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**National Asbestos Awareness Month urges homeowners, renovators and tradies to respect asbestos because it’s not worth the risk!**

**November is National Asbestos Awareness Month -** **Friday 25 November is Asbestos Awareness Day 2022**

During National Asbestos Awareness Month (1–30 November) the Asbestos Education Committee aims to increase essential awareness of the ever present danger of asbestos when renovating or maintaining homes particularly amid the continued record-breaking building and renovation boom and the tradie shortage and inflation bites hard.

Amid the growing popularity of renovating, with homeowners gripped by interest rate hikes together with the unprecedented lack of tradespersons and the rising costs of labour; concerns are growing that homeowners are taking avoidable risks with asbestos, jeopardising their health and the health of others when doing DIY renovations.

Over 4,000 Australians die every year from asbestos-related diseases – around 265% more than the annual national road toll, so as long as asbestos-containing materials remain in homes built or renovated prior to 1990, it’s vital that DIYers, homeowners, renovators and tradies heed the warnings and respect the serious dangers of asbestos because it’s not worth the risk!

Clare Collins, Chair of the Asbestos Education Committee and director of the national campaign said, “Asbestos Awareness Month aims to reduce the incidences of avoidable asbestos exposure to prevent asbestos-related diseases by providing Australians with essential information to help save lives.

“While asbestos-containing materials remain in one-third of Australian homes, the significance of this dedicated month-long campaign to the ongoing health of Australians, cannot be overstated.

“And with health experts predicting a continued rise in third wave asbestos-related diseases as a result of exposure to asbestos fibres when renovating or maintaining old properties; the Australian Mesothelioma Registry data on exposure; the growing popularity of renovating and the current shortage of tradespersons; homeowners must learn to respect the serious risks posed by asbestos mismanagement to protect their health and the health of their loved ones,” she said.

Cherie Barber, Australia’s Renovation Queen™ who lost her Grandfather to asbestos-related diseases is a long-time Ambassador for the National Asbestos Awareness campaign who is passionate about ensuring homeowners and DIYers learn to respect asbestos risks to stay safe.

“Many homeowners wrongly believe that asbestos-containing products are only found in fibro homes made from asbestos-cement sheeting,” said Ms Barber.

“The fact is, asbestos was used extensively in the manufacture of more than 3000 building and decorator products that can still be found in brick, fibro, weatherboard, clad homes, apartments or sheds built or renovated before 1990.

“Many of these products could be lurking under floor coverings including carpets, linoleum and vinyl tiles, behind wall and floor tiles, in cement floors, internal and external walls, ceilings and ceiling space (insulation), eaves, roofs, around hot water pipes, fences, home extensions, garages, outdoor toilets, backyard and farm structures, chook sheds and even dog kennels. It was used everywhere!” Ms Barber said.

If undisturbed, well maintained and in a stable, sealed condition, these products are considered unlikely to pose health risks. However, if disturbed during maintenance, renovation or demolition, and invisible fibres are released that can be inhaled, this can lead to asbestos-related diseases including malignant mesothelioma, lung cancer, asbestosis and benign pleural disease.

There is no cure for mesothelioma, a cancer that can develop between 33 and 44 years after inhaling asbestos fibres with the average survival time following diagnosis, just 12 months.

With growing evidence suggesting the current occurrences of asbestos-related diseases are as a result of exposure to asbestos fibres during DIY and renovations, and with more people, specifically women, diagnosed as a result of inhaling fibres in non-occupational settings; every homeowner, renovator and tradie must respect asbestos and learn how to identify asbestos-containing products to manage and dispose of them safely in line with regulations.

“Australia was among the highest consumers of asbestos products in the world so it’s not surprising that a broad range of these potentially hazardous products are still commonly found in at least 1 in 3 Australian homes in some form or another,” said Ms Barber.

“Because there is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres, without knowing where asbestos might lurk in and around properties or knowing how to manage it safely, people could be playing ‘Renovation Roulette’, risking their health and the health of families and bystanders if they fail to respect asbestos and disturb these hazardous materials.

“With the popularity of renovating continuing to rise coupled with the current tradie shortage, we want to ensure people renovate safely. We don’t want people to take the *‘she’ll be right’* approach and start ripping out old floor coverings, wall and floor tiles or undertaking any work or demolition without first checking to see if asbestos might be lurking in their home,” she said.

