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SNOWY MOUNTAINS WEEKLY

Asbestos removal costs local family \$30,000

By Nicole Angus

Recently, local resident Dom Rankin signed a cheque for \$30,000 for the removal of asbestos from his home.

Had Mr Rankin been living in the ACT he would not have paid a cent for the very same job.

A furore in the ACT in 1988, over the use of loose asbestos for insulation in around 1,300 houses, led to a determination by the, then controlling Federal Government to fully fund the removal of the dangerous fibre.

Since then, the formation of the ACT Government has resulted in dual contributions from both the ACT and Federal Governments.

Mr Rankin has been lobbying furiously over the past six months in an attempt to secure some compensation from either the Federal or NSW Government for the removal of asbestos insulation from the roof of his Jindabyne house. But his enquires have been passed from one department to another.

Mr Rankin has written letters to State Member for Monaro Peter Cochran, the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services, Federal Member for Eden/Monaro Jim Snow and Minister for Arts, Sport, Tourism and Territories, Ros Kelly.

Mr Snow recently issued a statement calling on the NSW Government to finance "the urgent removal of asbestos from district homes".

Mr Snow said: "The ACT then under Federal control, recognised that their own health inspectors passed the use of the material. It is time NSW recognised the material was also permitted under NSW regulations.

"It is not the fault of homeowners that the substance was passed as safe. The tradition is that the Government responsible for the administering authority takes responsibility for approval given," Mr Snow said.

Mr Rankin said he wants someone to take responsibility.

"As far as getting any satisfaction from the politicians, I may as well be hitting my head against a brick wall, they have just passed the buck from one to another," Mr Rankin said.

"The stuff doesn't lose its toxicity when it crosses the ACT border"

"When you read in the papers the waste the government can run up... for example the exorbitant cost of refurbishing Wal Murray's office, or the \$400 million of tax payer's money, the government is going to spend to try to attract the Olympic games to Sydney, when there is no guarantee that it will come here... well that's an awful lot of houses which could be cleaned [have the asbestos removed]. So they can't stuff down my neck that they are short of cash," he said.

Mr Rankin's attention was first drawn to the problems of asbestos, by the publicity which surrounded the asbestos problems in the ACT. As Mr Rankin's house had been built in the early 70s (around the time asbestos was being used for housing insulation in the area), he became suspicious, and decided to have his home analysed.

Continued on page 2



It demonstrates the...
ving the dangerous...
ester and paper mix,

business for help

through CES are eligible for sub- while the jobseeker makes the on to employment, while under and the SkillShare banner, CES and runs courses at the Department ation, Employment and Training's

the results are measured in terms of employment," he said.
"We ask for information from industry as to what they want. They've got certain levels that are expected and that's what we aim for."

INSIDE
* Flood Relief Appeal update

... in the past.
 era of the video telephone is just around
 corner, and with it comes telephone hon-

... article in Tuesday's Sydney
 ing Her... by the end of next year the
 telephone will have "started selling" in
 table numb...

...nston Tan, principal engineer of inter-
 communication services at Telecom's
 ch laboratories in Melbourne, said the
 video phones would be on the market by
 1 of this year.

... video phone enables you to see a moving
 image of your caller.

...ling to the article, Australia will be
 leading video phones, ahead of most
 countries, except, of course, Japan.

... predicted that by 1995, the phones
 cost as little as \$1,000 and would be
 available to most residential customers.

... is not lost, you also have the choice of
 turning off the camera at your end, should
 you be at your best.

...h, this is no doubt a breakthrough in
 communications technology and will have
 many advantages for the business com-
 munity. Its use in personal situations does not
 have the same attraction.

... will be a major component in its
 success, but most people like to have
 a say about who they invite into their
 home.

...ones aside, we hope there will not be
 disappointed kids this week with the
 Kids Korner will not be running in
 this month. Space constraints meant some-
 one to give, and unfortunately for our
 readers, Kids Korner got the short

... promise it will be back, bigger and
 better, next week!

Snowline

S SUPPLIES

cheapest, cleanest
 most reliable energy
 in the mountains.



Jindabyne and the Mountains
 7 DAYS 8am - 7pm

BORAL GAS

Snowline Gas Supplies
 Cnr Kosciusko & Thredbo Rds
 Jindabyne 56 2099

VY-MONARO WEEKLY

Street, Cooma NSW 2630

... Society, and a steering
 committee was formed at a recent
 public meeting.

The steering committee has noted
 three possible venues and is currently
 inquiring as to the availability of
 those venues. If the sites are available
 the steering committee will make
 arrangements to inspect them.

The steering committee has also been
 discussing a theme for the proposed
 museum.

According to Mr Robertson one
 recommendation was a broad
 transport theme, which would look at
 local transport from the Aboriginal
 movements in the area, through to the

people access to the documented
 history of the area.

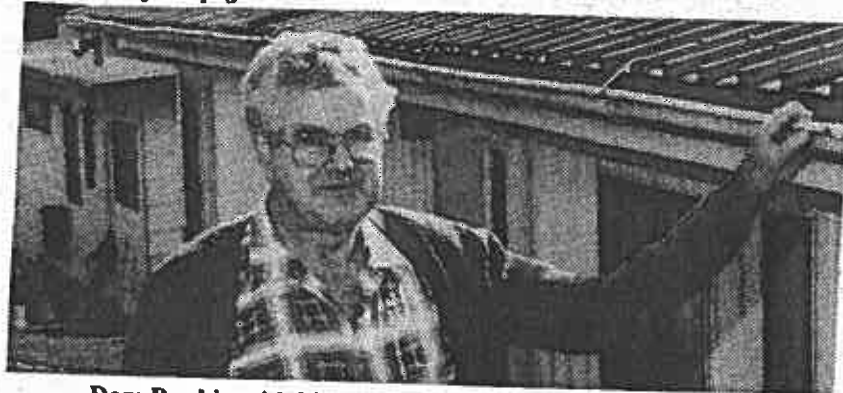
Mr Robertson said when a more firm
 proposal had been developed the
 steering committee would once again
 call a public meeting to gauge public
 support for their actions to date.

Funding was an area the group was
 yet to consider in detail, and this
 would be done after the proposal was
 more solid.

The group also intends to join the
 Museums Association of Australia,
 which is a non-government body
 which aids local museums in
 planning and conservation matters.

Asbestos concerns for locals

Continued from page 1



Dom Rankin with his very expensive, asbestos-free roof

After testing positive,
 Mr Rankin said it was
 like having a "millstone"
 around his neck.

"My kids have lived in
 this house since they
 were babies [they are
 now in their mid-teens],
 but as far as we know it
 has not been detrimental
 to my family's health,"
 he said.

"But I am not only con-
 cerned about my own
 case, there are a lot of
 other people who are
 worried out of their
 minds," he said.

After finding his home
 was insulated with as-
 bestos, Mr Rankin has
 had the air monitored
 several times to ensure
 there was no danger.

Before having the as-
 bestos removed, the

Rankins put their house
 on the market, but found
 it was "worthless" while
 it contained asbestos.

According to ACT li-
 censed asbestos remover
 Frank Williams, asbes-
 tos also causes problems
 when renovating, and it
 was difficult to find
 tradesmen who would
 perform electrical work
 or plumbing work on
 houses which contained
 asbestos.

Mr Williams was one of
 the early lobbyists for
 government contribu-
 tions, when the extent of
 the asbestos problem
 was first discovered in
 Canberra.

He said removal of as-
 bestos from a house can
 cost between \$30,000
 and \$60,000 due to the

enormity of the task and
 the safety precautions
 which have to be taken.

In an article in Tues-
 day's *Canberra Times*
 former general manager
 of the ACT Asbestos
 Branch Dr Keith McK-
 enry lashed out at recent
 criticism which has been
 levelled at the cost and
 efficiency of the ACT
 asbestos removal exer-
 cise.

Dr McKenry also
 pointed the finger at the
 NSW government for
 failing to act on the as-
 bestos issue in that state.
 "The real issue, as I see
 it, is the dereliction of
 duty in relation to
 Queanbeyan - where
 they have not even con-
 ducted a survey to iden-
 tify affected homes,
 much less sealed them to
 ensure they are safe to
 live in on an interim ba-
 sis," he said.

As Mr Rankin pointed
 out: "This stuff doesn't
 lose its
 toxicity when it crosses
 the ACT border."

* What is asbestos? See
 story page 5.

Raffle draw date change

The Monster Raffle, organised for the Melody
 McDuff Appeal, will be drawn this Saturday at
 8pm at the Monaro Hotel, not August 10 as
 advertised.

Tickets are still on sale and can be purchased for
 \$2 from Monaro Hotel and Monaro Electricity.

PUBLISHER

Neil Hardy

...ers on an adjoin-
 ing hidden in grass
 The men, all ag-
 mitabel Police
 ministering pro-
 Three were addi-
 and steal and en-
 One was additi-
 damage, and a
 lands and obtain-
 tion.

They have been
 Court on August
 placed on additi-
 port daily to Cha

.....
 Two men from
 have been bailed
 charged with de-
 hibitive drugs, f-
 cannabis and pos-
 sible drug - canna-
 The two men, age
 when Cooma poli-
 on Kosciusko Ro-
 Sunday, and the m-
 modore was being
 tion.

The constable who
 could smell canna-
 The driver tested
 vehicle was search-
 tity of LSD, amphe-
 Both men were tak-
 taken to Cooma H-
 urine sample.
 They will appear in
 gust 7, 1991.

.....
 An 18-year-old C-
 Cooma police at BP
 after they noticed t-
 registration plates.
 The 18-year-old m-
 lice enquired as to
 Despite warnings h-
 him under arrest.
 He was eventually
 placed in the rear of
 He has been bailed
 Court on August 7,
 conduct; resist arres-
 three counts.

.....
 Police arrested a n-
 11.40pm on Saturday
 by a Mobile Breath-
 an expired driver's l-
 unregistered and un-
 cated a fire arm in the
 a holder of a current s-
 He was taken to Coor-
 was charged with po-
 shooters' licence susp-
 and driving an unregis-
 cle. He has been bailed
 Court on August 7, 19

EDITOR

H&B RFW:ja
File EV3

10 March 1993

The Hon. R A Phillips MP
NSW Minister for Health
State Parliament
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir

SUBJECT ASBESTOS INSULATION MATERIAL

Council at its Meeting of 3 March 1993 considered a report in relation to asbestos insulation in housing and resolved to refer several questions to you for clarification of Council's Policy in this regard.

Queanbeyan has a unique location adjacent to Canberra in which City there operates an asbestos removal policy initiated by the Commonwealth Government and now jointly funded by the Commonwealth and ACT Governments.

In 1989 the Commonwealth Government invited Council to join its asbestos identification (and later removal) programme. This was referred to the NSW Health Department for advice. Council resolved to not avail itself of this inspection service and to continue to refer samples of suspected asbestos for identification and advice to NSW Health Department Regional Office at Goulburn.

Subsequent reports to Council resulted in policy Number 12/032 "Asbestos Insulation in Buildings", a copy of which is attached. This policy accepts that asbestos may be considered safe if left undisturbed, but is based on the assumption that there will be no necessity to enter the roofspace or to disturb the asbestos material.

Council was instrumental in calling a NSW Health Regional Taskforce on Asbestos Insulation which met once only on 28 August 1989. One recommendation of this Taskforce was that "the Departments of Health, Local Government and the WorkCover Authority be requested to liaise and formulate policy and procedure regarding asbestos insulation in residential premises."

Members of Council would be grateful for a copy of any State policy which exists in this regard and for your comments on Council's existing policy.

.../2

There are several points which need to be considered in relation to asbestos insulation in buildings.

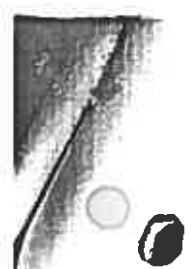
1. Contamination of a living environment with asbestos fibres is hazardous to health and the risk is dose related.
2. To minimise this risk in houses insulated with asbestos materials, the following preventive measures are recommended. (a) Containment of loose asbestos insulation material by effective and durable sealing. or (b) Total removal of loose asbestos insulation material by licensed contractor.
3. Complete removal of asbestos fibres is not achievable.
4. Any demolition, building, electrical or plumbing work must be carried out by a qualified contractor.

(Points 1,2,3 and 4 from letter dated 29 January 1993 from Dr Peter Hlavacek, Medical Officer of Health and Director, Public Health Unit, S E Region, NSW Health Department.)

5. There is no legislation under current WorkCover control which covers any removal of asbestos from domestic dwellings.
6. Asbestos does not present any significant health risk whilst acting as a static insulation medium in a domestic ceiling area.
7. If the owner does wish to remove any asbestos material from his dwelling then compliance with the current WorkCover legislation is mandatory. In this respect the use of a licensed asbestos removalist is required.
8. Any alterations to a building or structure containing asbestos shall have the asbestos removed by a licensed asbestos removalist prior to construction activities commencing.

(Points 5,6,7, and 8 from letter dated 2 September 1991 from Peter Goodhew, Scientific Advisor, NSW WorkCover Authority.)

The questions which Council refers to you as Minister for Health are as follows. I would be grateful for replies to these questions as quickly as possible as the longterm health and shortterm concern of Queanbeyan residents are involved.

- 
1. Did the Housing Commission use asbestos insulation in ceilings?
 2. How many asbestos contaminated houses have ceiling mounted hot water services?
 3. Will private expert asbestos removers still be in business when the time comes to demolish these houses or do major roof repairs in dwellings with asbestos insulation?

.../3

4. Will people still be conscious of the danger of asbestos when following generations use these houses and the use of new asbestos has been long discontinued?
5. Will innocent buyers of contaminated houses have legal redress against the vendor?
6. Who will police the use of warnings signs at ceiling entry points?
7. Will electricians and plumbers be willing or advised to repair hot water systems or electrical wiring in ceilings without special clothing and breathing apparatus?
8. As it is logical that safe servicing, maintenance and replacement of equipment located in roofspace would require extra expenses, who would pay? Will there be a public subsidy?
9. As the use of asbestos was approved by state authorities is it not logical that the state government not local government accept responsibility for formulating a long term protection policy and paying for its implementation?

Yours faithfully


HUGH A. PERCY
CITY MANAGER/TOWN CLERK

Attach.

Copies to: The Regional Director
NSW Health Department
Locked Bay No 11
GOULBURN NSW 2580

The Hon. P Cochran MP
Member of Monaro
PO Box 716
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

H&B RFW:ja
File EV 3

10 March 1993

The Hon P Cochran MP
Member for Monaro
PO Box 716
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

Dear Sir


SUBJECT ASBESTOS INSULATION MATERIAL

Council has on previous occasions drawn to your attention the plight of NSW residents who have, or suspect the presence of asbestos insulation in their homes.

Council considered a report on this matter at its Meeting of 3 March 1993. It was resolved to retain the present policy and to ask the NSW Minister for Health for answers to questions related to longterm safety of occupants, repairers and demolishers of asbestos contaminated buildings.

A copy of the letter to the Minister is attached. Council seeks your support to obtain answers to these questions and to reach conclusion in relation to a State Policy on asbestos insulation in buildings.

Yours faithfully


HUGH A PERCY
CITY MANAGER/TOWN CLERK

Attach.



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
 MEMBER FOR MONARO

Electorate Office
 Karabar Shopping Mall
 Queanbeyan, NSW 2620
 P.O. Box 716
 Queanbeyan, NSW 2620
 Tel: (06) 299 4899
 Fax: (06) 297 9998

30 April 1993

My Ref:93-0005(5)
 Yours:H&B RFW:ja (EV 3)

Mr Hugh Percy, General Manager
 Queanbeyan City Council
 PO Box 90
 QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

Dear Hugh

I write in reply to your letter of 10 March 1993 regarding your correspondence to the NSW Minister for Health in relation to asbetos.

You would be well aware that this matter has been raised on numerous occasions in the past by individuals and other organisations claiming that the New South Wales Government should undertake similar action to that of the ACT Government (and formerly the Federal Government) in removing the asbestos from effected Canberra properties.

The present, and previous, New South Wales Governments have denied responsibility for this process and I would therefore suggest that any further pursuit of the matter would not prove fruitful.

Scientific evidence presented to the Department of Housing and made public through the media the last time this matter was raised suggested that the levels of likely asbestos infection were negligible and that in effect the likelihood of contamination from asbestos in a home which had been insulated with the substance was less likely to occur than that of travelling along a dusty road.

I am therefore not able to support your request on this occasion.

Yours sincerely

Peter Cochran

PETER COCHRAN MP
 Member for Monaro


PC:jt

REFERR TO	ACTION BY
CITY MANAGER TOWN CLERK	
COMMUNITY SERVICES	
ENGINEERING SERVICES	
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SERVICES	
X HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES	
PLANNING, PARKS & CONSERVATION SERVICES	
COPY	
COMMENTS	
'93-05-03-3919	
FILE No.	RK/0206/003

*Noted RFW
 7/5/93 Take
 up with Mr Cochran
 (then to Council?)
 RFW*



Peter Cochran puts Monaro First

 NEW SOUTH WALES		ACTION BY
MINISTER FOR HEALTH		
CITY MANAGER		
COMMUNITY SERVICES		
ENGINEERING SERVICES		
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SERVICES		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES		
PLANNING, PARKS & CONSERVATION SERVICES		
COPY		
COMMENTS		
193-05-11-0110		
FILE NO.	EVT/0206/003	

M/93/02236

4 MAY 1993

Mr HA Percy
 Town Clerk
 Queanbeyan City Council
 257 Crawford Street
 QUEANBEYAN 2620

Dear Mr Percy

I refer to your letter concerning loose asbestos roof insulation in Queanbeyan.

