

Statewide Strategic Plan for the Safe Management of Asbestos 2022-2025

First progress report





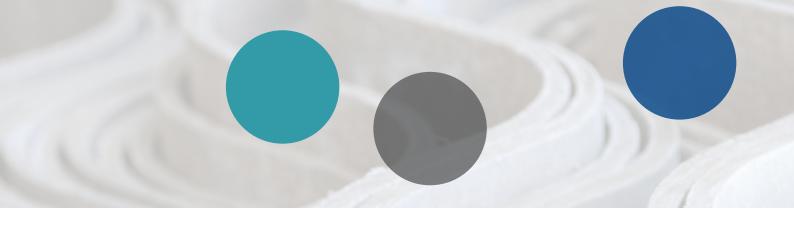
The Queensland Government has a comprehensive regulatory framework to minimise the risks of exposure to asbestos in workplaces, mine sites, domestic premises and the natural environment. Seven State Government agencies and all local governments are responsible for administering asbestos-related legislation through a collaborative service delivery model.

The Office of Industrial Relations (OIR) is the lead agency to coordinate asbestos management issues across government. OIR led the development of the Statewide Strategic Plan for the Safe Management of Asbestos in Queensland 2022-2025 (Strategic Plan) in collaboration with the Interagency Asbestos Group (IAG), comprised of government departments who have asbestos-related regulatory responsibilities, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Local Government Association of Queensland.

The Strategic Plan was endorsed by the Queensland Government in July 2022. While significant improvements were made after the first Statewide Strategic Plan for the Safe Management of Asbestos 2014-2019, it is important that the Queensland Government continues its efforts to ensure the detrimental impacts of asbestos are minimised. The second Strategic Plan provides a framework to guide Queensland's whole-of-government approach towards improving awareness and management of asbestos related risks and how regulatory agencies respond to asbestos matters. It includes 23 actions across the following four priority areas:

- improved asbestos awareness to influence behavioural change
- identification and effective management of asbestos containing materials
- safe removal, transport and disposal of asbestos waste
- effective and coordinated regulation.

This is the first annual progress report under the Strategic Plan to cover actions taken in the last quarter of 2022.



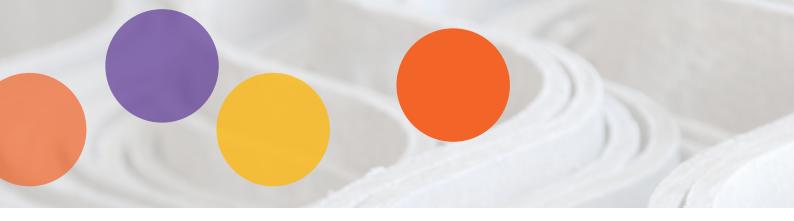
Key achievements under the Strategic Plan

Priority 1

Improve asbestos awareness to influence behavioural change

Produce targeted comprehensive asbestos awareness advice and information campaigns for the community and workers

- Development of four <u>films</u> featuring an asbestos expert walking through different homes to show where asbestos may be found in homes built in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.
- Launch of a series of illustrations to help promote and raise awareness of key asbestos safety messages for homeowners and the community. These will continue to be used on the <u>asbestos government website</u>, on social media and on printed materials:
 - How asbestos should be disposed of
 - Identifying asbestos products inside
 - Identifying asbestos outside
 - What not to do with asbestos
 - Where asbestos may be found in bathrooms.
- Asbestos Awareness Week (21-27 November 2022), led by OIR to promote the importance of living and working safely with asbestos. Key messages focused on educating householders and tradespeople where asbestos might be found in homes and what they should do to stay safe. The week included an asbestos safety session webinar targeting community and tradespeople. More than 900 people watched the live webinar, which covered a range of topics, including:
 - the safe management of asbestos in Queensland
 - the dangers of using high pressure water blasters on asbestos products
 - Julie and Don Sager's heartbreaking story of losing their son Adam to mesothelioma.
- Electrical Safety Week 2022 (5-9 September 2022), led by OIR featured an electrical and asbestos safety in rental properties webinar, watched live by 214 attendees alongside several organisations watching as a collective group. Key messages were shared by safety advocates, Don and Julie Sager, and OIR's Chief Advisor (Asbestos) about asbestos safety in rental properties. The webinar is available for viewing on the asbestos government website and continues to be promoted as an ongoing resource.