“Complacency poses the greatest risk of all so it’s vital people learn to respect asbestos as a real and present danger and learn how to manage it safely by visiting Australia’s most comprehensive, trusted source of asbestos information, asbestosawareness.com.au,” Ms Barber said.

The website offers extensive information including the types of homes that may be affected and the types of products to look for. The online [**Asbestos Product Database**](https://asbestosawareness.com.au/asbestos-products-database/) provides images and locations of products likely to contain asbestos and the [**Asbestos Awareness – 20 Point Safety Check**](https://asbestosawareness.com.au/20-point-safety-check/) gives information on the risks and how to manage asbestos safely.

While the [**Fact Sheets for Homeowners**](https://asbestosawareness.com.au/fact-sheets/) provide instructions on how to stay safe around asbestos, the user-friendly [**Asbestos Awareness Residential Property Checklist**](https://asbestosawareness.com.au/asbestos-in-the-home/residentialchecklist/)**– A Homeowner’s Guide to Identifying Asbestos-Containing Materials** is an invaluable step-by-step guide that takes homeowners through their property to help them identify where asbestos might be lurking and acts as an asbestos register of suspected asbestos locations for the ongoing safe management of asbestos-containing materials not removed during renovations.

“The rule is, if your home was built or renovated prior to 1990 and you suspect it contains asbestos, before taking up tools be sure to 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!” said Ms Barber.

“When it comes to asbestos, renovators should expect the unexpected! If you find asbestos in your home, don’t cut it! Don’t drill it! Don’t sand it! Don’t saw it! Don’t scrape it! Don’t scrub it! Don’t dismantle it! Don’t tip it! Don’t waterblast it! And whatever you do, don’t dump it!” she said.

Now in its eleventh year, Australia’s longest-running, multi-award winning annual national Asbestos Awareness campaign will continue to warn homeowners, renovators and tradies of the dangers of asbestos and direct them to Australia’s leading, most comprehensive, trusted asbestos information source **asbestosawareness.com.au** to help save lives.

**-ENDS-**

**HASHTAGS**

#RespectAsbestos [#AsbestosAwareness](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/asbestosawareness/) [#AsbestosAwarenessMonth](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/asbestosawarenessmonth/) #RenovationRoulette #AsbestosSafety #DIY #StopPlayingRenovationRoulette #RespectAsbestosRisks #AsbestosAndRenovating #Renovating #Renovations

**INTERVIEW REQUESTS**

For interviews with a range of spokespersons including Cherie Barber, industry experts, researchers and case studies contact: **Insight Communications on 02 9518 4744**

Clare Collins: 0414 821 957 ⬩ [clare@insightcommunications.net.au](https://webmail.sydney.edu.au/owa/redir.aspx?C=MC_JNYUXc0aJKcfZa-JQKavYnxFqlNAIacp5eDEaui4t9uMv6BshBWoCuZf7-NGT84nSQrO24_8.&URL=mailto%3aclare%40insightcommunications.net.au)

Alice Collins: 0414 686 091 ⬩ [alice@insightcommunications.net.au](https://webmail.sydney.edu.au/owa/redir.aspx?C=MC_JNYUXc0aJKcfZa-JQKavYnxFqlNAIacp5eDEaui4t9uMv6BshBWoCuZf7-NGT84nSQrO24_8.&URL=mailto%3aalice%40insightcommunications.net.au)

**FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT ASBESTOS**

For information and asbestos education resources refer to the Campaign Notes & Quick Links on page 3.

For detailed Journalist Notes about asbestos risks and resources, please contact **Insight Communications**.

**AMBASSADOR PHOTOGRAPHS, ASBESTOS PRODUCT IMAGES & GRAPHICS**

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

**ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH CAMPAIGN NOTES & WEBSITE QUICK LINKS**

NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH 2022

2022 marks 11 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 asbstosawareness.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 2022 National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign is being conducted wholly in a pro-bono capacity.** Funding for the campaign ceased in December 2017 and funding to keep the website live concluded in February 2020. Given the campaign and the website are of national significance in the prevention of asbestos-related diseases, 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. Working in partnership with Advocacy Australia, to continue the campaign and keep the website current and live beyond 2022, funding is desperately needed.

ASBESTOSAWARENESS.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 2.37 million pageviews** - Over 1 million session and welcomed over 740,000 unique users.
* **Averaged 11,000 users per month in 2021**; a 32% increase on 2020. November averages a **37% increase** on average months.
* **Average 23,231 pageviews per month in 2021**; 26% increase on 2020. November’s have a **76% increase** on average months.