As you are aware the NSW Health Department in 1989 opted for a policy of containment of loose asbestos insulation in houses in Queanbeyan. Subsequently residents of Queanbeyan were invited, through advertisements in the local press, to submit samples of roof insulation for analysis. To date only seven residences have been identified as containing loose asbestos.

The NSW Health Department agrees with the eight points made in your letter regarding asbestos insulation in buildings.

The nine questions which you pose in relation to the health and safety and legal aspects of this issue are more appropriately addressed to the Departments of Housing and the Workcover Authority. Accordingly I have forwarded a copy of your letter to my colleagues the Hon R Webster MLC, Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing and the Hon J Hannaford MLC, Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations.

The major responsibility of the NSW Health Department is to determine the magnitude of the health risk posed by loose asbestos insulation. The Department will conduct some careful air and dust monitoring of houses in Queanbeyan with asbestos insulation in the roof space. It would be irresponsible of me or the Government to embark on an expensive programme of removal if no health benefit could be demonstrated. The current policy of containment will be re-appraised in the light of these results.

I appreciate the reasons which prompted you to raise this matter and trust that this information clarifies the situation.

Yours sincerely



The Hon Ron Phillips MP
 Minister for Health



**MINISTER FOR PLANNING
AND
MINISTER FOR HOUSING**

Level 12 Westfield Tower
100 William Street
DARLINGHURST, Sydney 2010

Phone: (02) 368 2666
Fax: (02) 368 2688

Mr H A Percy
Town Clerk
Queanbeyan City Council
P O Box 90
QUEANBEYAN 2620

YOUR REF: H & BRFW:ja
File: EV3
OUR REF: H 09559

REFERS TO	ACTION BY
CITY MANAGER	
TOWN CLERK	
COMMUNITY SERVICES	
ENGINEERING SERVICES	
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SERVICES	
X HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES	
PLANNING, PARKS & RECREATION SERVICES	
COPY	
COMMENTS	
FILE No.	HSD/0195/002

09 JUN 1993

Dear Mr Percy

I refer to your letter regarding asbestos insulation material in housing at Queanbeyan as it relates to Department of Housing dwellings.

The Department has carried out initial investigations into its housing stock in Queanbeyan. While there has been no evidence to support the presence of asbestos insulation in its dwellings, the matter is being pursued.

The general question of asbestos insulation removal from housing stock will probably be dependent on the N.S.W. Health Department's findings of air and dust monitoring. The containment of asbestos insulation may be an appropriate measure if monitoring identifies lower fibre levels in dust and air in living environments.

In regard to the questions posed in your letter a number of responses can be offered by the Department as follows:-

Question 1

No Departmental records indicate use of asbestos insulation in ceilings of its housing stock. A five year programme of stock assessment is being developed for a state-wide asset management database to include insulation type.

Question 2

N/A



Question 3

Given the heightened awareness of the problems with asbestos, registered asbestos removal businesses will most likely be active for many years to come as their demand will increase with the growing incidence of the material being detected.

Questions 4 to 9

To date, the Department has not encountered the use of asbestos insulation in any of its dwellings. Consequently, the need to consider the matters raised in these questions has never arisen.

Overall, the questions posed relate generally to the formulation and implementation of a policy for asbestos containment, removal and responsibility. The role of the Department is not to create such a policy but rather to contribute by commenting on a proposed policy.

I appreciate the concerns that prompted your letter and trust the above information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Webster". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R".

Robert Webster MLC
Minister for Planning
and Minister for Housing



New South Wales

Hon. Kerry Chikarovski, MP
Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment
Minister for the Status of Women

• Level 8, 185 Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

• Facsimile (02) 237 2500
• Telephone (02) 237 2555

9300486SL

Mr Hugh Percy
City Manager/Town Clerk
City of Queanbeyan
City Council Chambers
257 Crawford Street
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

REFER TO	ACTION BY
CITY MANAGER/TOWN CLERK	
COMMUNITY SERVICES	
ENGINEERING SERVICES	
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SERVICES	
X HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES	
PLANNING, PARKS & CONSERVATION SERVICES	
COPY	
COMMENTS 9506-21.6024	
FILE No. EVT/0206/003	

17 JUN 1993

Dear Mr Percy

I refer to your correspondence concerning asbestos insulation in housing addressed to my colleague, the Minister for Health, the Hon R A Phillips MP. As some of the matters raised in your letter fall within my administration the Minister has referred your letter to me for consideration and reply.

At the outset, I would point out that the WorkCover Authority which falls within my administrative is only responsible for activities related to occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation.

I have arranged for the questions raised in your letter to be carefully considered in the light of the above responsibilities and the following information has been provided by WorkCover for the respective questions you have posed:

3. Currently, there are more than 120 contractors licensed by WorkCover and it is anticipated that asbestos removal contractors will continue to operate while there is asbestos to be removed.
4. Public awareness of the health and safety risks associated with asbestos-based products is increasing, not decreasing. WorkCover will continue to disseminate information on the health and safety risks of asbestos-based products as long as these products are being used (as in brake pads) or are present in buildings (commercial and domestic).

*Noted - reported to Guel's Meg
8 July 93 RAN*

7. Information is readily available on the need for appropriate precautions to be taken by persons carrying out maintenance work in areas where asbestos-based products are found and considerable publicity has been generated relating to asbestos and its harmful effects. In this context I have enclosed a copy of some information on the topic produced by WorkCover. In addition, the Regulations under the Construction Safety Act contain extensive provisions designed to provide protection for workers engaged in asbestos removal or who come into contact with asbestos.

9. It is incorrect to say that the use of asbestos-based products was "approved" by government authorities. As the harmful effects of asbestos became known, immediate and extensive action was taken by government authorities to ban its use and to draw the attention of the public to the dangers posed by exposure to asbestos.

As outlined above, I have provided responses to the matters you have raised which primarily fall within my administration. This together with the information provided by my colleagues should assist your Council's appreciation of the situation with respect to the premises concerned in Queanbeyan.

Yours sincerely



Hon (Mrs) Kerry Chikarovski, MP
Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment
Minister for the Status of Women

HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES DIVISION'S REPORT TO MEETING OF COUNCIL
ON WEDNESDAY 7 JULY 1993.....3

SUBJECT : INFORMATION ON SERVICES PROVIDED (Continued)

1.3 ASBESTOS INSULATION IN BUILDINGS

(File EV 3)

SUMMARY

Council at its Meeting of 3 March 1993 (page 54) considered a report on asbestos insulation in housing and resolved to confirm its present policy number 12/032. It was also resolved to write to the Minister for Health asking about the longterm effects of asbestos fibres in the housing environment and calling for action in relation to identification and contamination or removal of asbestos in houses of Queanbeyan.

COMMENTS

Replies have been received from The Hon. Ron Phillips MP, Minister for Health, and from The Hon. Peter Cochran MP, Member for Monaro.

The Minister for Health states in part:

"As you are aware the NSW Health Department in 1989 opted for a policy of containment of loose asbestos insulation in houses in Queanbeyan. Subsequently residents of Queanbeyan were invited, through advertisements in the local press, to submit samples of roof insulation for analysis. To date only seven residences have been identified as containing loose asbestos.

"The NSW Health Department agrees with the eight points made in your letter regarding asbestos insulation in buildings.

"The major responsibility of the NSW Health Department is to determine the magnitude of the health risk posed by loose asbestos insulation. The Department will conduct some careful air and dust monitoring of houses in Queanbeyan with asbestos insulation in the roof space. It would be irresponsible of me or the Government to embark on an expensive programme of removal if no health benefit could be demonstrated. The current policy of containment will be reappraised in the light of these results."

The Member for Monaro states in part:

"You would be well aware that this matter has been raised on numerous occasions in the past by individuals and other organisations claiming that the New South Wales Government should undertake similar action to that of the ACT Government (and formerly the Federal Government) in removing the asbestos from effected Canberra properties.

"The present, and previous, New South Wales Governments have denied responsibility for this process and I would therefore suggest that any further pursuit of the matter would not prove fruitful.

"Scientific evidence presented to the Department of Housing and made public through the media the last time this matter was raised suggested that the levels of likely asbestos infection were negligible and that in effect the likelihood of contamination from asbestos in a home which had been insulated with the substance was less likely to occur than that of travelling along a dusty road."

SUBJECT : INFORMATION ON SERVICES PROVIDED (Continued)

COMMENTS (Continued) *E.V.S.*

The nine questions posed by Council to the Minister for Health "in relation to the health and safety and legal aspects of this issue are more appropriately addressed to the Department of Housing and the WorkCover Authority. Accordingly I have forwarded a copy of your letter to my colleagues The Hon. R Webster MLC, Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing and The Hon J Hannaford MLC, Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations."

The Minister for Housing states in part:

"The Department has carried out initial investigations into its housing stock in Queanbeyan. While there has been no evidence to support the presence of asbestos insulation in its dwellings, the matter is being pursued.

"The general question of asbestos insulation removal from housing stock will probably be dependent on the NSW Health Department's findings of air and dust monitoring. The containment of asbestos insulation may be an appropriate measure if monitoring identifies lower fibre levels in dust and air in living environments.

"No Departmental records indicate use of asbestos insulation in ceilings of its housing stock. A five year programme of stock assessment is being developed for a state-wide asset management database to include insulation type.

"Given the heightened awareness of the problems with asbestos, registered asbestos removal businesses will most likely be active for many years to come as their demand will increase with the growing incidence of the material being detected.

"To date, the Department has not encountered the use of asbestos insulation in any of its dwellings."

The Hon. Kerry Chikarovski MP, Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment has replied on behalf of the WorkCover Authority. She states in part:

".....the WorkCover Authority is only responsible for activities related to occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation."

"Currently, there are more that 120 contractors licensed by WorkCover and it is anticipated that asbestos removal contractors will continue to operate while there is asbestos to be removed.

"Public awareness of the health and safety risks associated with asbestos-based products is increasing, not decreasing. WorkCover will continue to disseminate information on the health and safety risks of asbestos-based products as long as these products are being used (as in brake pads) or are present in buildings (commercial and domestic).

"Information is readily available on the need for appropriate precautions to be taken by persons carrying out maintenance work in areas where asbestos-based products are found and considerable publicity has been generated relating to asbestos and its harmful effects. In this context I have enclosed a copy of some information on the topic produced by WorkCover. In addition, the Regulations under the Construction Safety Act contain extensive provisions designed to provide protection for workers engaged in asbestos removal or who come into contact with asbestos.

SUBJECT : INFORMATION ON SERVICES PROVIDED (Continued)

COMMENTS (Continued)

"It is incorrect to say that the use of asbestos-based products was "approved" by government authorities. As the harmful effects of asbestos became known, immediate and extensive action was taken by government authorities to ban its use and to draw the attention of the public to the dangers posed by exposure to asbestos."

These replies go part way to addressing Council's concerns and confirm Council's policy and direction in relation to identification containment and removal of asbestos insulation in buildings.

1.4 HEALTH AND BUILDING SURVEYORS' ANNUAL CONFERENCE
(File HS16)

The 1993 Annual State Conference for Health and Building Surveyors is to be held at Manly Sydney from 23 to 27 August 1993. Agenda items include

- * fire safety
- * housing - AMCORD and the Global Village
- * quality assurance
- * environment management biodiversity
- * toxic substances, land contamination, land degradation, and alternative uses
- * total catchment management
- * animal control
- * development control dispute resolution
- * public health challenges - risks, promotion, food nutrition, community health
- * training and employment
- * tour of CSIRO Experimental Building Station.

Aldermen, directors of other divisions of Council and health and building surveyors are invited to attend. For the first time last year an alderman of this Council attended this Annual Conference and was impressed by agenda quality and diversity of subject.. Registration fee for non members is \$440 plus accommodation and meals, an estimated maximum of \$1200 each additional person.

It is intended that two of Council's health and building surveyors attend this years conference.

Council may choose to consider sending one or two elected members as additional delegates.

H&B RFW:ja

File EVT/0206/003

Mr J Snow
Member for Eden Monaro
PO Box 232
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

Dear Sir

SUBJECT ASBESTOS INSULATION IN BUILDINGS

During the 1960s and 1970s a private contractor in the Queanbeyan Canberra area insulated private homes by pumping loose asbestos fibres into roofspaces. This practise was discontinued before 1980.

It has since been recognised that asbestos fibres present a danger to health and Council has been working closely with the South Eastern Public Health Unit of the NSW Health Department on a program of voluntary identification of insulation materials in roofspaces of houses. Seven homes have been identified as containing asbestos material.

There has been no survey of houses built before 1980 in Queanbeyan to determine the extent of asbestos insulation used in roofspaces. Based on approximately 1.5% of Canberra homes found to contain asbestos, there is an estimated 60 homes in Queanbeyan which are effected in this way.

Removal of asbestos from homes in Canberra has been undertaken by the Commonwealth Government which accepted responsibility for this task. Since formation of the ACT Government, the Commonwealth has shared the costs of this removal.

Because of the extent of the problem in Queanbeyan as a one-off New South Wales entity effected in the same way as the residents of Canberra, and because of costs involved in removal and the precedence already set by the Commonwealth Government in funding of ACT asbestos removal, it is requested that consideration be given by the Commonwealth Government to fund removal of asbestos insulation in the same way as it assisted effected home owners of Canberra.

Yours faithfully


HUGH A PERCY
GENERAL MANAGER

8 February 1994



OFFICE OF JIM SNOW, M.P.
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR EDEN-MONARO



CRIMINAL JUSTICE
COMMUNITY SERVICES
ENGINEERING SERVICES
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SERVICES
HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES
TRAINING SERVICES & COMMUNITY SERVICES

194-2-24-1007
EXT 206/003

18 February 1994

Mr Hugh Percy
General Manager
Queanbeyan City Council
PO Box 90
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2600

Dear Mr Percy

Thank you for your letter of 8 February 1994 concerning the removal of asbestos insulation from homes in Queanbeyan.

I have written to the Hon Brian Howe MP, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Services and the Hon Graham Richardson, Minister for Health concerning the matter and will let you know as soon as I receive a reply.

Yours sincerely

JIM SNOW
Federal Member for Eden-Monaro

(JS:LC)

Noted
REW
1/3/94

19 1 APR 1994



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA



GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone: (06) 289 1555
Telex: 61209 Fax: (06) 281 6946

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, HOUSING,
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Electorate Secretary to
Mr J.H. Snow MP
PO Box 232
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

6 APR 1994

The Hon B.L. Howe MP, has asked me to thank Mr Snow for his personal representations of 18 February 1994, on behalf of the Queanbeyan City Council concerning the removal of asbestos insulation in Queanbeyan.

As the matter raised comes under the portfolio responsibilities of the New South Wales Minister for Housing, The Hon R.J. Webster MLC, I have passed your letter to his office for consideration.

Gail Campbell

Gail Campbell
Ministerial Liaison Officer

Senior Adviser to
The Hon R.J. Webster MLC
Minister for Housing
Level 12, Westfield Towers
100 William Street
DARLINGHURST NSW 2010

	ACTION
CITY MANAGER TOWN CLERK	
COMMUNITY SERVICES	
ENGINEERING SERVICES	
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SERVICES	
X HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES	
PLANNING, PARKS & CONSERVATION SERVICES	
COPY	
COMMENTS	
94-4-15 1931	
FILE No.	RJG/200/003-021

Referred for consideration and appropriate action.

GMC

Gail Campbell
Ministerial Liaison Officer

*Noted RJW
15 April 94*

H&B RFW:ja

File: EVT/0206/003

Senior Adviser to
The Hon R J Webster MLC
Minister for Housing
Level 12 Westfield Towers
100 William Street
DARLINGHURST NSW 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBJECT ASBESTOS INSULATION IN BUILDINGS

Council by letter dated 8 February 1994 wrote to Mr J Snow Member for Eden Monaro in relation to asbestos insulation in buildings who has forwarded Council's letter to you for consideration and appropriate action.

Council's concern is that buildings within its area containing asbestos roof insulation material are not provided with the same benefits as private residences in Canberra which were found to contain this material.

In recent times the Commonwealth of Australia in conjunction with the ACT Government has funded removal of asbestos insulation within the ACT but this financial benefit does not extend to other parts of Australia.

Investigation has found that similar insulation exists in houses in Queanbeyan and perhaps also in Goulburn, Yass and Wagga. The extent is unknown but based on Canberra figures of approximately 1.5% of homes built before 1980 there are relatively low numbers of buildings involved.

Council and the residents of Queanbeyan are extremely concerned at the inequities which exist, the economic burden on residents of Queanbeyan, and the moral social and psychological issues involved.

It would be appreciated if this could be addressed as a matter of urgency and Council advised of the decision of the Commonwealth government to fund removal of asbestos insulation to those affected homes in the same way as the government assisted with asbestos removal those homeowners of Canberra.

Yours faithfully



B F WHITWORTH
DIRECTOR
HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES
FOR
HUGH A PERCY
GENERAL MANAGER

2 May 1994

Copy

Mr J Snow
Member for Eden Monaro
PO Box 232
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620



15 JUN 1994

MINISTER FOR HEALTH

M/94/3687

09 JUN 1994

Mr J H Snow MP
Federal Member for Eden-Monaro
P O Box 232
QUEANBEYAN 2620

Dear Mr Snow

I refer to your representations on behalf of Queanbeyan City Council concerning removal of asbestos insulation from homes in Queanbeyan.

