

London based Laurie Kazan-Allen, Coordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat and a respected world-leading authority on the global health threat for more than 30 years said, "It's not just that asbestosawareness.com.au was amongst the very first tailor-made online asbestos resources in Australia; but it has consistently been ahead of the curve in its messaging, outreach work and strategic plans for raising awareness of the asbestos hazard throughout the country.

"The website is indeed a one-stop-shop for all sorts of stakeholders including homeowners, tradies, local councils, property managers, farmers and more. To my mind, two of the best features of the site are its accessibility and lack of intimidation. Information is presented clearly with links for further research and provides resources for indigenous peoples and Arabic, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese speaking communities reinforcing the inclusivity of the campaign behind this invaluable resource," she said.

Stop playing renovation roulette and visit asbestosawareness.com.au - it's not worth the risk!

-ENDS-

FURTHER INFORMATION & INTERVIEW REQUESTS

For information and asbestos education resources refer to the Campaign Notes & Website Quick Links on page 3. For detailed Journalist Notes about asbestos risks and resources or to arrange interviews with a variety of spokespersons including Ambassadors and case studies, contact Insight Communications on 02 9518 4744.
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AMBASSADOR PHOTOGRAPHS, ASBESTOS PRODUCT IMAGES & GRAPHICS

For various images and graphics of asbestos-containing materials or Asbestos Awareness Ambassador Cherie Barber, Australia's Renovation Queen™ visit: <https://asbestosawareness.box.com/v/AsbestosAwarenessImages>

HASHTAGS

#AsbestosAwareness #AsbestosAwarenessMonth #RespectAsbestos #RenovationRoulette #AsbestosSafety #DIY #StopPlayingRenovationRoulette #RespectAsbestosRisks #AsbestosAndRenovating #Renovating #Renovations

INTERVIEWEES AVAILABLE – NOTE: full bios and interviews with health, industry or state-based spokespersons are available on request.

Cherie Barber

Cherie Barber is widely known as Australia's Renovation Queen™. Cherie is a regular TV renovator, highly sought-after public speaker, author and award-winning businesswoman with her renovating for profit career spanning more than 30 years. Cherie lost her grandfather to asbestos-related disease and has been a dedicated Ambassador for the National Asbestos Awareness campaign to educate homeowners and DIYers on how to renovate homes with asbestos safely since 2013.

Laurie Kazan-Allen (London based)

Ms. Kazan-Allen is the founder and coordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) and has been a world-leading authority on the global threat asbestos poses to human health for more than 30 years. Ms. Kazan-Allen has presented in asbestos forums on six continents and is the respected author and editor of publications and papers documenting the global struggle for an asbestos-free future.

Joanne Wade

Joanne Wade is the Practice Group Leader/Head of NSW, Victoria and Queensland Dust Diseases Teams for Slater and Gordon Lawyers and is a respected thought leader in advocating for the needs of people with asbestos related diseases since 1996. Joanne brings a unique credibility and very personal experience to the role, as her father is a victim of asbestos disease, which has led her to a career she is passionate about. Ms Wade was a founding member of Australia's first Asbestos Education Committee aimed at educating homeowners and renovators on the dangers of asbestos.

Clare Collins

Clare Collins is the Director of the National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign and asbestosawareness.com.au. Clare is the Managing Director of Insight Communications, the creators and managers of the Asbestos Awareness campaign since 2011. Working in consultation with government experts and industry leaders, Insight are the creatives behind the multi-award winning campaign and asbestosawareness.com.au. Insight has presented the campaign to stakeholders and industry leaders in the UK, Europe and Australia.

John Batty

John Batty is President of the Asbestos & Hazardous-Materials Consultants Association (AHCA) and the Managing Director of EDP Consultants, a global provider of Health, Safety and Environmental Services. John has more than 17 years experience in asbestos and hazardous materials management and provides consultancy services to a number of government departments and private organisations.

Bret Baker JP

Bret Baker is President of the Asbestos & Hazmat Removal Contractors Association of NSW (AHRCA). Bret is a Civil and Environmental Engineer and is the Managing Director of Beasy Pty Ltd with more than 25 years experienced in asbestos removal and demolition. Bret is a long-time industry representative on a number of government asbestos and demolition advisory committees and has presented at state and national asbestos forums on asbestos-related industry issues.

