



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

Second progress report



Queensland Asbestos Strategic Plan 2022-2025

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. Five 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), which includes government departments with asbestos-related regulatory or management responsibilities, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ).

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 second annual progress report under the Strategic Plan to cover actions taken during 2023.



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

- Two webinar safety sessions were held during Asbestos Awareness Week 2023 (20-27 November). The first was aimed at businesses and was jointly delivered by OIR and the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI)¹, covering practical guidance for tradespeople working with asbestos and their environmental obligations for transporting asbestos waste. The second session, aimed towards homeowners and DIYers, was jointly delivered by OIR, DESI, Queensland Health (QH) and the LGAQ and covered where asbestos containing materials may be found in homes, DIY removal of up to 10m² of non-friable asbestos, transport and disposal of asbestos and the role of local councils in managing asbestos in the community. More than 470 viewers watched the sessions. These events were supported by a social media campaign, newsletter articles and emails promoting asbestos safety and the webinars, as well as an advertising placement in the construction industry publication, *BuildIT*. The recorded webinars are available on the [WorkSafe website](#) and promoted as an ongoing resource.
- OIR targeted businesses and asbestos removalist companies with educational social media posts about correct safety procedures, to complement the Asbestos Compliance Management Campaign undertaken from September to November 2023. In addition, an eSAFE article notifying businesses about the audit campaign and updates on the notices that were issued and the most common compliance issues that inspectors noted were published.

Produce additional practical information material on asbestos safety in the home, workplace and the environment

- A flyer on the use of high pressure water blasters on asbestos roofs was produced and is available on asbestos.qld.gov.au website and in printed form. The flyers were distributed by Ipswich City Council to all ratepayers in this jurisdiction.
- Information about successful prosecutions under the Work Health and Safety legislation that involve asbestos is published on the WorkSafe website and promoted in eSAFE newsletters.

¹ Formerly the Department of Environment and Science



Improve education and training for those at risk of exposure to asbestos fibres or who make decisions about ACMs²

- OIR safety advocates, Don and Julie Sager, attended Scenic Rim Regional Council to speak to council workers, including construction, landscape, maintenance and landfill workers, about the loss of their son Adam to mesothelioma.
- The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) achieved the first step in establishing a statutory seller disclosure scheme for the sale of all freehold land in Queensland with the assent of the *Property Law Act 2023* in November. When it commences, the disclosure scheme will make it mandatory for a seller to disclose relevant information, including warnings for certain matters, to a buyer in a single document along with any prescribed certificates. The Act will be supported by a regulation that will prescribe information that must be disclosed under the seller disclosure scheme, which is proposed to include a warning statement about the potential presence of asbestos and direct buyers to access further information about asbestos.

Continue to promote asbestos safety messages to the community

- Asbestos safety messages were promoted in the community with information displays and inspectors from OIR participating in community-facing events including:
 - Brisbane Home Show
 - Cairns Home Show
 - Rockhampton Home Show
 - Mackay Home Show
 - Fraser Coast Home Show
 - Brisbane Exhibition (EKKA).
- Ongoing social media on OIR's platforms encourage industry and the community to share posts about asbestos safety, including safety for flood clean up, water blasting asbestos and DIY caution.
 - Workplace Health and Safety Queensland [Facebook page](#)
 - Electrical Safety Office [Facebook page](#)
 - Workplace Health and Safety Queensland [Instagram page](#)
 - Workplace Health and Safety Queensland [LinkedIn page](#).

² Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs)



Priority 2

Identification and effective management of legacy in situ ACMs, imported asbestos and naturally occurring asbestos

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

- The Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works (DHLGPPW)³ continued to explore options to establish an asbestos eradication agency (for government owned and controlled buildings).

Identify and promote robust models for identifying and grading ACMs

- QBuild, as a provider of asbestos management services to departments, will continue working with customer agencies on their asbestos management practices, such as identifying and grading ACMs through asbestos audits.

Priority 3

Safe removal, transport and disposal of asbestos waste

Ensure existing tools for prioritising removal of ACMs are reviewed, tested, promoted and used

- QBuild continues to work with customer agencies in the provision of asbestos management services including the tools for prioritising the removal of ACMs.


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

- OIR is engaging with the demolition industry to ensure that workers operating excavators and other plant in an asbestos removal area and carrying out licensed asbestos removal activities (including moving soil or debris that contains ACMs) have undertaken the necessary VET training course prescribed by section 460 of the *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011*. OIR also attends forums hosted by the Demolition and Asbestos Industry Association for its members to discuss issues identified in the asbestos removal industry.

Review existing requirements for the transport and disposal of asbestos waste to identify any barriers to compliance

- Consultation with the community and industry in 2023 identified the following barriers to compliance with asbestos disposal requirements:
 - lack of disposal facilities accepting ACM waste
 - high levels of administration and high disposal costs at those facilities accepting ACM waste.

³ Formerly the Department of Energy and Public Works.



DESI is considering how to address these barriers, which are generally business decisions of landfill owners/operators. As the majority of Queensland's landfills are owned by local councils, DESI continues to work with LGAQ to understand the issues and explore potential options for their resolution. DESI is also conducting analysis on whether the distance between ACM removal sites and suitable disposal locations could be a contributing factor for the illegal dumping of ACMs.