The matters raised have been noted and I will carefully examine the position.

I shall be in touch with you again as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Ron Phillips MP
Minister for Health

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
JUN 17 1994	
FBI - SYDNEY	
94-6-17-3051	
FILE NO. [initials]	

*Noted RFW
20/6/94*



MINISTER FOR PLANNING
AND
MINISTER FOR HOUSING

Level 12 Westfield Tower
100 William Street
DARLINGHURST, Sydney 2010

YOUR REF:

OUR REF:

JA/740

Phone: (02) 368 2666
Fax: (02) 368 2688

	ACTION BY
COMMUNITY SERVICES	
TRADE SERVICES	
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SERVICES	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEALTH & BUILDING SERVICES	
PLANNING, PARKS & CONSERVATION SERVICES	
COPY	
94 5-20 2557	
FILE NO.	EVI/0206/003-02.

18 MAY 1994

Mr R F Whitworth
Director
Health & Building Services
for
Hugh A Percy
General Manager
Queanbeyan City Council
257 Crawford Street
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2650

Dear Mr Whitworth

Thank you for your letter regarding the Councils' concerns in relation to asbestos insulation in buildings.

As this matter falls within the portfolio of the Hon Ron Phillips MP, Minister for Health, I have forwarded your letter to him for consideration and reply direct.

Yours sincerely

Robert J Webster MLC
Minister for Planning
and Minister for Housing.

Noted RDL
27 May 94

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION'S REPORT TO MEETING OF COUNCIL ON
WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 1996.....47

ITEM NUMBER : 13
 SUBJECT : ASBESTOS INSULATION IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM
 1995/96
 REFERENCE : EV3
 19
 AUTHOR : THOMPSON/CARR

SUMMARY

This report summaries the inspections conducted by Council officers for the asbestos insulation identification program in Queanbeyan for 1995/96.

COMMENT

Council at its Meeting of 1 June 1994 resolved (Minute 563) on the issue of asbestos insulation in Queanbeyan homes:

1. to pursue an equitable solution to the asbestos roof insulation issue by involving local governments, state government, federal government and the owners of affected homes.
2. to determine the extent of asbestos roof insulation in Queanbeyan homes by distributing a leaflet to all relevant households, in rate notices, to solicitors, real estate agents and the like advising of Council's asbestos identification service and inviting home owners to contact Council to determine if their premises are involved in future negotiations attempting to resolve this issue, and seeking suggestions to reach an equitable solution.
3. that owners of homes identified as having asbestos roof insulation be kept informed in writing of the above action.
4. that after more accurate determination of the extent of asbestos roof insulation in Queanbeyan homes, Council coordinate a private meeting of affected home owners to examine alternatives and to seek government support, and that Council be represented by the Mayor Clr F J Pangallo, Clr Harry Hesse, the Director of Environmental Services, and the Manager of Environmental Services.

Council's Environmental Services section has completed Parts 2 and 3 of Council's resolution of 1 June 1994 meeting.

Asbestos insulation in buildings has become a sensitive issue to the residents of Queanbeyan. A private contractor in the Queanbeyan/Canberra areas was known to have insulated private homes by pumping loose asbestos fibres into roof spaces during this 1960's and 1970's. This practice was discontinued in 1980 and no record of the number of houses insulated with asbestos was kept.

**SUBJECT : ASBESTOS INSULATION IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM
1995/96 (Continued)**

There has been no previous study of the number of houses in Queanbeyan with asbestos insulation used in roofspaces. Although, based on approximately 1.5% of Canberra homes found to contain loose asbestos, there could be up to 60 homes in Queanbeyan which are effected in this way.

The Asbestos Identification Program of 1995/96 aimed to determine the extent of roof asbestos insulation in Queanbeyan homes. A total of 5 000 letters were sent to owners of homes built before 1980 advising them of Council's identification service. A leaflet was also distributed in 1995 rates notices to all owners in Queanbeyan.

Council officers participating in the asbestos identification then received Department of Health training in asbestos sampling and identification. Council supplied appropriate protective equipment together with a health assessment check of each individual officer in accordance with Occupational Health & Safety and Department of Health requirements. The health assessment determined any previous respiratory health problems of the Council officer and provided a baseline health assessment for any future complications due to exposure to asbestos dust particles.

There was a significant response from Queanbeyan residents to the letter and leaflets distributed. Approximately 400 telephone calls were received and 322 requested initial inspections. The remaining 78 residents made enquiries only. A register of inspection appointments was then prepared to arrange a suitable inspection time to complete all requested inspections.

Council officers completed 272 roof inspections on homes in Queanbeyan. The lower number of inspections completed was due to residents reconsidering the inspection of their home at the time of inspection. Of the 272 roof samples collected and sent to Department of Health for analysis only two were positively identified as asbestos insulation while 2 unknown roof insulation materials have been forwarded to Goulburn WorkCover for further identification. These are unlikely to be asbestos material.

The owners of the two homes identified as containing asbestos insulation were then informed by letter and advised of methods of containment so that insulation is isolated from living areas and any trades or service people who may be required to work at the property are aware of the problem. Council also advises the local Fire Brigade and Telstra of any positive samples for Occupational Health & Safety measures when attending these premises. Owners which submitted samples which were not asbestos have or will be informed by letter and notified that no further action needs to be taken.

Therefore, the Asbestos Identification Program results together with asbestos testing of Queanbeyan homes over the past 6 years has given a total of 9 homes containing asbestos insulation. This sampling pool supports that 1% (60 homes) of houses in Queanbeyan may contain asbestos insulation. However the sensitive nature and perceived stigma of having asbestos in one's home may have deterred some people from using the service. In addition some people may just "not want to know" if they do have a problem.

Council will continue with the NSW Department of Health to provide the identification service and welcomes any requests for inspection and sample collection on household premises.

**SUBJECT : ASBESTOS INSULATION IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM
1995/96 (Continued)**

Having completed the identification program Council should now look at Parts 1 and 4 of the June 1994 resolution. Before pursuing an equitable solution to the issue it is considered that a private meeting with the affected owners and representatives of Council should be called to come up with some future options. It is suggested that this meeting take place Wednesday 22 May 1995 commencing in the Uriarra Room at 6.00pm.

As the original taskforce member, Mr Harry Hesse, is no longer an elected representative Council may like to select another Councillor to attend the meeting with the Mayor.

The results and recommended future action will be reported back to Council after the private meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The NSW Department of Health has conducted a study which shows that providing occupiers of houses containing asbestos insulation follow their isolation guidelines there are unlikely to be any long term health effects on occupiers. However, the asbestos is still in situ and accidents such as storms or fires, reconstruction work and ultimately the demolition of the house all have the potential to cause an environmental hazard if the asbestos remains.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs for removal of asbestos have been estimated to be between \$10 000 - \$60 000 per house. Presently this cost would be borne by the owner. This and other issues will be discussed at the meeting with affected residents.

CONCLUSION

The asbestos identification program conducted by Council has given all affected owners in Queanbeyan an opportunity to take advantage of Council's free identification service. The results support the fact that there are probably at least 60 homes in Queanbeyan with asbestos insulation.

As this issue is highly sensitive and may have both social and financial implications for owners it is suggested that the affected owners meet confidentially with Council representatives to examine future options for dealing with the problem. A report should be brought back to Council on the results of this meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That results of the Asbestos Insulation Identification Program detailed in this report be received for information.
 2. That in light of these results Council coordinate a private meeting on Wednesday 22 May 1996 to be attended by the affected home owners, the Mayor Cllr F Pangallo, another nominated Cllr (in absence of Cllr H Hesse), the Director of Environmental Services, the Manager of Environmental Services, and the Asbestos Identification Program Coordinator, to examine future options for dealing with asbestos insulation in homes.
-

EV 19-02
FJP:sb

The Hon Dr Andrew Refshauge
Deputy Premier
Minister for Health & Minister for
Aboriginal Affairs
Level 11
73 Miller Street
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060

Dear Deputy Premier & Minister,

Assistance for the Removal of Loose Asbestos Insulation Material

I am writing this letter on behalf of residents in Queanbeyan who own homes containing loose asbestos insulation material in an effort to arrange a meeting with you to discuss this issue.

This action was prompted by the gross inequities experienced by Queanbeyan residents when compared to home owners in Canberra less than 10km away where over 1,000 homes had asbestos material removed at no cost to the owners. Funding was jointly provided by the Federal and Territory Governments with \$99.8 million being expended overall.

Council further considered the issue in late 1996 and felt that the reluctance of the Federal and State Governments to contribute to a removal program may have been prompted by the fact that the costs involved had not been quantified.

As such Council carried out an asbestos identification program whereby letters were sent to every owner of a home built prior to 1980 asking if they would like to use Council's identification service to find out if they had loose asbestos insulation in their roof space.

Council collected and analysed 272 samples. Of these only two samples were positive. When these are added to the seven homes identified prior to beginning the program a total of nine homes in Queanbeyan have been confirmed as containing loose asbestos insulation material.

Council subsequently called a meeting of the affected home owners to discuss the results of the identification program. At that meeting the home owners agreed the following:

- that as the Territory and Federal Governments had paid for removal in the ACT then the Federal and NSW State Governments should also be called on to fund a removal program for the houses in Queanbeyan.
- that the appropriate ministries to approach are the State and Federal Departments of Health

- that copies of any submissions go to the Minister responsible for State Emergency Services because of the potential for emergency workers such as fire brigade and SES personnel to be exposed to the insulation material in the event of a fire or roofing being lost
- that Council seek indicative prices from licensed asbestos removalists for removal of insulation from the Queanbeyan homes involved
- that the group appoint two members to act as representatives if representations to the Minister are required.

Council asked 11 removalists to submit indicative prices for removal of asbestos from the nine homes identified as containing asbestos insulating material. Two of these supplied quotes based on a specification prepared by Council. The indicative prices were both in the vicinity of \$330,000 or around \$35,000 per home.

On the basis of the above information it appears that if all stakeholders (i.e. Federal Government, State Government and owners) were prepared to contribute some funds to a removal program then these nine homes could be cleared of asbestos insulation.

As such I am seeking a meeting with you or your representatives to discuss the possibility of determining some way to assist the owners of the affected properties. I urge you to give your serious consideration to resolving this issue as apart from the very real health issues involved (both public health and that of the occupants), and the obvious inequalities between ACT and NSW residents, the problem imposes a significant economic and psychological burden on the affected owners. I would appreciate if you could contact me as soon as possible to finalise arrangements for a meeting with you or your representative.

Yours sincerely



**CR FRANK J PANGALLO MBE
MAYOR
QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL**

13th July, 1998

EV 19-02
FJP:sb

The Hon Robert Debus
Minister for Energy
Minister for Tourism, Minister for Corrective
Services, Minister for Emergency Services
and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts
Level 19
Roden Cutler House
24 Campbell Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

Assistance for the Removal of Loose Asbestos Insulation Material

I am writing this letter on behalf of residents in Queanbeyan who own homes containing loose asbestos insulation material in an effort to arrange a meeting with you to discuss this issue.

This action was prompted by the gross inequities experienced by Queanbeyan residents when compared to home owners in Canberra less than 10km away where over 1,000 homes had asbestos material removed at no cost to the owners. Funding was jointly provided by the Federal and Territory Governments with \$99.8 million being expended overall.

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- that the appropriate ministries to approach are the State and Federal Departments of Health

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- that the group appoint two members to act as representatives if representations to the Minister are required.

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On the basis of the above information it appears that if all stakeholders (i.e. Federal Government, State Government and owners) were prepared to contribute some funds to a removal program then these nine homes could be cleared of asbestos insulation.

As such I am seeking a meeting with you or your representatives to discuss the possibility of determining some way to assist the owners of the affected properties. I urge you to give your serious consideration to resolving this issue as apart from the very real health issues involved (both public health and that of the occupants), and the obvious inequalities between ACT and NSW residents, the problem imposes a significant economic and psychological burden on the affected owners. I would appreciate if you could contact me as soon as possible to finalise arrangements for a meeting with you or your representative.

Yours sincerely



**CR FRANK J PANGALLO MBE
MAYOR
QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL**

13th July, 1998



NEW SOUTH WALES

DEPUTY PREMIER,
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

29 July 1998

CR. Frank J Pangallo MBE
Mayor
Queanbeyan City Council
PO Box 90
Queanbeyan NSW 2620

Dear Mr Pangello

I write to thank you for your request to meet with Dr Andrew Refshauge, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, to discuss assistance for the removal of loose asbestos insulation material.

Unfortunately, due to a heavy schedule Dr Refshauge is unable to meet with you. As the minister is unable to meet with you he has referred your request to the Department of Health. A representative from the Department of Health will contact your office to arrange a mutual meeting time.

The Deputy Premier has asked me to convey his appreciation of your request and his regrets at being unable to meet with you.

Yours sincerely



Janet Collins
PRIVATE SECRETARY

13/8/98



NEW SOUTH WALES

MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Cr F.J. Pangallo MBE
Mayor
Queanbeyan City Council
PO Box 90
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

RECEIVED QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL		- 3 AUG 1998
Letter No	5038	
13 AUG 1998		
Action by	DIRECTOR Whitworth.	
File Number	EVT/0206/019-02	

Dear Councillor Panagallo

I refer to your letter of 13 July concerning the proposed asbestos insulation removal program within the Queanbeyan Council area.

At this issue is of relevance to the Department of Health I have taken liberty of referring your correspondence to the Deputy Premier, the Hon. Andrew Refshauge MP, who is also the Minister for Health, for his attention and response to you direct.

Yours sincerely

Bob Debus

Noted ROW
18/8/98

R 11/8/98



NEW SOUTH WALES

07 OCT 1998

DEPUTY PREMIER,
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

M98/4370

Councillor Frank J Pangallo MBE
Mayor
Queanbeyan City Council
PO Box 90
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

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of*

Dear Councillor Pangallo

I refer to your letter to the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon Robert Debus MP, concerning removal of loose asbestos roof insulation from private homes in Queanbeyan.

I am advised that a study conducted by the South Eastern NSW Public Health Unit in 1993 concluded that the health risk to residents and the public was insignificant, provided the insulation material was not disturbed.

While there may be some risk to emergency services personnel in the event of fire, or other activity which disturbs roof material, I am advised that this risk has been minimised by the emergency services' knowledge of the affected dwellings.

Removal of asbestos from private homes is ordinarily a cost borne by the homeowner. I therefore share your concern that the action of the ACT and Commonwealth governments in funding asbestos removal in the ACT has created an inequity in treatment between the citizens of the ACT and of NSW.

I appreciate your concerns in raising these matters and I have requested the Southern Area Health Service Public Health Unit to contact your office to arrange a meeting to discuss further the issues raised in your letter. The Southern NSW Public Health Unit Environmental Health Officer, Mr Warren Matthews, will contact your office to arrange the meeting. He can be contacted on (02) 4827 3428.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Refshauge MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Health
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

RECEIVED QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL	
Letter No.	6364
12 OCT 1998	
Action by	RFW
File Number	EVT/0206/019-02

9/10/98

The Hon Dr Michael Wooldridge MP
Federal Minister for Health and Family Services
Suite MG 48
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

Assistance for the Removal of Loose Asbestos Insulation Material

I am writing this letter on behalf of residents in Queanbeyan who own homes containing loose asbestos insulation material in an effort to arrange a meeting with you to discuss this issue.

This action was prompted by the gross inequities experienced by Queanbeyan residents when compared to home owners in Canberra less than 10km away where over 1,000 homes had asbestos material removed at no cost to the owners. Funding was jointly provided by the Federal and Territory Governments with \$99.8 million being expended overall.

Council further considered the issue in late 1996 and felt that the reluctance of the Federal and State Governments to contribute to a removal program may have been prompted by the fact that the costs involved had not been quantified.

As such Council carried out an asbestos identification program whereby letters were sent to every owner of a home built prior to 1980 asking if they would like to use Council's identification service to find out if they had loose asbestos insulation in their roof space.

Council collected and analysed 272 samples. Of these only two samples were positive. When these are added to the seven homes identified prior to beginning the program a total of nine homes in Queanbeyan have been confirmed as containing loose asbestos insulation material.

Council subsequently called a meeting of the affected home owners to discuss the results of the identification program. At that meeting the home owners agreed the following:

- that as the Territory and Federal Governments had paid for removal in the ACT then the Federal and NSW State Governments should also be called on to fund a removal program for the houses in Queanbeyan.
- that the appropriate ministries to approach are the State and Federal Departments of Health

- that copies of any submissions go to the Minister responsible for State Emergency Services because of the potential for emergency workers such as fire brigade and SES personnel to be exposed to the insulation material in the event of a fire or roofing being lost
- that Council seek indicative prices from licensed asbestos removalists for removal of insulation from the Queanbeyan homes involved
- that the group appoint two members to act as representatives if representations to the Minister are required.

Council asked 11 removalists to submit indicative prices for removal of asbestos from the nine homes identified as containing asbestos insulating material. Two of these supplied quotes based on a specification prepared by Council. The indicative prices were both in the vicinity of \$330,000 or around \$35,000 per home.

On the basis of the above information it appears that if all stakeholders (i.e. Federal Government, State Government and owners) were prepared to contribute some funds to a removal program then these nine homes could be cleared of asbestos insulation.