Sandie Foreman, Asbestos Awareness Advocate and mesothelioma patient

Sandie Foreman is a respected advocate in the prevention of asbestos-related diseases who seizes every opportunity to increase awareness of the dangers of asbestos in the community. Sandie was 57-years-old when she diagnosed with mesothelioma in 2016.

Mathew Klintfält, Asbestos Awareness Advocate and son of the Late Carol Klintfält AM

Mathew Klintfält is the son of the Late Carol Klintfält AM who was honoured with an Order of Australia in Queen's Birthday Honours Roll 2015 for her tireless advocacy to Asbestos Awareness following her diagnosis with mesothelioma. Mathew is an advocated for the prevention of asbestos-related diseases providing personal insight into the impact asbestos had on his mother and his family.

Associate Professor Thomas John MBBS, PhD

Associate Professor Thomas John is a medical oncologist at the Department of Medical Oncology, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne. A/Prof John specialises in thoracic malignancies with a focus on asbestos-related cancers and is widely published in the field of lung disease.

ASBESTOS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN NOTES & WEBSITE QUICK LINKS

NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH 2021

Marking 10 years campaigning in the prevention of asbestos-related diseases

2021 marks 10 years as Australia's longest-running, multi-award winning annual Asbestos Awareness campaign that warns homeowners, renovators and tradies of the dangers of asbestos and directs them to Australia's most comprehensive source of asbestos information and resources at asbestosawareness.com.au where they can learn how to manage asbestos safely. Since 2011, the campaign has won multiple peer-reviewed awards both nationally and internationally and has been acknowledged in medical journals as a leading initiative in the prevention of asbestos-related diseases.

The 2021 National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign is being conducted wholly in a pro-bono capacity. Funding for the campaign ceased in 2018 and funding to keep the website live concluded in January 2019. Given the campaign and the website are of national significance, Insight Communications (campaign and content creators and directors) have managed to keep the website live with the support of web developers, I-NEX and creative director, Gemma Waite of Moth Creative. However, to continue the campaign and keep the website current and live beyond 2021, funding is desperately needed.

ASBESTOS.AWARENESS.COM.AU

asbestosawareness.com.au is Australia's leading, most comprehensive trusted source of asbestos information dedicated to educating the community about the dangers of asbestos with a specific focus on homeowners, renovators, tradies, commercial property managers and the owners and managers of regional properties where naturally occurring asbestos can be found.

Since launching on Monday 21 November 2011, the asbestosawareness.com.au website has had:

- ◆ **Over 2.2 million pageviews - Over 1 million sessions - Over 700,000 unique users**
- ◆ Averaged 11,000 users per month in 2021 - a 32% increase on 2020. Each November during National Asbestos Awareness Month it averages a 37% increase on regular monthly users.
- ◆ Averaged 23,231 pageviews per month in 2021 - a 26% increase on 2020. Each November during National Asbestos Awareness Month it averages a 76% increase on regular monthly pageviews
- ◆ Over **1500 downloadable resources** (fact sheets, flyers/posters, graphics, images, AV) have been **accessed over 500,000 times**

Visit asbestosawareness.com.au for information and useful, practical resources including:

- ◆ **[Asbestos in Your Home – The Ultimate Renovators Guide](#)** (Easy to follow video hosted and produced by Australia's Renovation Queen™ and Asbestos Awareness Ambassador, Cherie Barber)
- ◆ **[Asbestos Awareness Residential Property Checklist – A Homeowner's Guide to Identifying Asbestos-Containing Materials](#)** (User-friendly step-by-step guide to identifying asbestos in the home)
- ◆ **[Asbestos Awareness - 20 Point Safety Check](#)** (Asbestos risks and how to manage asbestos safely)
- ◆ **[Fact Sheets for Homeowners](#)** (When, why and how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE))
- ◆ **[Residential Checklist for Tradies – A Tradespersons Guide to Asbestos](#)** (Identify the product types and locations)
- ◆ **[Trade Specific Checklist for Tradies – A Tradespersons Guide to Asbestos](#)** (Tailored to 23 specific trades)
- ◆ **[Fact Sheets for Tradies](#)** (When, why and how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE))
- ◆ **[Asbestos Product Database](#)** (Australia's first comprehensive online asbestos product database)
- ◆ **[Asbestos Management for Commercial and Non-Residential Properties](#)** (Australia's only online resource)
- ◆ **[Naturally Occurring Asbestos](#)** (Australia's only comprehensive online NOA resource)

SOURCES

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