



**RESPECT
ASBESTOS**

it's not worth the risk!



MEDIA RELEASE: 23 NOVEMBER 2022

New resources help employers better inform workers of asbestos risks

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH - FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER IS ASBESTOS AWARENESS DAY 2022

Today, the Asbestos Education Committee announced the release of newly developed resources to help a wide range of employers inform workers of asbestos risks to prevent asbestos-related diseases that kill more than 4,000 Australians every year. Of these, many have been exposed to asbestos fibres in the workplace.

Before a complete ban on asbestos came into force in Australia in December 2003, Australia was among the highest consumers of asbestos-containing materials in the world resulting in Australia now having extensive legacy asbestos that's responsible for causing the world's highest incidences of asbestos-related diseases.

As long as asbestos-containing materials remain hidden in one third of Australian homes built before 1990 and in commercial and non-residential properties built prior to 2004; the incidences of asbestos-related diseases and deaths are predicted to continue to rise if workers are unaware of the risks when working where asbestos is present.

With 12.9% of Australian workers being technicians or tradies and a further 9% working as labourers, this group which accounts for almost one quarter of Australia's workforce are most at risk of exposure to asbestos fibres in the workplace.

To better inform workers of asbestos risks, the Asbestos Education Committee developed a series of effective *Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talks* to help employers promote compliance with Work Health and Safety (WH&S) regulations to prevent unnecessary exposed to asbestos fibres that can kill.

Phillip Smith, Group Executive, Environmental, Health, Safety and Quality at SHAPE Australia and a member of the Asbestos Education Committee said, "Short weekly Toolbox Talks are an effective and essential communication and consultation tool to ensure WH&S best practice in the workplace.

"By taking a proactive approach and reinforcing important health and safety information among workers on a regular basis, employers can maintain regulatory compliance and build a culture of health and safety that protects workers from injury and health risks including exposure to asbestos fibres," he said.

"Although not a substitute for asbestos awareness or compliance training, this unique series of *Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talks* will assist employers in reminding workers and contractors about the dangers of asbestos and their significant responsibility to manage it safely," Mr Smith said.

Tradies need to be aware that asbestos was used extensively in the manufacture of more than 3000 building and decorator products that can still be found in any brick, fibro, weatherboard, clad home, apartment or shed built or renovated before 1990 and in any commercial or non-residential property built before 2004.

Asbestos-containing material 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!

If disturbed during maintenance, renovation or demolition and invisible fibres are released that can be inhaled, this can lead to asbestos-related diseases including asbestosis, lung cancer and malignant mesothelioma. 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.

According to the most recent Australian Mesothelioma Registry (AMR) Report (2021), men were more likely to be diagnosed with mesothelioma than women across all age groups with the number of cases diagnosed each year for both men and women steadily increasing over the past 40 years.

A survey of workers diagnosed with mesothelioma conducted by the AMR showed that 85% of those who'd worked as a plumber or gasfitter, 84% in electrical trades, and 85% in building industry trades were assessed as having had probable exposure in those jobs. For the majority the level of exposure was classified as 'high'.

Clare Collins, Chair of the Asbestos Education Committee and Director of the National Asbestos Awareness campaign since 2011 said, "Because tradies and workers are at risk of coming into contact with asbestos-containing materials in



**RESPECT
ASBESTOS**

it's not worth the risk!



their day-to-day work, if they don't know what to look for or how to manage asbestos safely, they can unknowingly disturb asbestos and put their lives and the lives of others at risk,"

"As long as asbestos remains an ever-present danger in Australian homes and commercial and non-residential properties; preventing exposure among one third of Australian workers must be a significant priority if we aim to minimise Australia's Third Wave of asbestos-related diseases," Ms Collins said.

"By developing a suite of *Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talks* to assist contractors and businesses in the building and renovation industries to regularly remind workers of the importance of compliance with WH&S regulations relating to asbestos, we aim to protect workers from becoming a statistic of asbestos-related deaths.

In addition to the known group of effected workers (electricians, plumbers, gas-fitters and builders), there's a wide range of trades that could be vulnerable to asbestos if they don't know the risks or how to manage it safely.

Those at risk of exposure in the workplace include installers of kitchens and bathrooms; heating, air conditioning and maintenance workers; installers of solar panels and cladding; painters, wallpaper hangers and decorators; tilers; layers of floor coverings and floor sanders (stripping carpets, tiles and vinyl flooring), and those who install communications cabling. All need to know how to identify asbestos-containing materials to manage the potential risk.