As such I am seeking a meeting with you or your representatives to discuss the possibility of determining some way to assist the owners of the affected properties. I urge you to give your serious consideration to resolving this issue as apart from the very real health issues involved (both public health and that of the occupants), and the obvious inequalities between ACT and NSW residents, the problem imposes a significant economic and psychological burden on the affected owners. I would appreciate if you could contact me as soon as possible to finalise arrangements for a meeting with you or your representative.

Yours sincerely



**CR FRANK J PANGALLO MBE
MAYOR
QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL**

16th November, 1998

EVS: DWC:dwc

File EV 19-02

12 March 1999

The Hon Dr Michael Wooldridge MP
Federal Minister for Health and Family Services
Suite MG 48
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

**RE: LETTER REQUESTING FUNDING ASSISTANCE FOR THE REMOVAL OF
LOOSE ASBESTOS INSULATION MATERIAL**

Council refers to the attached letter addressing the issue of assistance for funding the removal of loose asbestos insulation material from Queanbeyan homes.

In this letter Council has indicated concerns for public health and inequalities in the community on this particular issue. A number of residents have since contacted Council concerning the outcome of Council's recent approaches to you for a meeting on funding assistance. To date, neither acknowledgment or an answer to the letter has been received.

On behalf of Queanbeyan residents with asbestos affected properties Council would appreciate a reply. Council believes the issue could be progressed by arranging a face to face meeting with you or your representative.

Should you have any further enquiries please contact Daryl Carr of Council's Environmental Services on (02) 62980268.

Yours faithfully



CR FRANK J PANGALLO MBE
MAYOR

P.O. BOX 90
QUEANBEYAN, 2620
Telephone: 6298 0223
Mobile: 0418 633 383



7
MAYOR'S ROOM
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
253 CRAWFORD STREET
QUEANBEYAN, N.S.W. 2620

REFERENCE NUMBER EVS:MJT:dwc
WHEN REPLYING PLEASE QUOTE NUMBER

File SF000084

22 February 2000

The Hon John Howard MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

**RE: LETTER REQUESTING ASSISTANCE FOR THE REMOVAL OF LOOSE
ASBESTOS INSULATION MATERIAL IN HOUSES IN QUEANBEYAN**

Council has for many years been seeking support from the Federal and NSW State Governments to obtain assistance for the removal of loose asbestos insulation material from nine homes in Queanbeyan.

I am writing this letter on behalf of residents in Queanbeyan who own homes containing loose asbestos insulation material in an effort to receive some positive feedback from yourself or from one of Ministers.

To date both Federal and State ministers have been contacted in regard to this issue as detailed in the attached Asbestos Funding Precis. The response from your Health Minister has been far from positive. Despite forwarding two requests (see attached copies) no reply has been received nor does it appear that the request has been passed on to any other departments. Council is therefore seeking your personal assistance to acknowledge and take action on its request.

As background to this issue, action was initially prompted by the gross inequities experienced by Queanbeyan residents when compared to home owners in Canberra less than 10km away where over 1000 homes had asbestos material removed at no cost to the owners. Funding was jointly provided by the Federal and Territory Governments with \$99.8 million dollars being expended overall.

...../2

Council further considered the issue in late 1996 and felt that the reluctance of the Federal and State Governments to contribute to a removal program may have been prompted by the fact that the costs involved had not been quantified.

As such Council carried out an asbestos identification program whereby letters were sent to every owner of a home built prior to 1980 asking if they would like to use Council's identification service to find out if they had loose asbestos insulation in their roof space.

Council collected and analysed 272 samples. Of these only two samples were positive. When these are added to the seven homes identified prior to beginning the program a total of nine homes in Queanbeyan have been confirmed as containing loose asbestos insulation material.

Council subsequently called a meeting of the affected home owners to discuss the results of the identification program. At that meeting the home owners agreed the following:

- that as the Territory and Federal Governments had paid for removal in the ACT then the Federal and NSW State Governments should also be called on to fund a removal program for the houses in Queanbeyan
- that the appropriate ministries to approach were the State and Federal Departments of Health
- that copies of any submissions go to the Minister responsible for State Emergency Services because of the potential for emergency workers such as fire brigade and SES personnel to be exposed to the insulation material in the event of a fire or roofing being lost
- that Council seek indicative prices from licensed asbestos removalists for removal of insulation from the Queanbeyan homes involved
- that the group appoint two members to act as representatives if representations to the Minister are required.

Council asked 11 removalists to submit indicative prices for removal of asbestos from the nine homes identified as containing asbestos insulating material. Two of these supplied quotes based on a specification prepared by Council. The indicative prices were both in the vicinity of \$330,000 or around \$35,000 per home.

On the basis of the above information it appears that if all stakeholders (ie Federal Government, State Government and owners) were prepared to contribute some funds to a removal program then these nine homes could be cleared of asbestos insulation, and the current boundary inequity removed.

I urge you to give your serious consideration to resolving this issue as apart from the very real health issues involved (both public health and that of the occupants), and the obvious inequalities between ACT and NSW residents, the problem imposes a significant economic and psychological burden on the effected owners.

In view of the poor response received from the Minister for Health I am seeking a meeting with you or your representatives to discuss the possibility of determining some way to assist the owners of the affected properties. I would appreciate if you could contact me as soon as possible to finalise arrangements for a meeting with you or your ministerial representative.

I can be contacted on telephone number (02) 62980299.

Yours faithfully



CR FRANK J PANGALLO MBE
MAYOR
QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL

copy to Gary Nairn
Federal Member for Eden Monaro
PO Box 232
Queanbeyan NSW 2620



SENATOR THE HON BILL HEFFERNAN
Parliamentary Secretary to Cabinet
Senator for New South Wales

Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Telephone: (02) 6277 3610
Facsimile: (02) 6277 3614

Councillor Frank J Pangallo MBE
Mayor
Queanbeyan City Council
PO Box 90
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

RECEIVED QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL RECORDS - 7 APR 2000	
Action by	SF000084
File Number	DCARR

3 APR 2000

Dear Councillor

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister of 22 February 2000 regarding the removal of loose asbestos insulation material from homes in Queanbeyan. The Prime Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Department of Health and Aged care has advised me that the removal of asbestos from private dwellings is not a Commonwealth responsibility. I have been further advised that in 1993 the NSW Department of Health conducted a report on the health effects of loose asbestos in Queanbeyan houses. The report found that rates of asbestos related cancer in Queanbeyan did not differ from the rest of NSW and that asbestos should be removed when alterations or extensions occur. The authors of the report stated that they did not consider that the NSW Government was responsible for removing asbestos from private dwellings.

The provision of Commonwealth funding for the removal of asbestos from Canberra houses arose through circumstances unique to the ACT. The Commonwealth agreed to provide financial assistance for the removal of asbestos from Canberra houses on the basis that, at the time the insulation procedure was in use, the Commonwealth was directly responsible for governing the ACT.

Accordingly the Government is unable to provide the assistance requested for the removal of asbestos from Queanbeyan homes. I have copied your letter and my response to the NSW Minister for Health, the Hon Craig Knowles MP, as the relevant authority to deal with such a request.

Thank you for bringing this issue to the Prime Minister's attention.

Yours sincerely

BILL HEFFERNAN

5/4/00



GARY NAIRN MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR EDEN-MONARO



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

8

RECEIVED	
QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL	
RECORDS	
- 6 APR 2000	
Act. b.	D CARR 24 March 2000
File Num.	SF000084

Cr Frank Pangallo MBE
Mayor
Queanbeyan City Council
PO Box 90
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

Dear Cr Pangallo *Frank*

Thank you for forwarding me a copy of your letter of 22 February 2000 to the Prime Minister seeking Commonwealth financial assistance for the removal of loose asbestos insulation material in Queanbeyan houses.

I have requested that a copy of the Prime Minister's (or relevant Minister's) response be forwarded to me.

Yours sincerely

Gary Nairn
GARY NAIRN MP
Federal Member for Eden-Monaro

GN:jr

*Noted D. CARR
7/29/00*

28/3/00



NEW SOUTH WALES

Ian McManus MP
Parliamentary Secretary to
the Minister for Health

5 OCT 2000

RECEIVED IN RECORDS Queanbeyan City Council	
LETTER No.	IC 007769
	M00/2740
	8 NOV 2000
ACTION BY:	M THOMPSON
FILE NUMBER	SF000084
<input type="checkbox"/> Actioned	<input type="checkbox"/> NFA <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Comments	

Councillor Frank Pangallo
Mayor
Queanbeyan City Council
PO Box 90
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

Dear Councillor Pangallo

I refer to your letter requesting financial assistance for the removal of loose asbestos roof insulation from nine homes in Queanbeyan. The Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf.

I am advised that a study conducted by the Southern NSW Public Health Unit in 1993 concluded that the health risk to residents and the public was insignificant, provided the insulation material was not disturbed. I understand that additional testing since this time has not revealed any significant change.

While there may be some risk to Emergency Services personnel in the event of fire, or other activity which disturbs roof material, I am advised that this risk has been minimised by the Emergency Services' knowledge of the affected homes.

Removal of asbestos from private homes is ordinarily a cost borne by the home owner. The Southern NSW Public Health Unit continues to analyse roof insulation samples and provide advice to Council and home owners.

However, given your ongoing concerns I would like to suggest that a meeting between yourself, the residents and representatives from Southern Area Health Service should take place. I would encourage you to make contact with Mr Warren Matthews, Environmental Health Officer on 4827 3428 to arrange a time that is most suitable to the parties concerned.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Ian McManus MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Health

RECEIVED QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL	
MAYOR	
10 OCT 2000	
Action by	
File Number	

Noted
D. Carr
8/11/2000

Name
Address
Address

Dear Sir and Madam

RE: UPDATE ON ASBESTOS INSULATION IN HOUSING

This letter is to provide the owners of homes which contain loose asbestos roof insulation with information on Council's latest endeavours to seek some form of financial assistance from the Federal and State Governments to remove the insulation from affected houses.

Council last met with affected owners in May 1996 and provided an update letter in January 1997. Since that time the following actions have been taken by Council.

1. A letter from the Mayor was forwarded to the Ministers shown below. The letter:
 - outlined the inequities of funding being provided to the ACT and not Queanbeyan;
 - detailed the number of premises involved and estimates of cost for removal;
 - suggested that if all stakeholders (ie the Federal, State, Local government and owners) contributed then the removal program for the nine homes involved could proceed;
 - requested a meeting of the respective Ministers with the Mayor and owners representatives.

This letter went to both the Federal and State Ministers for Health and the State Minister for Emergency Services (because of the impact on emergency workers). The following responses were received.

- The Emergency Services Minister referred the matter to NSW Health.
- NSW Health reiterated their previous position that providing the insulation was not disturbed they did not consider that there was any significant health risk to the occupants of affected homes and that they provided advice on health issues, not funding.
- There was no response from the Federal Health Minister despite two requests.
- None of the Ministers were prepared to meet with Council or the owners.

- 2 -

2. Following this unsatisfactory result the Mayor wrote to the Prime Minister in similar terms to the above. The reply received indicated that this issue was not considered to be a Commonwealth responsibility and that the Commonwealth's involvement with the ACT was because they had jurisdiction over the Territory at the time the insulation was installed. It stated that the Commonwealth was unable to provide any assistance.
3. A copy of the Prime Minister's response was also forwarded to NSW Health. A letter was then received from NSW Health reiterating their position as described above.

At this point in time Council appears to have exhausted its options as far as seeking financial assistance from the State and Federal Governments. Council acknowledges the difficulties asbestos insulation causes in relation to maintenance of homes and the fact that the presence of asbestos insulation greatly effects the value of affected properties.

However, there appears little more that Council can do at this point in time to assist owners. Please continue to observe the health and safety suggestions previously recommended by the Department of Health. Council sincerely regrets that its advocacy on behalf of affected owners has not been successful. If in future you make a decision to arrange for private removal of the asbestos insulation please feel free to contact Council for advice.

Yours faithfully



**CR FRANK PANGALLO MBE
MAYOR
QUEANBEYAN CITY COUNCIL**

5 December, 2001

Ghostly soldiers catch Royal Show judge's eye

By TRUDY TAYLOR

QUEANBEYAN artist Margaret Hadfield has been awarded second prize in the Landscape section of this year's Royal Easter Show in Sydney.

The landscape is the first of a series of works being painted by Ms Hadfield following an emotive visit to Gallipoli in May last year.

The award-winning painting is a panoramic view of Anzac Cove with the 'ghostly' image of two soldiers.

The ghosting technique is unique to Ms Hadfield, who wanted to portray not the horror of Gallipoli, but the humanity and respect between Australia and Turkey as a result of the battle.

Ms Hadfield said she only realised the ghosting effect was successful when people viewed the painting, but didn't notice the emergence of the figures until they had stared at it for some time.

Historical

The image of the soldiers is based on a statue of a Turkish soldier carrying an injured British soldier.

"I changed the image for the painting slightly to make the injured soldier Australian, which helped capture the mood I was trying to create," Ms Hadfield told *The Age*.

This is not the first time Ms Hadfield had entered the Royal Easter Show art competition.

"I have been entering on and off since I was 19."

"I follow a more traditional style of painting and it is hard to win because the prizes are usually awarded to the contemporary style of work. Just being hung in the exhibition was a great honour."

Ms Hadfield was born in Coonabarabran and moved



AWARD WINNER: This file photo shows artist Margaret Hadfield putting the finishing touches on the first painting in her Gallipoli. Ms Hadfield was awarded second prize in the Landscape section of this year's Royal Easter Show in Sydney for the painting.

to the Queanbeyan area 11 years ago.

She has been an artist her entire life selling her first painting at 13 years of age ... and she has not stopped since.

Ms Hadfield is a 'natural' self taught artist although she admits she was largely influenced by her father Peter Zorndrager a Dutch immigrant and "creative genius".

Before the 2000 Olympics Margaret became very busy painting landscapes on didgeridoos and boomerangs for a major souvenir wholesaler. She still supplies these along with her own product of birds

painted onto native timber.

A large part of Ms Hadfield's business is painting murals and trompe l'oeil (trick of the eye) paintings as well as teaching art and painting to adults and children.

"I am always in my painting clothes even when I go down town, my daughter said I am known as the paint lady because my clothes are always splattered in paint."

Touched by the experience of visiting Gallipoli, Ms Hadfield is currently working on the second painting in the series involving and encapsulating the moving history into the rugged landscape.

"Knowing I can enter in the painting I enter is big awards, like the Easter Show, makes me do a major work each year ... always the best that I can do," she said.

No money for asbestos removal

QUEANBEYAN'S problem of asbestos in at least 60 homes will not be removed by the NSW Government.

A spokesman for NSW Health Minister Morris Iemma said there was no money in the NSW health budget to remove the asbestos.

"There is no precedent for NSW Health, or for the NSW Government, to fund the removal of asbestos from private homes."

The spokesman said the NSW Government was responsible for removing asbestos from public buildings, "but that responsibility does not extend to private dwellings".

He said the Commonwealth's decision to remove the asbestos from Canberra homes was a Federal government decision and did not oblige NSW to do the same in Queanbeyan.

Queanbeyan City Council has said it could not afford to remove the material.

Mayor Frank Pangallo said the cost would have to be borne by the owners.

The Federal Government has said it was a state government responsibility, but the State Government is denying it.

This means that the cost of removing the asbestos - between \$60,000 and \$100,000 for each house - will rest with home owners.

Up to 60 homes in Queanbeyan are said to have the amosite or 'brown' asbestos - in loose-fibre, 100 per cent pure form - in ceiling spaces as insulation.

In both Queanbeyan and Canberra, asbestos was pumped into ceiling spaces in homes as insulation during the 1960s and 70s.

In the 1980s, the Commonwealth

Government (which then had responsibility for the ACT) funded a \$100 million program to remove the asbestos from 1050 Canberra homes.

Queanbeyan homes were left out of the program, and the asbestos remains. Exposure to asbestos can cause potentially fatal lung scarring and cancers and is particularly deadly in loose-fibre form.

The NSW Health Department and the Queanbeyan City Council were formally told of the presence of asbestos, together with its dangers, in 1989.

Authorities are aware of eight homes which have the asbestos in the ceiling space, but it is estimated there are more than 50 others, as yet undiscovered, throughout the city.

A spokesman for NSW Industrial Relations Minister John Della Bosca said it was a difficult situation, but not one that was the responsibility of government.

"Government resources don't stretch, and there is not a program in place to remediate residential properties."

Member for Monaro Steve Whan no state or federal government held a legal responsibility to clear the asbestos.

He said he would raise the matter with Mr Della Bosca next week, "not with a view to a grant of money but to see if there is some we can help. Perhaps, the solution is the Government can pursue the companies responsible in the same [way] we have pursued James Hardie".

Mayor Pangallo said council had pursued all avenues in attempting to secure federal and state government funding.

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Disqualified from driving

GEORGE Kalogianis, 26, has been fined \$600 on a charge of middle-range drink-driving in Queanbeyan Local Court. Mr Kalogianis, of Weir Place, Queanbeyan, pleaded guilty to the charge. Magistrate Paula Russell disqualified him from driving for 12 months.

Heritage listing for Braidwood

EFFORTS are underway to put Braidwood on the NSW Heritage Register. NSW Heritage Council staff met Palerang Council on Tuesday to elaborate on the implications of the listing. A draft development control plan has been drawn up. Palerang Council has invited submissions which close on May 16.

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FACTS ON FUNERALS

"What do I say to my grieving friend?"