Continue to promote asbestos safety messages to the community

- Promotion of asbestos safety messages to the community with ongoing displays and inspectors from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) participating in community-facing events including:
 - Brisbane Home Shows
 - Brisbane EKKA
 - National Association of Women in Construction events.
- Ongoing social media on OIR's platforms encouraging industry and the community to share posts about asbestos safety:
 - Workplace Health and Safety Queensland <u>Facebook page</u>
 - Electrical Safety Office Facebook page
 - Workplace Health and Safety Queensland LinkedIn page.

Priority 2

Identification and effective management of legacy in situ asbestos containing materials (ACM), imported asbestos and naturally occurring asbestos

Consider the establishment of a Queensland asbestos eradication agency (for government owned or controlled buildings)

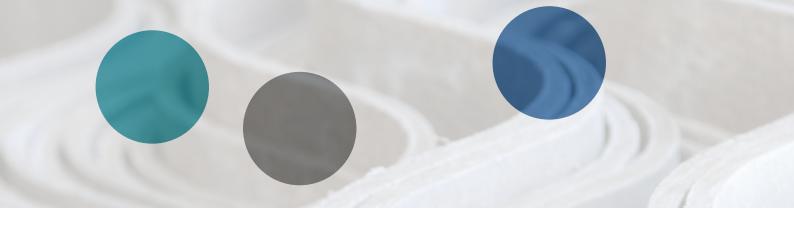
The Department of Energy and Public Works (DEPW) is continuing work on the Queensland Government's
consideration of the establishment of an asbestos eradication agency (for government owned and controlled
buildings).

Priority 3

Safe removal, transport and disposal of asbestos waste

Encourage the safe removal and disposal of ACMs from commercial buildings, land and infrastructure

 OIR is encouraging the safe removal and disposal of ACMs from commercial buildings, and infrastructure by undertaking compliance and engagement activities to target the safe removal and disposal of ACMs underpinned by correct identification of ACMs.



Improve the quality of asbestos-related training and ensure effective oversight of licensing regimes

• OIR is reviewing the delivery model of the asbestos authorised persons training to improve the quality of training and improve oversight of licensing regimes. OIR is working with Department of Environment and Science (DES), Queensland Health (QH), and Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) to develop a resource library on an online portal, hosted by QH. The resources will form part of the authorised officer refresher training. Work is underway to transition some initial authorised officer training into e-learning modules while maintaining face-to-face course modules for the practical elements, such as personal protective equipment donning/doffing and sampling methodology.

Improve the accessibility and availability of information on the waste disposal facilities that can receive ACMs

 Updates to the <u>asbestos disposal information on the asbestos government website</u> was completed by DES to improve the accessibility and availability of information on waste disposal facilities.

Priority 4

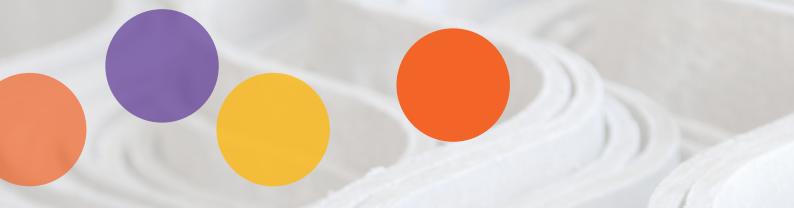
Effective and coordinated regulation

Support local governments to enforce devolved responsibilities

 OIR and QH provided support to local governments to administer devolved responsibilities by delivering authorised officer training and refresher training. OIR has developed a delivery plan for the 2023 year in coordination with QH, DES and LGAQ.