The *Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talks* are designed to complement the extensive range of resources for tradies and workers already freely available from asbestosawareness.com.au/tradies. The website hosts a suite of unique and comprehensive resources for workers likely to come into contact with asbestos including *26 Fact Sheets* and trade-specific guidance materials; the *20 Point Asbestos Safety Checklist for Tradies Working on Residential Properties*; *A Tradie's Guide to Safe Practices in Managing Asbestos in Residential Properties*; and *A Tradesperson's Guide to Asbestos Containing Materials in Domestic Properties*.

The *Asbestos Awareness for Young Workers* is a new and essential education resource for young workers, apprentices, trade teachers, employers conscientious of protecting their workers from asbestos hazards, and parents wanting to protect their family members from asbestos exposure.

For those working in the commercial and non-residential property sector, the *Asbestos Management Handbook for Commercial & Non-Residential Properties* is a valuable tool complemented by a suite of templates providing property owners, managers and contractors with the essential resources they need to meet compliance standards.

It doesn't matter if you're a tradie, a labourer, a handyman or a homeowner or renovator; if you suspect a material may contain asbestos, Don't cut it! Don't drill it! Don't drop 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! Don't demolish it! And whatever you do... Don't dump it!

Before taking up tools, respect asbestos and find out what you need to know by visiting asbestosawareness.com.au because it's not worth the risk!

-ENDS-

ASBESTOS AWARENESS TOOLBOX TALKS COVER:

National Asbestos Awareness Month - Asbestos in Residential Properties - Types of Asbestos Common in Construction - Managing Asbestos in the Workplace - Unexpected Asbestos Finds - Exploding Asbestos Myths - Asbestos Management Plans and Registers - Commercial and Non-residential Properties - Naturally Occurring Asbestos - Asbestos and Rural and Regional Properties <https://asbestosawareness.com.au/asbestos-for-tradies/tradies-fact-sheets/>

HASHTAGS

#RespectAsbestos #AsbestosAwareness #AsbestosAwarenessMonth #ToolboxTalks #AsbestosSafety #DIY #StopPlayingRenovationRoulette #RespectAsbestosRisks

INTERVIEW REQUESTS

For detailed Journalist Notes and interviews requests with a range of expert spokespersons contact:

Insight Communications on 02 9518 4744 Clare Collins: 0414 821 957 ♦ clare@insightcommunications.net.au
Alice Collins: 0414 686 091 ♦ alice@insightcommunications.net.au

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT ASBESTOS & ASBESTOS PRODUCT IMAGES & GRAPHICS

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

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 NOTES & WEBSITE QUICK LINKS

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 2.37 million pageviews** - Over 1 million session with over 740,000 unique users.
- ◆ **Averaged 11,000 users per month in 2021**
- ◆ **Average 23,231 pageviews per month in 2021**

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

- ◆ **Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talks** (10 Toolbox Talks to help employers better inform workers of asbestos risks)
- ◆ **Asbestos Awareness for Young Workers** (Education resource developed with SafeWork NSW)
- ◆ **Asbestos Awareness - 20 Point Safety Check** (Asbestos risks and how to manage asbestos safely)
- ◆ **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)
- ◆ **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)
- ◆ **Fact Sheets for Homeowners** (When, why and how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- ◆ **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)
- ◆ **Naturally Occurring Asbestos** (Australia's only comprehensive online NOA resource)

SOURCES

- ◆ Mesothelioma in Australia 2020 Published November 2021 [26 August 2020 - Mesothelioma in Australia 2019 - Australian Mesothelioma Register](#) - Accessed 27 Sept 2021 Accessed November 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](#). Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2018 Feb;15(2). doi: 10.3390/ijerph15020384. PMID: 29473898 - Accessed 6 Oct 2021
- ◆ Accessed 20 November 2022 - Australian Worker Demographics 2021 [https://profile.id.com.au/australia/occupations#:~:text=Technicians%20and%20Trades%20Workers%20\(1%2C554%2C315%20people%20or%2012.9%25\)](https://profile.id.com.au/australia/occupations#:~:text=Technicians%20and%20Trades%20Workers%20(1%2C554%2C315%20people%20or%2012.9%25))

ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH CAMPAIGN

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 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 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.



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

Phillip Smith

Phillip Smith is the Group Executive for Environment, Health, Safety and Quality at SHAPE Australia. 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 Australia 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.

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 Member. 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.

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.

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

Cir 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. Cir 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. Cir Cummings is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

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. Mathew 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 Asbestos Awareness Campaign aimed at educating homeowners and renovators on the dangers of asbestos.

Health and Medical Researchers

Health and medical researchers are available on request.