If you are giving support to a bereaved friend, don't worry if you can't find the "right" words to take away the pain - there simply aren't any. A grieving person needs to feel and express the loss physically and emotionally before moving on to make new beginnings. Your friend might feel angry, depressed, guilty, relieved, empty, low self esteem, fearful, confused, numb, yearning... even lonely.

During this time of upheaval, it's important to know that you don't need special qualifications to provide genuine assistance. Just being there without judging, preaching or feeling uncomfortable can help your friend come to terms with their grief.

Helping a grieving friend often means that you too will share some of the pain. This takes courage and a special type of friendship. Your friend will want to talk, cry, share, reminisce or even just sit in silence with you.

A good time to visit a bereaved friend is "After the flowers have died" that is after about a week or two after the funeral. It's also important to maintain regular contact with your friend six to eight weeks after the death.

If you would like more information, or would like to speak to someone please telephone 6297 1052.

Queanbeyan (02) 6297 1052
Canberra (02) 6281 5300

M. H. O' ROURKE
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

THE AUSTRALIAN & FAMILY OWNED

The Queanbeyan Age, Friday 1 April 2005 - 3

A city nervous about asbestos

There may be 60 houses in Queanbeyan with lethal insulation in their roofs, and nobody will help the residents remove it, writes **BEN DOHERTY**

THEY'RE on their own. Queanbeyan householders stuck with a ceiling full of potentially deadly loose-fibre asbestos will get no help from government at any level.

About 60 houses in the 15,000-household city have the substance in their ceiling space, pumped in there as cheap insulation in the 1960s and '70s, when asbestos was not the deadly fear-monger it is today, rather a super-material which didn't catch fire, didn't get wet and was the solution to countless building problems.

The dangers of asbestos are well known in these post-Wittencoom, post-James Hardie days, and in loose-fibre form it is especially poisonous.

But the real danger in the Queanbeyan situation is that the vast majority of the people who have the substance in their ceilings don't even know it is there.

The city council knows of eight houses with it, but estimates that there are probably more than 50 others in the city.

Council, the NSW and Federal Governments have known of the issue for nearly two decades, but nothing has been done.

Their apathy has been described as many things, from "masterful inaction" to "a culpable silence".

Representations have been made to governments by council representatives, local Members and private citizens, but there has been no funding for a clean-up or even a survey of the problem.

This week the Queanbeyan Council told *The Canberra Times* it did not have the wherewithal to fund a clean-up.

The Federal Government said the problem fell under state jurisdiction.

And NSW said neither its health nor asbestos budget extended to clearing the substance from people's homes.

Queanbeyan homeowners who have the stuff in their ceiling — and many may choose not to know because of concerns over house values — face a bill of between

\$60,000 and \$100,000 to have it removed.

Compare that with Canberra, 6km away, the only other city in the world sharing the dubious distinction of having 100 per cent pure, loose-fill asbestos pumped into the roof spaces of houses.

In 1988, then Territories Minister Gary Punch signed an asbestos-removal program which would ultimately run five years, and cost the Commonwealth \$100 million.

But Queanbeyan houses were not included, left out because of the imaginary line that separates NSW from the ACT.

WHERE to from here? Despite the attention to the issue this week, there appears to be no way forward for the people of Queanbeyan who wish to rid their homes of the asbestos.

Most are understandably reluctant to come forward — make it known that your house contains asbestos and you may never be able to sell it — but of even more concern is the fact that many people don't know, or don't want to know, the asbestos is there.

Governments, local, state and federal, have adopted a similar attitude.

Queanbeyan and the NSW Government were made aware of the situation in 1989, when the ACT Asbestos Removal team met them and offered to survey Queanbeyan to find out where the asbestos was.

The offer was rejected. The survey has never been done.

The Federal Government was the target of a sustained letter-writing campaign from private citizens, industry bodies and council.

But the Commonwealth has said its position is consistent with its 1988 decision.

While it was responsible in 1988 for the ACT (and so removed the asbestos), over the border, any asbestos is the jurisdiction of the NSW Government.

A letter from the office of the Prime Minister in 2001 points the finger straight at the NSW Govern-



THE CANBERRA PROGRAM: Mrs Frances Christie hangs out the washing in her back yard in Pearce in 1989, practically surrounded by asbestos-removal equipment. The roof is shrouded in plastic and in the foreground is a dust-extracting machine.

ment. "The Federal Government does not have the jurisdiction to deal with this matter; it is the responsibility of the NSW Government. We have therefore forwarded correspondence to the NSW Premier's Department," it said.

But the state Government has consistently denied any obligation to remove the asbestos.

Secretly, it fears that if it shoulders responsibility it will be called on to remove the substance — even in other less deadly forms — from thousands of houses across the state.

A spokesman for NSW Industrial Relations Minister John Della Bosca told *The Canberra Times* this week that he empathised with Queanbeyan residents' "difficult situation", but could not help.

Similarly the office of Health Minister Morris Iemma said it would not be in a position to assist. "There is no precedent for NSW Health, or the NSW Government, to fund the removal of asbestos from private homes," he said.

And the inaction at local government level has been similar.

Queanbeyan Mayor Frank Pangallo has said his council's budget could never stretch to the \$6 million likely to be needed to clear the city of loose-fill asbestos. He says the council has done all it can to attract government support.

A letter-writing campaign to various state and federal ministers in the early '90s and then again later in the decade (and about to be revived in the wake of this recent publicity) yielded nothing.

But not all of Queanbeyan's councillors believe the city can absolve itself of responsibility so easily.

Councillors Tim Overall, Sue Jarvis and Steve Stavreas told *The Canberra Times* this week the council had a duty of care to its residents and needed to do more.

Councillor Stavreas said that, at the very least, the council should fund an audit of houses which stood in the years when the asbestos was installed, so that a register of affected properties could be set up, in order that conditions can be put on the renovation or demolition of those houses.



SERIOUS STUFF: Students at Bruce TAFE training in 1990 for a certificate course in asbestos removal, funded by contractors and the ACT Administration branch.

A critical point is that neither Queanbeyan City authorities nor anybody else even knows the size of the problem.

Homeowners who had the material installed have left and unwitting new occupants have

moved in. The contractor who installed the material — Dirk Jansen, or, as he liked to be called, Mr Fluffy — imported the asbestos from South Africa between 1968 and 1978, when the practice was prohibited.

When, in 1988, the ACT Asbestos Removal Program was being set up, Mr Jansen was approached and asked to identify the properties he'd filled with asbestos.

According to bureaucrats running the program, he was uncooperative, and said he'd kept no record of houses he'd treated.

Attempts by *The Canberra Times* to find Mr Jansen in recent weeks have proved unsuccessful and it's believed he no longer lives in the ACT.

So what of the health consequences for Queanbeyan residents?

Exposure to asbestos can cause asbestosis, mesothelioma and a host of lung diseases.

Most are fatal. Asbestos in fixed form — that is, locked in a solid material such as fibro or asbestos cladding — is in thousands of homes across Australia.

While it is locked in it is harmless, and the proportion of asbestos fibres in the material is low, usually between 5 and 15 per cent.

The asbestos in the Queanbeyan houses is 100 per cent pure, and in loose-fibre form, making it many times more dangerous than fixed asbestos.

At present, Queanbeyan residents are not suffering asbestos-related diseases at a rate any greater than the rest of Australia.

But these diseases have a long lag time — 37 years in the case of mesothelioma, an aggressive form of lung cancer which can be caused by a single asbestos fibre.

It is now 37 years since Mr Fluffy began installing asbestos in Queanbeyan and Canberra houses.

The vice-president of the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia, Bernie Banton, said this week that the Queanbeyan situation was frightening, and would almost certainly cause long-term health problems for those exposed.

"No exposure to asbestos is safe, we know that," he said. "But the Federal Government didn't spend \$100 million clearing Canberra homes for no reason, they did it because they recognised the health risk. This stuff is deadly."

Whether Queanbeyan's population does experience a spike in the number of asbestos-disease victims remains to be seen. But if it happens, it can be expected that government and council assistance would be forthcoming.

For the time being though, they're on their own.

John Sam Co

The Queanbeyan Age

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Pages 20

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<p>COMMUNITY NEWS</p> <h2>Wedding bells</h2> <p>Page 5</p> 	<p>ENTERTAINMENT</p> <h2>Out on the town</h2> <p>Pages 6-7</p> 	<p>SPORT</p> <h2>Weekend wrap up</h2> <p>Pages 17-20</p> 
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SILENT KILLER

Up to 60 homes in Queanbeyan still contain asbestos



By RAMA GAIND

TWO of the nine homes in Queanbeyan, which have been identified as containing asbestos, have had the loose-fill asbestos removed from their homes. This has been done at personal cost to the owners.

One of these residents is Michael Bresnik who - along with his wife and three children - has been living in the four-bedroom, double-storey home in Harper Close for 16 years.

In April last year, it cost him under \$27,000 to have the asbestos removed.

There was no government - local, state or federal - assistance

alone. They become dangerous when they deteriorate or are disturbed by activity such as building or renovating.

Up to 60 homes in Queanbeyan are said to have the amosite or brown asbestos in loose-fibre, 100 per cent pure form in ceiling spaces as insulation.

In both Queanbeyan and Canberra, asbestos was pumped into ceiling space in homes as insulation during the 1960s and 1970s.

Queanbeyan's problem of asbestos will not be removed by the NSW Government.

A spokesman for NSW Health Minister Morris Iemma said there was no money in the

NOW CONFIDENT: Michael Bresnik, of Queanbeyan, has paid about \$27,000 to have asbestos removed from his home.

It's removal had to come first, even though it meant we had to take out another loan.

- Michael Bresnik

"I do not hold the Queanbeyan City Council responsible," Mr Bresnik said. "It is the state law that is responsible"

He said he had suspicions about the presence of asbestos.

"I had bought the house from my father and I suspected it when I did some tiling in the kitchen," Mr Bresnik said. "The matter was brought to a head when Telstra put in a line."

"It was a costly exercise, but with a young family we couldn't do it any earlier."

Personal expense

"Now that the children have grown up, we felt there was a need to make improvements to the home. There was no point replacing the old carpets with new ones, while there was asbestos in our home. It's removal had to come first, even though it meant we had to take out another loan."

"However, now that the asbestos has been removed, there is a lot more confidence. It's the best thing we've done."

Having worked in the NSW Fire Brigade for 15 years, Mr Bresnik said he was aware of the inherent dangers of properties that contained asbestos in the event of "a storm, tempest or fire"

Authorities have said that materials containing asbestos do not pose a health risk if they are maintained in good condition and are left

alone. They become dangerous when they deteriorate or are disturbed by activity such as building or renovating.

NSW health budget to remove the asbestos.

A spokesperson for the NSW Industrial Relations Minister John Della Bosca said the office could not help even though he empathised with the situation

Council discussion

Asbestos insulation in Queanbeyan homes was the subject of a detailed mayoral minute to the City Council last Wednesday.

Cr Tom Mavec's motion, which was unanimously supported, called for a report on how council could further support ratepayers with loose asbestos insulation in roof cavities.

Mayor Frank Pangallo said council had been proactive in trying to resolve this issue since the early 1990s.

A precis of all action taken by council in relation to this matter was presented to council.

A letter dated April 30, 1993 from the then Member for Monaro Peter Cochran to City Council general manager Hugh Percy stated:

"...The present, and previous, NSW Governments have denied responsibility for this process and I would therefore suggest that any further pursuit of the matter would not prove fruitful."

"Scientific evidence presented to the Department of Housing and made public through the media the last time this matter was raised suggested that the levels of likely

asbestos infection were negligible and that in effect the likelihood of contamination from asbestos in a home which had been insulated with the substance was less likely to occur than that of travelling along a dusty road..."

Detailed statistics

In answer to a question from Cr Steve Stavreas, Mayor Pangallo pointed out that following an Asbestos Insulation Identification Program in 1995-96, 5000 letters were sent to owners of houses built before 1980. Also leaflets were sent out with the rates notices. Result was that 400 inquiries were received, 272 premises were inspected, samples were taken and analysed. Only two additional premises were identified as positive.

Total number of known houses in

Queanbeyan was nine.

During late 1980s and early 1990s Commonwealth and ACT Government agreed to fund removal of asbestos insulation from all homes. Asbestos removal program was undertaken at a total cost of just under \$100 million.

In 1996, council reported on findings of identification program and met with affected owners. Meeting agreed to pursue state and federal funding for removal. It was also agreed that indicative costs should be sought from asbestos removalists to assist in claims for funding.

During July-October 1996, information was sent to over 50 asbestos removalists requesting estimates of costs to remove insulation from nine houses.

Continued Page 2



Our town

the who's who and what's happening around Queanbeyan

Wedded bliss

"A BIT of give and take" is the secret to a long and happy married life, according to Win and Gordon Reid of Queanbeyan. They should know after having been married for 43 years! Happy memories were celebrated last Thursday as they remembered taking their vows at St Hilda's in Katoomba. All their five children were born in Katoomba, with the move to Queanbeyan being made in 1977. The couple has eight grandsons, four granddaughters, one great-grandson and two great-granddaughters. Congratulations!

Safety meet

QUEANBEYAN Safety House will hold its monthly meeting on Monday at 6.55pm at Morisset House. Do go along to support this program as the meeting lasts less than one hour. Community support from Jerrabomberra and Queanbeyan is greatly needed. For details contact Trish Chapman on 0424 455 423 or Constable Shayne Robinson on 6278 0570.

Car exhibition

SANDRA Fisher, a Braidwood artist, made an unusual effort by exhibiting in "Exotica" at the Allenburg Gallery in Braidwood. Exhibition theme was the cars that furiously ate the environment, lingeringly, but inescapably. It featured a series of digital images and vehicle derived sculptures that underpinned the theme.

Aboriginal art exhibition

Pialligo Estate Winery is holding a contemporary Aboriginal art exhibition with some of the best known artists working in Australia participating. Artists include Gloria Petyarre, Naata Nungarrayi, Gracie Pwerl Morton and Ronnie Tjampitjinpa. For further information call Pialligo Estate Winery, on 6262 6692, or call out to 18 Kallaroo Road.



Weather

Four day forecast for Queanbeyan

Tuesday: Fine after early local fog with moderate westerly winds, turning easterly later. Min: 8 Max: 24

Wednesday: Dry and sunny. Min: 8 Max: 22

Thursday: Patchy rain later. Min: 7 Max: 23

Friday: Few showers clearing. Min: 9 Max: 22

Trend for Saturday, Sunday and Monday: Unsettled though mostly dry with southerly winds becoming westerly.

Ghostly encounter at Riverside cemetery



HISTORICAL TOUR: Queanbeyan historian Connee-Coffeen conducted a tour of the Queanbeyan Riverside Cemetery last Saturday as part of Heritage Week. Connee stops to explain the significance of this particular gravestone, to a handful of children who took part in the tour.

Funding decision made by Greiner government

THE Member for Monaro Steve Whan said Mrs Forsythe had failed to mention that it was the Liberal Government in NSW - under the leadership of former Premier Nick Greiner - who made the decision not to fund the removal of asbestos in private homes in NSW.

"Mrs Forsythe's own party determined that the State was not legally responsible for the removal of asbestos," Mr Whan said.

"The difficulty the State Government faces is that there are potentially millions of homes in NSW that have some sort of asbestos product in them," he said. "If the taxpayers of NSW had to pay for removal from all those homes we could end up with a multi-billion-dollar bill."

"However, Mrs Forsythe has not said how a coalition Government would fund

this potential State-wide bill or even if they would actually fund removal of the Queanbeyan asbestos. Let's face it, it was Mrs Forsythe's party that said no in the first place!

"This issue was there for the whole 15 years the National Party held Monaro and for some strange reason we are only now seeing them say something about it."

Mr Whan said he had only recently been informed of the potential extent of the problem and he had written to the Premier and Ministers to ask if there was some way the State could look at helping.

"Given the potential statewide liability I do not know if my approach will be successful, however, I have written and asked the Premier to look at three things:

- Assisting Queanbeyan

City Council to determine exactly how many houses are affected and then determining if this type of particularly dangerous product is limited only to our area.

• If it is restricted to this area consider what assistance can be provided, in conjunction with the Queanbeyan City Council

• Investigate if any third party can be pursued to gain financial assistance or compensation to assist homeowners with removal of asbestos.

"The Carr Government has led the fight in Australia to make James Hardie pay fair compensation to people suffering asbestos related diseases, we have a great record of action on asbestos and I am sure that no one in the State Labor Government takes this problem lightly," Mr Whan said

Meet the Minister for Breakfast

LOCAL small business operators will have the chance to meet Minister for Small Business and Regional Development, David Campbell, when he visits Queanbeyan on April 13.

Minister Campbell will be the guest speaker at the Capital Region BEC monthly networking breakfast.

BEC chair Councillor Sue Whelan said the BEC was "delighted that Minister Campbell will be here to meet local business operators and talk about the vital role that small businesses play in the strong NSW economy and how the NSW government offers resources to support them."

"We expect local businesses to make the most of this opportunity to meet the Minister and introduce him to the vibrant Queanbeyan business community," Cr Whelan said.

Arts grants

QUEANBEYAN City Council has received two grants from the Regional Arts NSW Country Arts Support Program (CASP).

One grant, of \$1,500, is to employ a graffiti artist to help design and paint the wall of an amenities block at a new skate park.

The other grant, also for \$1,500, is to fund breakdance workshops for local youths with recognised teacher/dancer Francis Owusu, of Kulture Break.

Call for State government to act on asbestos contamination

LIBERAL Duty MLC for Monaro Patricia Forsythie has urged the Carr Government to act on the issue of possible asbestos contamination of some houses in Queanbeyan and surrounding areas.