Ensure effective compliance and enforcement of relevant laws by regulatory agencies and undertaking cross-agency regulatory activities

- Ensured effective compliance and enforcement of workplace health and safety (WHS) laws by responding to all asbestos incidents. Escalating high priority WHS asbestos events for response to the Asbestos Compliance Unit, WHSQ for further investigation and action.
- During 1 October 2022-31 December 2022, the Asbestos Compliance Unit, WHSQ:
 - commenced four new comprehensive investigations
 - completed and referred three matters to Office of the Workplace Health and Safety Prosecutor for consideration of prosecution action
 - completed and referred two matters to the asbestos licence review panel for consideration of licence sanctions.
- OIR is continuing to deliver significant WHS compliance campaigns with completion of an asbestos register compliance campaign, which ran from August 2022-October 2022 and resulted in 116 assessments state-wide and 65 enforcement actions. This successful campaign will be relaunched in 2023.



Respond effectively to imported materials containing asbestos found in the Queensland supply chain in accordance with established protocols

OIR is responding proactively to imported materials containing asbestos found in the Queensland supply chain. The Asbestos Compliance Unit, WHSQ responded to one incident involving imported materials containing asbestos which resulted in issuing three improvement notices and one infringement notice. The Occupational Health, Hygiene and Asbestos Unit (OHHAU), OIR also has a representative on the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities Imported Materials with Asbestos Working Group (the Working Group). The purpose of the Working Group is to ensure a coordinated and consistent whole-of-government approach to imported products or materials with asbestos, and to develop a body of shared knowledge about the sources of imported asbestos containing materials and products. The Working Group includes a protocol for coordinating a multijurisdictional response to identified asbestos importations.

Examine the need for improvements to regulatory standards, including reviewing the '10m2 rule' provisions under public health and work health and safety regulations by early 2023, and adopting amendments to the model work health and safety legislation in Queensland

• QH is conducting a review of the '10m² threshold provision' under the Public Health Regulation 2018 to determine whether there is a need to strengthen existing rules. A comprehensive discussion paper is being prepared for publishing for public consultation.

Engage with regulators in other jurisdictions to monitor developments and share best practice approaches to asbestos awareness and management

- OIR is continuing to engage with regulators in other jurisdictions to monitor developments on asbestos-related
 matters and participating on the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council. OIR has four representatives on the
 Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency's three committees:
 - Asbestos Awareness Committee
 - Research and Evaluation Committee
 - Asbestos Assessments Working Group.

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Future work

The Interagency Asbestos Group (IAG) will continue implementing the priorities of the Strategic Plan to further improve the management of asbestos risks in Queensland and to ensure the detrimental impacts of asbestos are minimised. The future work of the IAG in 2023 includes:

- The completion of Queensland Health's review into the '10m² threshold provision' in the Public Health Regulation 2018.
- Updating the Multiagency Asbestos Incident Response Protocol that outlines the collaborative approach
 between local governments and agencies with responsibilities for asbestos and how they will respond to
 and manage incidents. This protocol enables State and local governments to deliver improved asbestos
 services to the community. The protocol will be updated to ensure that the information available to
 government personnel in regulating asbestos reflects best practice policies, and provides a clear pathway
 for a timely response to asbestos incidents.
- Continuing to raise community awareness about the safe handling of asbestos containing materials.
- Ensuring there is up-to-date, accurate, clear and consistent information available to workplaces and members of the community about potential health risks of asbestos-containing materials and how to minimise exposure to these risks.
- Ensuring robust regulatory controls are in place to manage asbestos through each stage of its life cycle, and that there is coordination, cooperation and communication between responsible government agencies to enable effective enforcement.
- Continuing to implement the Queensland Government's commitment to consider the establishment of an asbestos eradication agency (for government owned and controlled buildings) by the DEPW.