Link with the enablers and opportunities provided in the *Keeping Queensland Clean: The Litter and Illegal Dumping Plan* to encourage the legal disposal of ACMs by members of the public

- In 2022-23, DESI received 46 reports of illegally dumped ACMs in 17 local government areas. This was similar to the previous financial year, where there were 45 reports in 19 local government areas, but less than 2020-21, where there were 61 reports across 22 local government areas.
- DESI continues to support local councils manage illegally dumped waste, including ACMs, by funding projects in 21 participating councils totalling \$2.3 million, under Round 2B of the Local Government Illegal Dumping Partnerships Program. The funding allowed councils to employ 17 dedicated illegal dumping compliance officers for 12 months and purchase compliance related equipment. Activities focused on the investigation and prevention of illegally dumped waste.

Priority 4

Effective and coordinated regulation

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

- A consultation paper on options for the safe removal of 10 square metres of asbestos by homeowners was released by QH in June 2023. The paper was prepared in response to concerns raised by industry and advocacy groups about potential unsafe removal of small quantities of asbestos by homeowners. The feedback received in response to the three options proposed in the consultation paper is under consideration by QH.

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

- OIR continues to engage with regulators in other jurisdictions to monitor developments on asbestos-related matters through formal and informal networks, including Safe Work Australia, and participating on the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council. OIR has representatives on three of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency's committees:
 - Asbestos Awareness Committee
 - Research and Evaluation Committee
 - Asbestos Assessments Working Group.




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

- OIR ensured effective compliance and enforcement of workplace health and safety laws by responding to all asbestos-related incidents in 2023.
- During 2023, in relation to asbestos issues, OIR inspectors issued:
 - 362 improvement notices
 - 77 prohibition notices
 - 50 infringement notices.
- During 2023, in relation to asbestos issues, OIR:
 - commenced five new comprehensive investigations
 - completed and referred five matters to the Office of the Workplace Health and Safety Prosecutor (OWHSP) for consideration of prosecution action. The OWHSP finalised six asbestos-related prosecutions, resulting in a combined penalty amount of \$208,600. Additionally, one individual was also ordered by the court to complete 60 hours of community service
 - completed and referred two matters to the Asbestos Licence Review Panel (ALRP) for consideration of licence sanctions. Of the four matters considered by the ALRP, one asbestos assessor licence was cancelled, two class B asbestos removal licence holder authorisations were cancelled and one class B asbestos removal licence holder's authorisation was suspended for two months.
- OIR continues to deliver significant WHS compliance campaigns, with the completion of an asbestos register and management plan compliance campaign running from September 2023–November 2023. The campaign assessed Part 8.3 'Management of asbestos and associated risks' of the *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011*. During the campaign, 139 businesses were assessed, resulting in 121 enforcement actions being taken. OIR plans to repeat this successful campaign for a third time in 2024.
- 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, was updated. This protocol enables state and local governments to deliver improved asbestos services to the community, and provides a clear pathway for a timely response to asbestos incidents.

Support local governments to enforce devolved responsibilities

- OIR and QH continue to support local governments to administer devolved responsibilities by delivering authorised environmental health officer (EHO) training and refresher training. In 2023 a total of 83 people were trained in the EHO course. Courses were held in Townsville, Gold Coast, Caboolture, and Gympie. OIR has developed a delivery plan for training sessions in 2024 in coordination with QH, DESI and LGAQ.

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- The training that is provided to local government authorised officers was updated in a major project which involved:
 - converting five modules from in-person delivery to eLearning and separating eLearning content into smaller modules to allow targeted learning and refresher training
 - creating a secure online library of relevant asbestos-related resources, to enable authorised officers to refresh their knowledge as needed
 - developing a single online system for managing training and streamlining administrative processes to replace the four separate systems previously used
 - developing refresher training sessions for authorised persons, based on five common asbestos related events that authorised persons may encounter.

As a result of these changes, authorised officers will find it easier to access the information they need to respond to asbestos-related incidents or enquiries when they need it.

- During 2023, QH assessed and gave approval to proceed with an Asbestos Reimbursement Scheme claim from Mackay Regional Council for the clean up and remediation of an incident involving the high pressure cleaning of an ACM fence at a domestic property in Mackay.

Undertake research into trends and emerging issues, including the health risks associated with naturally occurring asbestos, to support evidence-based policy

- In May 2023, Resources Safety and Health Queensland (RSHQ) engaged a consultant to undertake a literature review on the potential health effects of exposure to cleavage fragments (CFs), short asbestos fibres (SAFs) and thin asbestos fibres (TAFs) arising from interaction with naturally occurring asbestos. The review is due to be completed in 2024, and is expected to cover a range of matters including risk arising from exposure to these fibres and methods for analysing and assessing such exposure, particularly in the context of mine workers.

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

- OIR remains involved with the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities Imported Materials with Asbestos Working Group (the Working Group), with the Director of the Occupational Health, Hygiene and Asbestos Unit (OHHAU) chairing the Working Group in 2023 and providing technical support. 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 has a protocol for coordinating a multijurisdictional response to identified asbestos importations.
- OIR responded to two events of imported materials containing asbestos found in the Queensland supply chain in 2023.
- OIR continues to develop an action plan that will guide how OIR responds to reports of imported materials containing asbestos within Queensland, informed by the content of the Imported Materials with Asbestos Working Group Rapid Response Protocol. This will include updated guidance for inspectors who respond to these incidents.



Future work

The 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 2024 includes:

- the completion of QH review into the ‘10m² threshold provision’ in the *Public Health Regulation 2018*
- reviewing the content of the Queensland Government asbestos website
- undertaking cross-agency compliance activities
- continuing to raise community awareness about the safe handling of ACMs
- 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
- finalising the Queensland Government’s consideration of establishing an asbestos eradication agency (for government owned and controlled buildings).