Mrs Forsythie said after 10 years of the Carr Labor Government there had been no sense of urgency about this problem.

She told Parliament "the Premier had made much of his actions in relation to James Hardie Industries but after 10 years in government he has done nothing to identify the extent of the problem of asbestos contamination arising out of the injection into some houses of a pure form of

asbestos as ceiling insulation in the period after 1968.

"Based on the number of homes that were identified with the insulation material in the ACT during a survey at the end of the 1980s, there is reason to believe the number of homes that could be contaminated is about 60," she said.

"The issue is clearly bigger than the local council. It is urgent that houses in the Queanbeyan region be surveyed again.

"The Carr Labor Government must find the money to enable a survey of houses to commence and then to fund the removal of the material from the houses"

Asbestos - a silent killer

From Page 1

Only two companies were interested in submitting estimates. Costs were estimated to be between \$35,000 and \$50,000 per house depending upon its size.

In July 1998, the mayor sent letters to state and federal ministers of health and emergency services suggest-

ing that cost should be shared to assist with the removal.

In February 2000, a letter was sent to the Prime Minister, but a response received on April 3, 2000 was that it was not a Commonwealth responsibility. It reiterated findings of the NSW Department of Health.

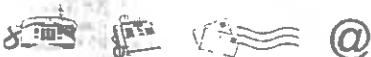


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Asbestos a sticky issue

Council waits for report before committing funds

By Kate Flor

JUST who should pay to resolve Queanbeyan's potentially deadly problem of loose-fibre asbestos is the sticking point with the Queanbeyan City Council.

Councillors Steve Stavreas, Tim all and Sue Jarvis put a motion which would have committed ratepayers to picking up two-thirds of the cost of removing the asbestos which was pumped into an unknown number of Queanbeyan ceiling spaces in the 1960s and 1970s.

The motion was defeated by five of the councillors present — Mayor Frank Pangallo, deputy-mayor Ann Rocca, Kerry White, Sue Whelan and Tom Mavec — preferring to wait for a report from council staff before committing funds.

Vague estimates put the number

of homes affected by the asbestos, which was imported to Australia by Mr Fluffy and sold as insulation door to door in the area, at between 60 and 70.

Cr Stavreas made an impassioned plea for the council to find a way to help those homeowners affected because of the public health implications for the whole community.

"It's our responsibility to find a way — not to find a way out of it," he said.

Cr Stavreas said the community needed to be protected against the possibility that the asbestos could escape — whether through roof damage in a freak storm or by financially strapped homeowners not abiding by the necessary safety standards.

As the opposition to the motion became apparent Cr Stavreas

appealed to councillors to look at the spirit of the motion rather than the detail.

"The fact remains that there is asbestos in town and you have had years to get State and Federal government funding," he said.

"It is a danger to the community. Let's stop pussy-footing around - it's our responsibility."

Councillors Stavreas, Overall, Jarvis and Taskovski, voted for the motion which included provision for the council to look at borrowing the funds needed to cover the estimated \$1,080,000 needed to remove the asbestos, and a renewed effort to attract funding from the state and federal government.

Mayor Frank Pangallo said asbestos posed a serious issue for Queanbeyan but he said he could not support a motion which would commit ratepayers to picking up a

blank cheque. He said during implementation of the \$100 million ACT program affected householders were rehoused for an average six weeks whilst homes were decontaminated.

He said nobody knew how many properties were affected by asbestos saying it could be a greater number than currently estimated.

Another problem Cr Pan raised was gaining access to help against a homeowners will.

"The motion is ill-conceived," he said.

Cr Tom Mavec said the Federal Government did have some flexibility since it was the Commonwealth that licensed Mr Fluffy to import the asbestos.

Councillor Raewyn Bastion was not at the meeting.

Housing takes action to protect tenants

By Kate Flor

QUEANBEYAN'S Community Housing head, Shelagh Keith, has acted to ensure the association's tenants are protected from any loose-fibre asbestos in their ceiling spaces.

Ms Keith has identified nine properties which need testing for the potentially deadly insulation.

She has written to all 69 properties owners and tenants outlining her actions and asking if owners know what is in their roofs.

"As landlord we have a duty-of-care towards our tenants," Ms Keith said.

"I believe we could be held liable if asbestos was found and one of our tenants developed an associated illness and we

knew it could be there.

"This protects them and it protects us."

She said the nine currently being checked by Classic Solutions had been identified as the right age and type of property.

She said if three properties were co-located one would be checked.

She said many of the owners of the 37 properties Community Housing leased had building reports which ruled out asbestos.

"It has been very pleasing that many of the real estate agents have responded very quickly and positively to the call for confirmation," she said.

Ms Keith said all tenants would be sent a letter confirming the state of their property.



Queanbeyan Community Housing head Shelagh Keith has been proactive in addressing the possibility of loose asbestos in homes. Picture: Melissa St

Real estate agent and Queanbeyan Business Council president Ian McNamee said it was important his industry was on the front foot when it

came to tackling Queanbeyan's asbestos problem. "We will be suggesting to our vendors that they get an asbestos report," he said.

Mr McNamee said his

business would be developing policies in relation to possible asbestos contamination of properties it dealt with - whether they were for sale or for re



HAPPY FAMILY: Jude, Daisy and Rophin Morris now have permanent residency in Australia.

Morris family still call Australia home

By RAMA GAIND

"AUSSIE, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi" are six little words that are resounding through the home of Jude and Daisy Morris after they won a long battle to stay in Australia. The couple, who work for the Queanbeyan Baptist Church, were granted permanent residency last week. The couple was informed late last year they could not stay in Australia because their beautiful 13-year-old son, Rophin, 13, was a financial burden on taxpayers. This decision was made in spite of Rophin

appearing in a 2005 Federal Government calendar to promote positive views of disability. Immigration Minister Senator Amanda Vanstone was convinced to overturn the ruling and allow them permanent residency after strong campaigning by the local community and several senior politicians. "Gratitude is our main emotion," Mr Morris said. "It's been a struggle, but it's wonderful now to be a part of this great nation," he said. "We are grateful to the minister. We can't wait to become Australian citizens!"

Jude and Daisy Morris, originally from India, have been living and working in Australia for over 11 years. Mr Morris works as a social worker in suicide prevention and intervention, also does counselling and some pastoral work with the church, while Mrs Morris runs a program to support women at-risk called 'Nurturing Womanhood'. A mayoral report to the Queanbeyan City Council last week noted council's support of the family's cause by agreeing to distribute petitions calling on the minister to support their application.

Council searches for ways to help with asbestos removal from homes

A QUEANBEYAN City Council report looking at ways of helping local residents with loose-fibre asbestos in their homes is to be discussed at its 18th meeting of council. At its meeting last week, council rejected a motion to set up a program for removing the loose-fibre asbestos from Queanbeyan homes. Council voted against a notice of motion by Councillors Steve Stavreas, Tim Overall and Sue Jarvis to set up a subsidy program that would cover two-thirds of the residents' costs of removing the deadly material. **Costs questioned** Some councillors questioned cost estimates contained in the motion which suggested having the asbestos removed from up to 60 properties under the proposal would cost about \$1 million. Nine homes have been identified in Queanbeyan as containing loose-fill asbestos. Two of them have had it removed at their own cost.

It is estimated that up to 60 Queanbeyan homes could contain the deadly material which was pumped into homes in Queanbeyan and Canberra between 1968 and 1978. The Federal Government funded a program to remove the material from 1050 ACT homes in 1988 at a cost of \$100 million. No money was provided for a similar program in Queanbeyan. In a statement Cr Tom Mavec said council at its April 6 meeting took the first step to find how to best protect the communities health. "This step will result in a report from officers that recognises all the needs," Cr Mavec said. **Protection** "This is the route we should continue down - prescriptive answers that bind us now do no one any good in the long run," he said. Cr Mavec said the whole of the community must be protected from the loose asbestos that was in the roof area in

some Queanbeyan homes. "Those who actually have it need encouragement and assistance to make certain that it does not cause any medical problems for them or their families and visitors. "This needs to be done taking into account all available scientific information including actual measurements in their homes. **Identification** "The public needs assurance that the loose asbestos will not lead to a public health problem before its ultimate disposal. Potential sources of contamination need to be identified so that proper precautions can be taken in emergencies - by fire and SES personnel, for example. "This takes time, and encouragement and incentives for home owners to come forward with information about what may lay in their ceilings. "The ratepayers need to

know that their rates are being spent in a way that protects the general community in a cost efficient and efficacious manner. "Their money must be well spent on procedures that provide real benefit. "Their rate dollar should stretch to provide the maximum value. In this case, it is recognition that Council did not create the problem that means Council should look elsewhere for most of the funds needed to protect public health. "This takes time and negotiations with other levels of government."

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Business awards

WHEN it meets next Wednesday, Queanbeyan City Council is expected to discuss whether it should be a sponsor for the 2005 Queanbeyan Age Excellence in Business Awards. Council deferred discussing the matter last week following a motion by Councillors Sue Whelan and Tom Mavec that this matter be deferred pending further information on how the money had been, and would be, expended. In 2004, council provided \$5000 for the appearance of guest speaker John Lees.

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FACTS ON FUNERALS NO 14

Working through your grief.

One very personal way of working through grief is to keep your own journal or diary. A journal is a safe place where you can express your feelings openly and privately, you can vent your feelings of pain, sorrow, sadness, fear, anxiety, anger, guilt, sense of hopelessness, helplessness or isolation.

Feelings of panic, yearning or emptiness are a normal part of the grieving process, and it is important to express them. "Bottling" them up quite often only makes things worse, and that's why a journal can help to ease the pressure.

What do I write in my journal?

- Whatever it is that you need to explore, express personally and privately that you would feel at risk to do so elsewhere.
- It can be happy, mad, sad or glad
- An uninhibited personal journal allows you to be as beautiful or as ugly as you feel.
- There are no "shoulds" or "should nots" in a journal - it is a private place to learn who you really are and not who you think that you should be. It's a place to let your thoughts roam free.

In essence, Journal writing provides you with the opportunity to explore your own grief process

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Classic Solutions Claus Skrzeczek says appropriate safety gear should be worn when dealing with potential asbestos site.

Picture: Melissa Stiles

Asbestos worries

Calls for Federal Government intervention to safeguard community

By Kate Filor

A 22-year veteran of the asbestos removal business has warned that Federal Government intervention is needed to stop Queanbeyan householders from removing and dumping the potentially deadly material themselves.

Classic Solutions' Claus Skrzeczek said householders with loose asbestos insulation would be tempted to get rid of it themselves rather than face the

high costs of professional removal.

Insulation was pumped into the region's roof spaces in the 1960s and 1970s by former local businessman Mr Fluffy who imported it from South Africa.

Mr Skrzeczek is sure some of the nine households identified as having asbestos in Queanbeyan during the Commonwealth's purge in the ACT during the early 1990s have already bagged the asbestos and dumped it.

Mr Skrzeczek said the cost of professional removal was prohibitive for many people and concerns about house re-sale values meant many did not want to know whether their homes were affected.

He said the money spent in Canberra had so far proved a good investment since no court case had been brought challenging the any government's duty of care.

"A pay-out would be about

\$1 million — that might be about how much it would cost to remove the stuff from all of Queanbeyan," Mr Skrzeczek said.

He said another part of the impetus for the \$100 million Federal Government's asbestos blitz in the 1990s was to ensure the material was safely removed for public health reasons.

He said bags of the loose asbestos had been found on the then Canberra tip face — some-

thing which had not been repeated so far. He said some of the Queanbeyan householders identified during the program in the 1990s had sold their properties at reduced prices — by about \$30,000 or \$35,000.

His concern is that those buyers then removed the asbestos and sold the homes without checks to ensure they were asbestos free. Mr Skrzeczek has checked 11 of 13 Queanbeyan Community Housing properties and has not found any asbestos.

OFFICE BLOCK



Site for \$19 million one stop government shop — page 7

DEVELOPMENT FEATURE

No land left as our city languishes at the mercy of ACT Government in wait for water rights — pages 10 and 11

PRINCIPAL



Queanbeyan South has a new head — discover his passion for IT — page 12

SERVICES DIVISION - MANAGER ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
REPORT TO MEETING OF COUNCIL TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY
18 MAY 2005.....15

ITEM NO : S3

SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES

REFERENCE : SF000084

AUTHOR : THOMPSON

INTRODUCTION

At its meeting of 6 April 2005 Council resolved that a report be prepared on ways in which Council could further assist home owners to remove loose asbestos insulation material from roof spaces in identified homes. As Council would be aware this issue has a long history and various attempts have been made by both Council and affected home owners to obtain assistance for the removal. To date none of these attempts have been successful.

This Report looks at the following issues:

- Is loose asbestos insulation material a public health issue?
- Is removal the best option?
- How can the premises that contain this material be identified?
- Who is responsible for removal?
- What are the options for providing assistance for removal?

COMMENT

These are wide ranging issues and in the interest of brevity and clarity the following parameters have been placed on this Report:

- The Report does not discuss the issue of bonded asbestos products in homes (ie wall linings, roofing material, vinyl tiles and the like). While it is acknowledged that bonded asbestos products can have potential health impacts if handled incorrectly, the potential impacts of loose asbestos insulation are the issue of immediate concern to Council. As such references to asbestos in this report relate only to loose asbestos insulation material in the roof spaces of houses.
- The Report does not delve significantly into the previous actions Council has been involved with. A Mayoral Minute considered by Council on 6 April 2005 provided a detailed summary of actions and responses carried out to date and it is not proposed to reiterate that information here.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

Is loose asbestos insulation material a public health issue?

This is an important question for Council to consider because if it is not a public health problem then it could be argued:- "Why should Council be involved at all?" This then becomes a private matter that effects only the occupiers and ratepayers money should not be used to subsidise removal when the only benefits are to the individual home owner.

So how do you answer such a question?

Firstly, consider the technical aspects of how asbestos impacts on human health. It is well documented that when asbestos fibres are inhaled they can cause the following diseases in humans.

- Asbestosis
- Lung Cancer
- Pleural Disorders
- Mesothelioma

It is also well documented that in the majority of cases the likelihood of contracting one of these conditions is related to the severity and length of exposure, the predisposition of the individual to these diseases and other contributing factors such as smoking.

A fair conclusion would appear to be that if a member of the public is exposed to asbestos fibres then that person could be at risk and that the greater the exposure the greater the risk.

But in the cases Council is aware of, asbestos is contained within the roof spaces of houses. How then could the public come in contact with the material particularly if the roof space is sealed off?

To date this is the position that both the Council and the NSW Department of Health have adopted when dealing with asbestos. When a premises is identified the owners and occupiers of the house are requested to seal up and prevent people entering the roof space (see attachment 1 for a copy of the advice given to residents). This position was based on testing carried out by the Department in 1993, the outcomes of which were reiterated to Council in a letter from the Parliamentary Secretary for Health in November 2000:

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INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

"a study conducted by the Southern NSW Public Health Unit in 1993 concluded that the health risk to residents and the public was insignificant, provided the insulation material was not disturbed. I understand that additional testing since this time has not revealed any significant change"

To date there is no evidence to suggest that such a position has not been valid with the tests revealing that numbers of asbestos fibres in these homes are no different to an ordinary home.

However, there are two important assumptions when adopting the above position. The first is that the material is not disturbed. Clearly there are instances that, although remote, could disturb materials and release them into the surrounding atmosphere. These include fire, storm damage to the roof, burst water pipes in roof spaces and similar unforeseen events. The second assumption is that the occupants are aware that they have asbestos. However, it is possible that some people may not realise they have asbestos insulation and may carry out extensions or work on roofs and in roof spaces, stirring up material and releasing it into the public domain.

It would appear the Commonwealth recognised this shortcoming in simply sealing up roof spaces and as a result spent close to \$100 million identifying and removing the material from homes in the ACT during the early 1990's.

Reviewing the above leads to the conclusion that although asbestos insulation can be contained in the short term to protect occupants of the house, it is likely that in the medium to long term the asbestos in these houses could be released into the public domain and as such become a public health problem.

It is suggested therefore that Council recognise that loose asbestos insulation in domestic housing is likely to become an issue of public health concern. Further, it is suggested that the NSW Department of Health be requested to repeat the tests previously carried out to determine if the current procedure of sealing up roof spaces is effective in reducing the exposure of occupants to asbestos fibres.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

Is Removal the Best Option?

Regardless of whether removal is the best option, the fact is that removal is inevitable. Whether it is done voluntarily, as part of an organised program or to reduce a hazard caused by some damage or alteration to the building, removal will need to take place at some time.

In the intervening period, however long that might be, it is possible to reduce the risk by sealing off the affected space. It is also likely that some form of stabilising compound could be developed to spray onto the surface of the material to reduce the risk of fibres becoming airborne, however at this stage Council is not aware of any such process being available.

In both these scenarios loose asbestos would remain for the life of the building and as discussed above would continue to pose a public health risk. As such it would need to be removed at some stage. There is an argument that this should be done sooner rather than later because it is likely that the expertise involved in removal will decrease over time as this type of material, which has been banned from use for many years, becomes less and less common in buildings.

In the medium to long term there is a strong argument that removal of the material is the best option.

How can the premises that contain this material be identified?

Asbestos has a unique structure that can be identified under a polarising microscope. A small sample less than the size of matchbox is all that is required, but the sample must be analysed by a trained eye for a positive identification usually under laboratory conditions.