Asbestos information resources accessed from the website:

* **Over 1500 resources are available to the public to download**. 107 are flyers, fact sheets, posters and templates with the remaining being images, graphics, presentations and videos.
* **These resources have been accessed over 600,000 times**

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

* [**Asbestos in Your Home – The Ultimate Renovators Guide**](http://asbestosawareness.com.au/asbestos-in-the-home/video-asbestos-in-your-home/) (*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**](http://asbestosawareness.com.au/asbestos-in-the-home/healthy-house-checklist/)(*User-friendly step-by-step guide to identifying asbestos in the home*)
* [**Asbestos Awareness - 20 Point Safety Check**](http://asbestosawareness.com.au/20-point-safety-check) (*Asbestos risks and how to manage asbestos safely*)
* [**Fact Sheets for Homeowners**](http://asbestosawareness.com.au/fact-sheets) *(When, why and how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*
* [**Residential Checklist for Tradies – A Tradespersons Guide to Asbestos**](http://www.asbestosawareness.com.au/tradies) *(Identify the product types and locations)*
* [**Trade Specific Checklist for Tradies – A Tradespersons Guide to Asbestos**](http://www.asbestosawareness.com.au/tradies) *(Tailored to 23 specific trades)*
* [**Fact Sheets for Tradies**](http://www.asbestosawareness.com.au/tradies) *(When, why and how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*
* [**Asbestos Product Database**](http://asbestosawareness.com.au/asbestos-products-database) (*Australia’s first comprehensive online asbestos product database)*
* [**Asbestos Management for Commercial and Non-Residential Properties**](http://asbestosawareness.com.au/commercial) (*Australia’s only online resource)*
* [**Naturally Occurring Asbestos**](http://asbestosawareness.com.au/NOA)(*Australia’s only comprehensive online NOA resource)*

SOURCES

* 10 August 2022 - Massive tradie shortage puts more pressure on Aussie construction industry – Channel 9 <https://www.9news.com.au/national/australia-tradie-shortage-pressure-construction-industry/ea4c98b7-2c46-489b-b34d-1eff4a3d61bd>
* 1 June 2022 – Real Estate Conversation – Builders to remain busy into 2023 – HIH <https://www.therealestateconversation.com.au/news/2022/06/01/builders-remain-busy-2023-hia/1654040444>
* 26 August 2020 - [Mesothelioma in Australia 2019 - Australian Mesothelioma Register](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer/mesothelioma-in-australia-2019/contents/summary) – Accessed 27 Sept 2021
* February 2018 - Soeberg M, Vallance DA, Keena V, Takahashi K, Leigh J.  [Australia's ongoing legacy of asbestos: significant challenges remain even after the complete banning of asbestos almost fifteen years ago](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29473898/). Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2018 Feb;15(2). doi: 10.3390/ijerph15020384.  PMID: 29473898 - Accessed 6 Oct 2021

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

**Health and Medical Researchers available on request**

**Cherie Barber – CAMPAIGN AMBASSADOR**

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.

**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 including SafeWork NSW Demolition & Asbestos Consultative Committee and the Asbestos Safety & Eradication Agency of Australia – Management and Removal Committee. Bret has presented at state and national asbestos forums on asbestos-related industry issues. Bret is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

**John Batty**

John Batty is one of the founding members 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 18 years’ experience in asbestos and hazardous materials management and provides consultancy services to a number of government departments and private organisations. John is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

**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. Clare is the Chair of Advocacy Australia and the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

**Councillor Greg Cummings**

Clr Cummings has previously served as Mayor and Councillor on the former Holroyd City Council since 2004. He was elected as the first Mayor of Cumberland since inception in 2017. Clr Cummings has been instrumental in the initiation of the Workplace Tragedy Memorial, the asbestos awareness campaign, and Reconciliation Day. He strives to represent his constituents and is passionate about local issues. Clr Cummings is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

**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 and a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

**Phillip Smith**

Phillip Smith is the Group Executive for Environment, Health, Safety and Quality at SHAPE Australia Pty Limited. Phil has over 30 years’ experience in the building industry and holds trade, construction, strategic leadership and WHS qualifications. Phil is a member of the Asbestos & Hazmat Removal Contractors Association and the OFSC Industry Reference Group, and strongly advocates for asbestos awareness causes, industry associations and charitable organisations. SHAPE has a strong focus on asbestos management, education, and awareness, with industry leading asbestos management systems. Phil is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

**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 for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.