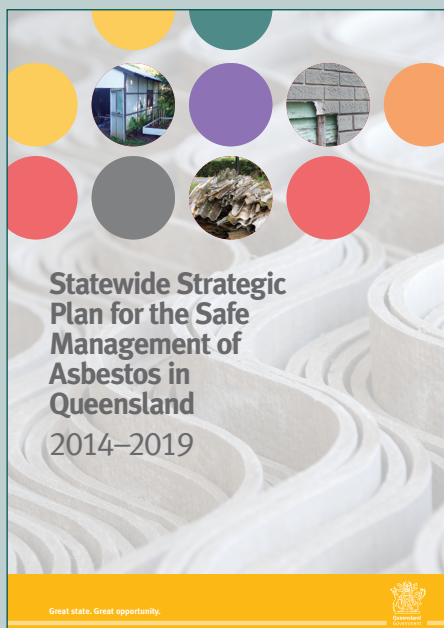


Asbestos strategy report card

30 September 2014

Launch of the Asbestos strategy



Queensland Government agencies responsible for managing and regulating asbestos are working better together to deliver a more efficient, effective and seamless system of service delivery, and reduce the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres in workplaces, domestic premises and in the natural environment.

An Interagency Asbestos Group (IAG), comprised of six government departments and the Local Government Association of Queensland, developed the *Statewide Strategic Plan for the Safe Management of Asbestos in Queensland 2014-2019* (Asbestos strategy) to provide a strategic and coordinated approach to the regulation and management of asbestos in Queensland.

The Asbestos strategy was officially released by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice on 3 April 2014 and focuses on the following priority areas:

- minimising the risk of exposure to asbestos
- seamless and integrated government service delivery
- community education and awareness about asbestos.

This is the first progress report under the strategy.

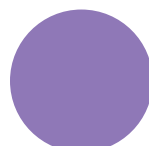
Seamless and integrated government service delivery

Implementing a collaborative service delivery model for the administration of asbestos laws has been a strategic transformation priority since the Queensland Ombudsman released *The Asbestos Report: An investigation into the regulation of asbestos in Queensland* (Asbestos report) in March 2013.

The Asbestos report was highly critical of the lack of coordination and cooperation between agencies in situations where their jurisdictions overlap. In response, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) was appointed as the lead agency for the coordination of issues relevant to the management and regulation of asbestos. Relevant agencies are working collaboratively through the Interagency Asbestos Group to provide coordination and strategic oversight of asbestos issues, incident response and joining up of asbestos services across government boundaries.

State and local governments have agreed on the roles and responsibilities of each agency in relation to asbestos management, which includes a role for local governments in enforcing asbestos regulations in domestic settings. The state government is providing high quality training, similar to that delivered to work health and safety inspectors, to environmental health officers and other local government staff to assist them in identifying asbestos and undertaking effective enforcement action. The initial face-to-face training being delivered across the state commenced in October 2014 and will be finalised in early 2015.

A statutory indemnity for local governments enforcing asbestos regulations under the *Public Health Act 2005* is also being considered as part of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, introduced into Parliament in September 2014.



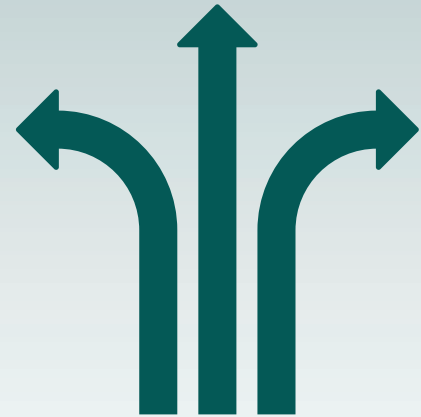
Key achievements under the Asbestos strategy

Multiagency asbestos incident response protocol

The protocol has been finalised by the IAG and sets out how agencies will respond to and manage asbestos incidents. While each agency is guided by its statutory obligations, the protocol acknowledges that the management of asbestos incidents may require agencies to collaborate and contribute beyond these obligations to ensure there is an effective response to community concerns about an asbestos incident.

It includes a list of over 25 practical scenarios to ensure there is coordination and collaboration between government agencies when responding to all asbestos incidents. Some examples include:

- derelict or fire-damaged domestic premises known or suspected of containing asbestos
- incident at a workplace (including where a domestic premises is a workplace) caused by a business, and where any asbestos debris has spread beyond the workplace property boundary into another property or properties (including domestic premises and/or waterways) – for example, the unlawful activity of high pressure water cleaning an asbestos cement sheet roof
- regulated waste transport without a licence
- illegal dumping of asbestos waste on local council land or state-owned land.



Whole-of-government asbestos communication strategy

A whole-of-government asbestos communication strategy has been developed by the IAG to improve public awareness of asbestos-related matters and ensure a consistent message is provided by all government agencies.

Key activities conducted to date include:

- promotion of the Queensland Government asbestos website (asbestos.qld.gov.au) and hotline 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
- publishing safe work procedures for working with and cleaning up asbestos containing materials
- creating an online register of asbestos removal licence holders where the public can easily check licensing of contractors
- regularly providing up-to-date information to the public through the eSAFE newsletters, social media updates and the website
- increasing community editorial and media opportunities, including through the Asbestos Related Disease Support Society Queensland's newsletter
- promoting the films *Losing breath: The Adam Sager story* and *Clear and present danger: Asbestos exposed*
- attending the 2014 Brisbane Home Shows in February and August, where 36 per cent of visitors indicated an intention to renovate their properties – and where 2000 asbestos home renovator guides and over 4000 asbestos safety DVDs were distributed at the August event.



Additional achievements

Since the approval of the Asbestos strategy, Government agencies have made progress in implementing the initiatives in the plan and improving asbestos safety. In addition to the above, other key achievements include:



- achieving agreement between agencies about the roles and responsibilities of each agency in relation to asbestos management and publishing of this information, along with the legislation administered by each agency, on the Queensland Government asbestos website
- publishing a list of local government waste disposal sites, that accept asbestos, on the Queensland Government asbestos website to help members of the public find a local disposal site
- amending the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 to simplify requirements for business and to ensure that asbestos work is done by properly qualified workers (commenced on 16 May 2014).

Future priorities

The future work program of the Interagency Asbestos Group in 2015 includes:



- considering issues in relation to the clean-up of asbestos debris where the party responsible for causing it cannot be found or is not able to pay for decontamination of the area
- scoping the extent of problem derelict buildings and asbestos waste more broadly in indigenous and remote communities and in this context, considering issues around asbestos removal costs, location of qualified asbestos removalists and appropriate disposal options
- developing strategies to reduce illegal asbestos dumping and to manage asbestos in disposal facilities in local government areas.

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