In Queanbeyan sampling has been carried out since 1989. In that time 397 samples of insulation have been tested and nine have been returned with a positive result. Of the samples taken 125 were bought to Council by the owner or an agent. The remainder were the 272 samples taken by Council officers during the voluntary identification program undertaken in 1995/96.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

All samples received by Council are recorded with their address, date taken and contact details of the requestor. They are then forwarded onto the Public Health Unit of the Greater Southern Area Health Service (GSAHS) in Goulburn for identification. Analysis of samples by the GSAHS is undertaken free of charge. This service continues to be available.

With the recent resurgence in interest on the asbestos issue Council is again receiving requests to carry out sampling and analysis. As indicated above the analysis itself is catered for, however actually obtaining the sample is the difficulty facing many owners.

Council recommends that only appropriately trained and equipped persons carry out the sampling and discourages owners from taking samples themselves. This reduces the risk to sampler and relies on the sampler's knowledge to prevent unnecessarily stirring up the material and making fibres airborne. The question is, if owners and occupiers can't take the sample to get it to Council for testing, then who can?

Council staff that were originally trained to carry out sampling have now either left Council's employment or have moved to other positions. As a result if Council wished to continue to provide a sampling service then some staff would need to receive appropriate training. This could be arranged. The main problem would be that if there was an influx of requests then these officers would be diverted away from their normal duties which are also important.

Alternatively, owners and occupiers could rely on the private sector to take samples. A brief survey of local asbestos removal contractors indicated that at least 4 would be prepared to undertake sampling with prices ranging from \$75-\$105. Many of these companies could also arrange for analysis to be undertaken at an additional cost of around \$60. However, it would be quite appropriate for the company to take the sample and hand it over to the owner so that they could bring it into Council for identification.

Although the cost may deter some owners from seeking private sampling it would ensure that timely sampling could take place with a minimum of impact on Council resources. As such it is suggested that Council ask all local asbestos removalists that are licensed in either the ACT or NSW if they would like to be included on a list which Council can forward to residents seeking sampling services.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

While the above deals with the one off requests from various owners who may be interested in having their insulation material identified it does not deal with the larger question of whether Council should support a mandatory City wide program of inspecting and sampling all possible affected homes.

This was the process followed in the ACT, which identified approximately 1% of potentially affected dwellings as containing asbestos. In Queanbeyan, where a voluntary system was put in place only 272 owners out of a potential 5000 premises took the option of having their homes inspected and sampled. Presumably a large portion did not require the service because they simply checked and found they had no insulation at all. However, there is undoubtedly a proportion that contains insulation material that was not sampled.

If a mandatory sampling regime was put in place there are two questions which need to be answered.

1. *Cost* – A sampling regime could be carried out by either appropriately trained Council officers or by a private contractor on Council's behalf. Council's resources would be overloaded just in organising the administrative processes behind such a program. Without additional staff it would be unlikely that staff would be able to carry out the inspections in any reasonable time period and without stopping all activities presently undertaken under in the Environmental Health and Environmental Improvement Fund Programs in the Management Plan.

A private contractor would appear to be the only viable option to get the program finished in a reasonable time frame. Based on preliminary queries this is likely to be somewhere between \$50 and \$75 for each premises. With approximately 4600 premises requiring inspection this would be in the order of \$230,000 to \$345,000. This does not include Council's administrative costs nor any costs which the GSAHS may wish to pass on because of the number of samples requiring identification in such a short period of time.

Funding such a program is discussed with other funding options later in this Report.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

2. *Council's ability to legally conduct such a survey* – Council's powers are set out in the Local Government Act 1993. Before embarking on such a program Council would need to ensure that it has appropriate powers that would warrant such a program being undertaken.

While such powers are wide ranging they are severely restricted in relation to entry to residential premises. Entry with the permission of the owner or occupier is generally not a significant issue but if the owner does not wish Council to carry out the inspection then entry to a residential premises can only be made with a search warrant obtained through court which requires the reasons for entry to be justified. Council has already struck a similar problem in gaining access to premises for swimming pool safety inspections of indoor pools.

The question may be asked, how such a program was conducted in the ACT. While the answer is not known at this time the fact that the ACT operate under *a* leasehold system of land tenure is likely to have been an important factor.

Clearly there are important issues which need to be considered if Council wants to pursue a mandatory inspection and sampling regime throughout the City. Even if Council had the financial capability to do so there is still the issue of whether it can do so legally.

As such it is suggested that a legal opinion be obtained on how Council might go about conducting a City wide inspection and sampling program. Such an opinion would cost in the vicinity of \$2000 - \$3000 to obtain. When this question has been decided Council could then look at the ways such a program could be funded. Alternatively, Council could determine not to pursue a City wide sampling and inspection program and continue to rely on the voluntary sampling system presently in place.

Who is Responsible for Removal of Asbestos Insulation Material?

This is the most vexed of all questions asked on the asbestos issue. Perhaps the best way to start is to review the stance of the various stakeholders at this point in time.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

Federal Government – After several requests by Council for Federal funding assistance to remove asbestos from homes a response was received by Senator the Hon. Bill Heffernan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet) on 3 April 2000 stating:

“The Department of Health and Aged Care has advised me that the removal of asbestos from private dwellings is not a Commonwealth responsibility.”

In response to the question about why Commonwealth funding was provided to ACT homes the comment was:

“The provision of Commonwealth funding for the removal of asbestos from Canberra housing arose through circumstances unique to the ACT. The Commonwealth agreed to provide financial assistance for removal of asbestos from the Canberra houses on the basis that, at the time the insulating procedure was in use, the Commonwealth was directly responsible for governing the ACT.”

As far as Council is aware the Federal position has not changed on this issue.

It has been argued that the Federal jurisdiction should bear some responsibility for the situation some home owners now find themselves in on the following basis. Loose asbestos material was imported into Australia from overseas. In the case of the material in Queanbeyan and Canberra it appears most was imported from South Africa. The material would have been cleared through Australian ports by the Federal jurisdiction for use and distribution throughout the country. Although it is not suggested that at that point in time the debilitating effects of asbestos were completely known, it is clear that a hazardous material was allowed into the country for use in domestic premises.

State Government – After prolonged discussions with various NSW Government Departments the position of the State can best be described by the following excerpt from Ian McManus MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health who states in his letter to Council of 5 October 2000:

“Removal of asbestos from private homes is ordinarily a cost borne by the home owner.”

The State government does continue to provide an asbestos identification service free of charge.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

While it has not been directly stated it would be understandable if the State and Federal jurisdictions are unwilling to commit funds because the extent of the problem is unknown. It has been confirmed that the material has been found in communities outside the Canberra/Queanbeyan area although the quantities are unknown at this stage. Similarly the exact number of homes in Queanbeyan is not known. Perhaps the Federal and State jurisdictions feel that providing funding assistance to the known claims may open the floodgates to other, as yet, unidentified claims.

Local Government – Council’s present position is the same as that of the State Government ie that the risk to the health of the public and residents is minimal provided the insulation material is not disturbed. Having said this Council has acted as an advocate for the affected householders over many years and while both the owners and Council have been unsuccessful to date it is clear that Council continues to drive the campaign for a review of the lack of funding arrangements for removal.

Council has also suggested that funding should be on a shared basis and that negotiations should take place for the federal, state, local and private stakeholders to take on 25% responsibility for costs.

The Home Owner – At present the home owner bears the full responsibility for dealing with asbestos insulation in their home. At least two of the nine known affected premises have had the material removed at the owner’s cost. At present the sale of homes is a case of buyer beware and Council officers are unaware of any legislation which specifically requires a vendor to advise a purchaser that the home contains asbestos insulation.

Similarly, if the roof was damaged or alterations to an affected building were to take place, the cost for containing the insulation material would be borne by the home owner.

Given the above, it is clear that at this point in time, the responsibility for the removal of asbestos insulation from a private dwellings rests (either fairly or not) with the home owner.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

COMMENT (Continued)

What are the options for providing assistance for removal?

If Council accepts that the removal of asbestos insulation is an important public health initiative then the following funding options could be considered:

The Owner Bears the Full Cost – This is the present situation. It reduces the cost on the public purse but has the disadvantage that removal is unlikely to take place until the owner can afford to do so. This means that the problem is likely to be around for many years to come.

Council, the State or Federal Jurisdictions Provide a Loan for Removal – Subject to checking legislative requirements any of these authorities could provide a loan to affected residents. This could be over a long period and if desired could be interest free. The availability to take up the loan could be for a short period to encourage the work to be done in the short to medium term.

Council Bears the Full Cost – This could be done but may meet resistance from other ratepayers who feel that public funding should not be provided for the benefit of so few householders. It would have the advantage of removing the material quickly.

Council Shares the Cost With the Owner – This could be done on a dollar for dollar basis or some other ratio. To encourage the work to be done quickly Council could offer to loan part of the money as indicated above where owners are not in a position to immediately find their portion of the funds.

State and Federal Funding Bears the Full Cost – Although this was basically the case in the ACT all indications are that it is unlikely that State and Federal funding for the full cost of removal will be obtained.

Owner, Council, State and Federal Share Costs – This appears to be the fairest approach to a situation which appears to have occurred through no fault of any of the parties involved. Funding could be on a 25% shared basis. Work could be carried out relatively quickly, for a minimal cost to all parties removing a potential public health risk for many years to come.

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COMMENT (Continued)

Costs associated with the owner finding alternate accommodation during the removal process would be at the owners' expense.

Costs for removal seem to vary considerably from \$30,000 in the case of a quote to a local owner through \$35,000 to \$45,000 in quotes obtained by Council in the mid 1990's up to \$100,000 per home in the Canberra removals.

However, the total cost will depend on the final number of homes affected, and until this is determined stakeholders may be reluctant to contribute funds.

As such the costs associated with carrying out an identification program may need to be added. Alternatively a deadline on applications for funding could be implemented to encourage owners of potentially affected premises to come forward and have samples taken.

Given the above it is suggested that Council consider a commitment to cover 25% of the removal costs for asbestos from affected homes as a show of good faith and support to affected owners and to further encourage State and Federal jurisdictions to contribute to the removal of this potential public health problem. Council's financial services may wish to consider ways of distributing expenditure over several years to reduce the impacts of such costs in the budget or alternatively examining whether a special rate could be levied to offset costs.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

No community consultation has taken place as part of this report. If Council determines at some stage in the future to fund some or all of the removal costs or an identification program then this should be done through the normal Management Plan process which gives the community an opportunity for input.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

These are discussed in the section of the report dealing with whether asbestos roof insulation is a public health problem.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

These are discussed throughout the report. The impact depends on the direction Council wishes to take. Any funding by Council should be open, accountable and included in the Management Plan for consideration.

CONCLUSION

Loose asbestos insulation is likely to become a public health problem in the medium to long term. It is also likely that unless appropriate precautions are taken, the residents of an affected home and tradesmen working at that home will be exposed to a significant health risk. For this reason the Department of Health's policy of sealing up affected roof spaces and monitoring living spaces should be adhered to in the short term until the asbestos material can be removed.

Sampling of homes for loose asbestos insulation should be carried out by appropriately trained private contractors selected from a panel by the resident. Sampling would be at the resident's cost. Residents can then bring the sample to Council where it will be forwarded to the GSAHS for identification.

In order to determine the full extent of the problem in the City, Council should seek a legal opinion on whether it is appropriate and legally practical to undertake a survey of all potentially affected premises in the City. Funding of such a program to be considered as a separate issue if Council determines this direction in the future.

In the medium to long term, the removal of loose asbestos insulation from private homes will result in a reduced public health risk to the community. For this reason it is in Council's interest to support the home owner's efforts to remove the material from their houses.

The fairest way to achieve this aim seems to be to share the cost of removal between the owner, Council, State and Federal governments. This has the advantage of ensuring that this public health issue is dealt with sooner rather than later. If Council makes such a commitment it should be on the basis that the owner meets their own costs associated with vacating the premises and on a fixed term basis to encourage owners to come forward and have their premises tested so that they do not miss out.

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council acknowledge that loose asbestos insulation in private dwellings in Queanbeyan is a public health concern.
2. That Council write to the Greater Southern Area Health Service and request that:
 - They carry out further testing on the living spaces of affected properties as they did in the mid 1990's to determine if the policy of sealing roof spaces has been effective in reducing the risks to occupants and tradesmen in affected dwellings; and
 - They continue to provide a free asbestos identification service where samples of insulation material are submitted to Council.
3. That Council acknowledge that in the medium to long term that the removal of loose asbestos insulation material from the roof spaces of private dwellings reduces potential public health risks.
4. That Council reiterate its policy of discouraging home owners from taking samples of insulating material. That as an alternative Council will provide a list of private sampling contractors to residents who require a sample to be taken at their own cost. That this list to be developed through expressions of interest from local contractors interested in providing a sampling service.
5. That Council obtain a legal opinion on whether a City wide sampling and identification program for loose asbestos insulation material is within Council's scope of powers and if so, the legal practicalities in carrying out such a program.
6. That Council make no commitment to a City wide sampling and identification program for loose asbestos insulation material at this time.
7. That Council make an in principle commitment to fund 25% of the removal costs of loose asbestos insulation material from private dwellings in Queanbeyan subject to:
 - A similar amount of funding being provided by the Owner, State and Federal Governments on an equal share basis;
 - This commitment having a fixed time span which is yet to be decided; and

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RECOMMENDATION (Continued)

- The owner covering all incidental costs such as alternative accommodation and the like not associated directly with the removal process.
8. That subject to Council approving Recommendation 7 above representations be made to the Prime Minister, NSW State Premier and the local Federal and State Members for funding on an equal share basis (25% from owner, Council, State and Federal) to remove loose asbestos insulation material from private homes within Queanbeyan.
 9. That Council seek the support of "H Division" in making the above mentioned representations.
-

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**SUBJECT : FUTURE ACTIONS RELATING TO LOOSE ASBESTOS
INSULATION IN ROOF SPACES (Continued)**

ATTACHMENT 1 – Advice Given to Residents

GUIDELINES
CONTAINMENT OF LOOSE ASBESTOS
ROOF INSULATION

The inhalation of asbestos fibres is hazardous to health, and the risk is dose related. Asbestos related diseases such as Mesothelioma, Asbestosis and lung cancer generally have long latency periods (ie period between exposure and contracting the disease can exceed 30 years). Persons with re-existing conditions such as diminished lung function and smokers are at a higher risk.

In 1993 a survey of homes insulated with loose asbestos ceiling insulation revealed that the asbestos fibres did not tend to escape into the living areas of the dwelling, provided the dwelling was structurally sound with intact ceilings.

To minimise this risk to the occupants of houses insulated with loose asbestos, the following measures are recommended:

- A. *Removal of loose asbestos insulation material, by a contractor holding a current Asbestos Removal Contractor's License issued by WorkCover Authority; * **OR***
- B. *Containment of loose asbestos insulation material by effective and durable sealing*

** Note - complete removal of all asbestos fibres is not achievable.*

If containment of loose asbestos is considered, the following matters must be addressed:

1. *All manholes should be sealed and signs erected indicating the presence of asbestos;*
2. *All cracks in walls and ceilings should be sealed to prevent entry of asbestos fibres into the living areas;*
3. *Any wall or ceiling vents should be sealed, and any exhaust fans which discharge into the roof space should be disconnected and sealed;*
4. *Any electrical, plumbing or other work in the roof space must be carried out by a qualified contractor, using approved personal and respiratory protection equipment, and observing safe working practices prescribed by WorkCover Authority;*
5. *No demolition, alteration or construction work shall be carried out until the asbestos has been removed by a contractor holding a current Asbestos Removal Contractor's License issued by WorkCover Authority;*
6. *The local Fire Brigade and Emergency Services will be notified of all premises which contain loose asbestos roof insulation.*

[ASBESTOS]

Carleen's quilt hobby

No word on Wood's fate



PRIZE WINNER: Local patchwork quilter, Carleen Dennington in front of her prize-winning quilt. The quilt will be hanging up at the Masonic Hall on May 28.

IN the third in a series of articles by Tim Mifsud, this article focuses on the work of local resident Carleen Dennington.

She will soon exhibit her works at the Legacy Art and Craft Exhibition in the Masonic Hall on Crawford Street on May 28.

Showing off one of the quilts soon to be on display at the Masonic Hall for Legacy on May 28, Mrs Dennington explained that it takes her roughly 12 months to make a large bed-size quilt. Covered in greens, blues, reds and many other colours, this patchwork quilt is one she says she will keep.

"I do them for my grandchildren and great grandchildren. But I do like to keep a couple. It's just a hobby," she said.

However, with three children, nine grandchildren and six great grandchild-

ren, this is one serious hobby. Sourcing materials sometimes involves scouring shops while on trips down the south coast.

She said it can be a bit of a thrill when one finds a unique piece of material that will fit perfectly with a quilt still in production.

Once the materials have been gathered, she spends many evenings just piecing it together.

Looking forward to the exhibition, she said, "it should be really good. There's a lot of talented people exhibiting. There's going to be a wide variety of different craftwork."

Head on down to the Masonic Hall on May 28 if you are keen to see some examples of Carleen Dennington's Quilts.

Admission will be a gold coin donation to Queanbeyan Legacy.

THERE has still been no word on a release date for Australian hostage Douglas Wood in Iraq.

Ikchhal Patel, of Queanbeyan, who is also treasurer of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, said there had been no confirmation of further movements.

It was Mr Patel who first realised that there was a role the federation could play in trying to secure the release of a fellow countryman and made contact with the Wood family.

"Whilst the Australian Government has been working very hard in trying to secure the release of Douglas, another group has been working tirelessly behind the scenes to assist in whatever way possible to ensure the safety and quick release of one of our dear countrymen," Mr Patel said.

No asbestos funds from State

NSW Government has indicated that it was unlikely to match a financial commitment made by Queanbeyan City Council to part-fund the removal of loose-fill asbestos from homes in Queanbeyan.

Last week, council agreed in principle, to fund 25 per cent of the removal costs of asbestos from homes which is estimated to cost between \$35,000 and \$100,000 a house.

This was contingent upon equal contribution from the state and federal government and home owners.

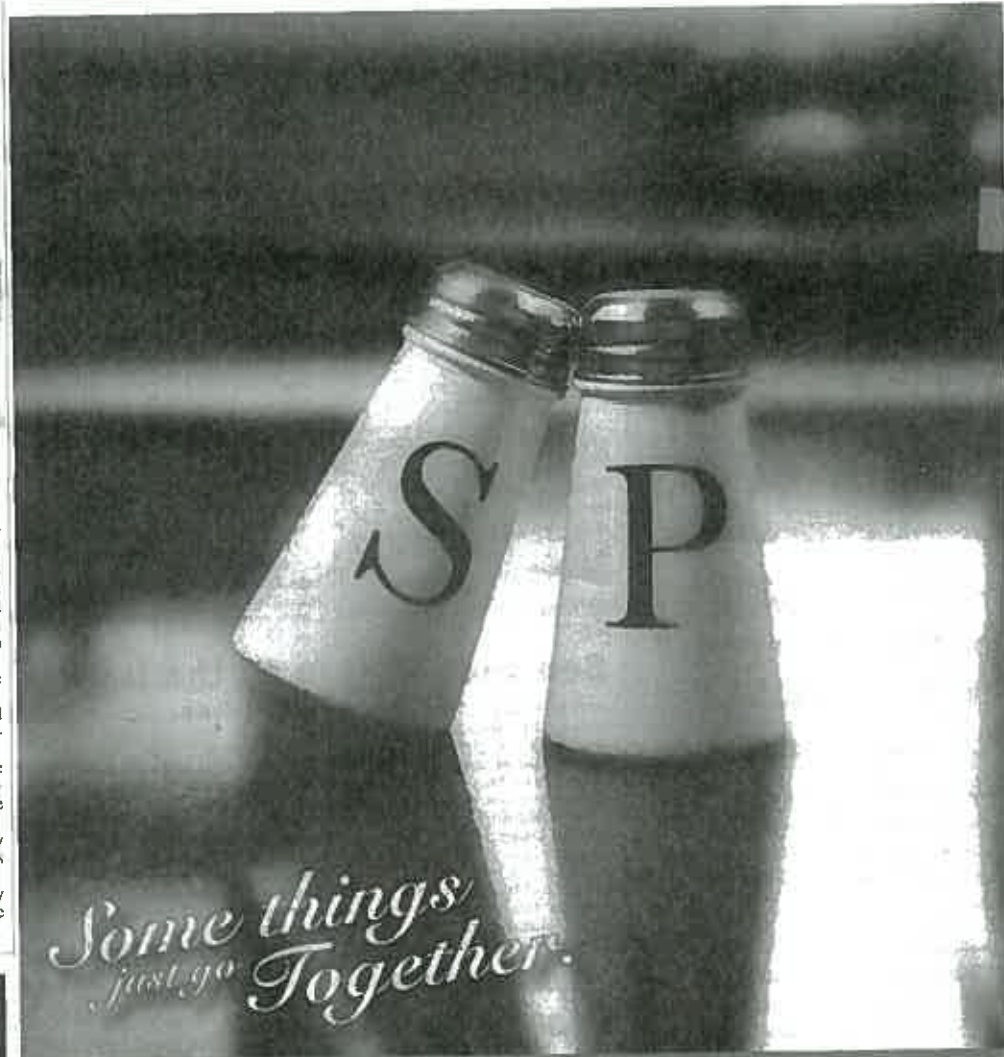
There are up to 60 homes in Queanbeyan which are believed to have loose-fill asbestos.

A spokesperson for the NSW Minister for Local Government Tony Kelly said the Queanbeyan proposal would be looked into by the minister.

However, the NSW Government was already aware of the asbestos situation in Queanbeyan and had previously stated the responsibility lay with the home owners.

Similar sentiments have also been expressed by NSW Health and Industrial Relations Ministers Morris Iemma and John Della Bosca.

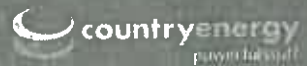
The Federal Government has also denied any responsibility for Queanbeyan homes, saying the jurisdiction lay with NSW.



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Thoughtful Thursdays

Mental Health Lunchtime Information Sessions

Thursday 26th May 2005

Phobias and Older People – understanding and helping

12.30-1.30pm

Queanbeyan Uniting Church
cnr of Rutledge & Crawford Sts

For more information Leanne Craze on 6298 9250



SERVICES	ENVIRONMENTAL	ITEM NO 3
THOMPSON	REF: SF000084	5 OCTOBER 2005
SUBJECT:	COUNCIL'S REQUEST TO CONVENE A MEETING ON THE CREATION OF A REGISTER OF PREMISES THAT ARE FREE FROM LOOSE ASBESTOS INSULATION.	

INTRODUCTION

At its meeting of 15 June 2005 Council resolved "*.. to convene a meeting with all Real Estate firms and property management organisations in Queanbeyan in order to discuss ways of establishing a register of residential and commercial dwellings that are free from dangerous loose asbestos insulation*".

This meeting was held on Thursday 4 August 2005. A copy of the minutes and the outcomes recommended is attached to this report for Council's perusal.

COMMENT

As can be seen from the minutes, the meeting was well attended by a cross section of stakeholders involved in this issue. Apart from Councillors and staff this included real estate representatives specialising in strata management, rental accommodation and sales as well as organisations specialising in tenancy advice and community housing.

It is important to note that the meeting concentrated on the issue of loose asbestos insulation in residential accommodation not on premises containing bonded asbestos products such as asbestos cement products and sheeting.

The minutes are fairly self explanatory so it is not intended to provide additional detail in this report. The important points arising from the meeting could be summarised as follows:

1. If a register were to be kept then it would have two basic uses:
 - to provide information that would assist in the protection of the public health of the community eg for Council to make informed decisions about demolitions or building projects or where some incident arose requiring the assistance of emergency services; or
 - to provide information in the conveyancing or rental process to potential purchasers or tenants.

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COMMENT (Continued)

2. Most of the stakeholders present saw the value in the first use, but were concerned about the second use. Regardless of whether Council, the estate agents or some other organisation maintained the register most felt that the maintenance of a register was impractical because:
 - There would be substantial costs in maintaining the register – not so much in the initial placing of the property on the register, but in dealing with the large number of enquiries from prospective purchasers or tenants who want to know if a property is on the register.
 - Whoever maintained the register would have to accept the liability for giving out incorrect or inaccurate information. Insurance in matters relating to asbestos is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain and most organisations present indicated they would not be prepared to accept such liability, nor would they expect Council to accept the liability.
 - There was concern about the accuracy of the information provided. There are several levels of reliability for such information ranging from relying on advice from an occupant that they have no insulation, through to the results of a pre purchase inspection to the upper end where a sample is analysed by a laboratory. Coupled with this is the problem that samples are usually taken from one spot in the roof and asbestos insulation could be located elsewhere.
3. Given the above, the stakeholders at the meeting generally agreed that a public register of premises that were clear of asbestos should not be maintained. Further, it was suggested that Council continue to maintain a list of premises where asbestos insulation had been identified for the purposes of advising emergency services and for assessing and appropriately conditioning applications involving development of affected premises.
4. The group then looked at other ways in which potential purchasers and tenants could be advised about the potential for asbestos insulation in homes they were buying or renting. The following suggestions were made.
 - Council could include general non-specific information on all section 149 zoning certificates advising prospective purchasers that asbestos insulation was used in housing in Queanbeyan and that they should carry out their own investigations.

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COMMENT (Continued)

- The Real Estate Institute could advise all its members of the problem and make it best practise to include an asbestos insulation check as part of their standard conveyancing procedure. A checklist could be prepared by Council to assist in this process. It was pointed out that not all selling agents are members of the Institute.
 - A similar step could be taken for agents renting out premises. Again it was pointed out that there were many properties which were rented out by non Institute members or by private individuals. Special steps may need to be taken to advise these people.
5. It was suggested that information on loose asbestos information also be made available in different languages to increase exposure of the issue.

All in attendance agreed that the meeting was beneficial in the exchange of information and ideas and in setting some direction for providing the community with more information concerning loose asbestos insulation.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Many of the main stakeholders dealing with property management in Queanbeyan were in attendance. Their advice was valuable and practical.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There were no significant environmental implications arising from the recommendations at the meeting, other than confirming that it was important that information be kept on premises which did have asbestos insulation for use by Council and emergency services in exercising functions where the insulation material could become a risk to public health.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Some staff time will be involved in implementing recommendations but these can be carried out within existing functions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That a register of residential and commercial dwellings that are free from dangerous loose asbestos insulation not be set up by Council, local real estate firms or property management organisations.
 2. That Council continue to maintain a confidential register of premises which contain loose asbestos insulation for the purpose of:
 - Working with affected home owners to source funding for removal;
 - Ensuring that proposed development on affected sites can be properly conditioned to ensure the risk to public health from loose asbestos becoming airborne during the construction/demolition process is minimised; and
 - Providing advice to emergency services about the location of affected premises in case there is an incident involving one of the premises.
 3. That Council investigate the possibility of including a generic statement on section 149 zoning certificates bringing the presence of loose asbestos insulation in Queanbeyan housing to the attention of prospective purchasers.
 4. That Council work with the local Real Estate Institute to assist them in developing a best practise methodology for advising potential purchasers and tenants about the presence of asbestos insulation in some Queanbeyan homes.
 5. That Council examine ways in which information about loose asbestos information can be translated into other languages.
-

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ATTACHMENT – Minutes of Creation of Loose Asbestos Register Meeting

MINUTES

Creation of Loose Asbestos Register Meeting
Thursday, 4 August 2005

Attendees

- Mayor Frank Pangallo
- Raewyn Bastion, Councillor
- Sue Jarvis, Councillor
- Tom Mavec, Councillor
- Michael Thompson, Manager Environmental Services
- Natasha Abbott, Team Leader Environmental Health
- Kate Gorman, Waste Advisory Officer
- Sara McIntyre, Assistant Environmental Health Officer
- Peta Arthur, Family Support Accommodation Coordinator
- Stephen Moss, Southern Cross Real Estate
- Shelagh Keith, Queanbeyan Community Housing
- John Buckley, Buckley and Holland Property Sales
- Michael Mallon, Raine and Horne Real Estate
- Richard Bedell, Department of Housing
- Jan Browne, Ian McNamee and Partners Pty Limited
- Kerrie Rolfe, Ian McNamee and Partners Pty Limited
- George Miller, Ian McNamee and Partners Pty Limited
- Willow Arthur, Tenancy Advice Service
- Tanya Saad, ACT Asbestos Taskforce

Introduction

At the Council meeting of 15 June 2005 Council resolved “..to convene a meeting with all real estate firms and property management organisations in Queanbeyan to discuss ways of establishing a register of residential and commercial dwellings that are free from dangerous loose asbestos insulation.”

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ATTACHMENT – Minutes of Creation of Loose Asbestos Register Meeting (Continued)

The purpose of this meeting was therefore to discuss the issues surrounding loose asbestos insulation in multi dwelling developments and other situations where premises were tenanted and whether the preparation of a register of premises which did not contain asbestos insulation would assist in the management of the problem.. The meeting was not intended to discuss issues related to the management of bonded asbestos products in these buildings.

History

Mr Thompson gave a brief outline of how asbestos insulation came to be used in Queanbeyan residences.

- Mr Fluffy was the only known person who had the idea that asbestos fibres would make a good insulation material.
- Asbestos was imported to Queanbeyan and surrounding areas during the 1960's and 1970's, however it appears to be concentrated in the Queanbeyan area.
- The link between asbestos and diseases became clear in the 1970's.
- By 1987, ACT residents had formed a lobby group to put pressure on the ACT and Commonwealth Governments to take action in relation to asbestos.
- In 1988 the ACT Government carried out a survey of potentially affected houses. Approximately 65,000 houses were surveyed with approximately 1,000 returning a positive sample to asbestos.
- The ACT asbestos removal program was carried over the late 1980's and early 1990's at a cost of \$100 million.
- In 1991 Queanbeyan City Council established a free testing service in conjunction with NSW Department of Health. If positive results were returned, the owner was advised to seal the roof space, along with any vents and openings. The NSW Fire Brigade and State Emergency Service were notified.
- In 1993 the NSW Department of Health carried out testing of affected houses to determine if the sealing of roof spaces was effective in containing loose asbestos fibres. The study indicated that sealing was effective and that the immediate removal of the asbestos material was not required.
- Queanbeyan City Council met with seven affected residents and took on an advocacy role to see if funding was available for the removal of loose asbestos insulation.

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ATTACHMENT – Minutes of Creation of Loose Asbestos Register Meeting

- Queanbeyan City Council offered a free service to take samples and send them to the NSW Department of Health for analysis. Two additional homes were found to contain loose asbestos insulation.
- Queanbeyan City Council tendered out costs for removal of asbestos, with quotes between \$35,000 and \$50,000 per house being returned. Queanbeyan City Council then sent letters to the Federal Government and NSW State Government requesting funding.
- In 1998, with no response having been received from the Federal Ministers, Queanbeyan City Council approached the Prime Minister. The response received detailed that this was not a Commonwealth responsibility.
- In 2004 the asbestos profile increased with the James Hardie case and ACT's new legislation regarding the responsibility of owners and tenants to notify others.
- Two home owners had the materials removed at their own cost.
- In June 2005 it was found that a multi dwelling unit comprising 38 units contained loose asbestos insulation.
- Discussions were held by Queanbeyan City Council to determine any further action to be taken. Council proposed to pay 25% of the removal costs if the other 75% was met by the owner and the State and Federal Governments.
- There is no indication that the NSW or Federal Government will follow in the ACT Government's footsteps in relation to legislative requirements for loose asbestos insulation to be removed from premises.
- Queanbeyan City Council expects that there could be up to 60 homes in Queanbeyan which are yet to be identified as containing loose asbestos insulation. This figure is based on the ACT testing program. However, no real knowledge of the number of premises affected is known at this stage.

Proposal for Register

It was proposed to create a register of properties that had received a Certificate of Clearance stating that the building is free from loose asbestos insulation. The register would take a positive approach to asbestos issues by containing houses that are free of loose asbestos insulation, rather than houses that do contain loose asbestos insulation.

SERVICES	ENVIRONMENTAL	ITEM NO 3
THOMPSON	REF: SF000084	5 OCTOBER 2005
SUBJECT:	COUNCIL'S REQUEST TO CONVENE A MEETING ON THE CREATION OF A REGISTER OF PREMISES THAT ARE FREE FROM LOOSE ASBESTOS INSULATION. (CONTINUED)	

ATTACHMENT – Minutes of Creation of Loose Asbestos Register Meeting

Discussion on Register

It was proposed that if a register were to be kept the information on a register could be used in the following circumstances:

- Sale of properties prior to the property being put on the market
- Demolition/renovations
- Warnings to tradespeople working on the building
- Emergency services / natural disasters
- Potential tenants

Issues Raised

If a register were to be developed a number of concerns were raised by those present. These included:

- Has legal advice been sought on the implications of keeping a register, especially in relation to what happens if incorrect or incomplete information is given out?
- What would the standard be for confirming that a premises did or did not have asbestos? Would a pre-purchase inspection be adequate or would a sample have to be analysed by an accredited laboratory. What happens if a Certificate of Clearance is not correct or doesn't incorporate the entire house?
- A register may be hard to maintain if not managed by Council due to a high staff turnover in the real estate industry.
- Perhaps it should be the purchaser's responsibility to ensure the property doesn't contain asbestos.
- Would a negative register be better given that thousands of houses without asbestos insulation would need to be tested.

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Possible Options

- Properties could be required to have a Certificate of Clearance before being listed on the market but all real estate agents would need to do this.
- Queanbeyan City Council may be prepared to put a clause on 149 Planning Certificates stating that properties built before a certain date may contain loose asbestos insulation.
- Real estate agents could develop a Memorandum of Understanding to undertake asbestos checks during building inspections and the analysis of records kept by real estate agents.
- Queanbeyan City Council could distribute asbestos information in other languages.
- Queanbeyan City Council could provide a checklist list to real estate agencies on the steps to be taken in relation to asbestos identification, for example, if a house was built after a certain date then it will not contain asbestos.

Recommendations

- All persons in attendance agreed that the costs and risks associated with maintaining a register made such a scheme unviable.
 - Queanbeyan City Council is to investigate the incorporation of a clause on 149 Planning Certificates advising applicants that houses in Queanbeyan erected before a certain date have the potential to contain loose asbestos insulation.
 - Queanbeyan City Council is to send information to real estate agencies and the Real Estate Industry Association with recommendations to have an asbestos inspection carried out during a pre purchase building inspection. This could incorporate the checklist previously discussed.
 - Tenants and private landlords may need to be addressed through a mandatory inspection program or other alternative.
 - Queanbeyan City Council will obtain a copy of a report to be released by the ACT Asbestos Taskforce later this month on their asbestos removal program.
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