

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH



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Deadly DIY: Home Renovations Linked to 51% of Mesothelioma Deaths

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH - FRIDAY 28 NOV IS ASBESTOS AWARENESS DAY 2025

With around 4,000 Australians dying from an asbestos-related disease annually, (more than three times the national road toll), and the death toll continuing to rise, National Asbestos Awareness Month (November) aims to save lives by alerting Australians to the dangers of asbestos that lurks in 1-in-3 Aussie homes.

Conducted by the *Asbestos Education Committee*, the annual national campaign educates Australians about the ongoing dangers of legacy asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) that can remain in any home built before 1990 by providing free tools and resources at asbestosawareness.com.au.

If sealed and in good, stable condition ACMs don't pose a health risk. However, if disturbed during demolition, renovation or maintenance; and asbestos fibres are released and can be inhaled, those exposed can develop deadly diseases including malignant mesothelioma (there is no cure), lung cancer and asbestosis.

With evidence suggesting asbestos exposure is also linked to ovarian and laryngeal (voice box) cancers and increased risk of breast, stomach and colon cancers; only through increased awareness and providing free practical education tools to help identify and manage asbestos safely, will we prevent asbestos-related deaths.

Cherie Barber, Australia's Renovation Queen™ and an Asbestos Awareness Ambassador for 12 years said, "Homeowners, renovators and tradies who fail to manage ACMs safely, not only risk exposing themselves to the deadly microscopic fibres, but can expose family members, children and neighbours.

"There is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres, but there are tools and rules homeowners and tradies should follow to ensure ACMs are managed safely to protect themselves and their loved ones.

"They should start by visiting asbestosawareness.com.au to find out what they need to know and if a home was built before 1990, have it inspected by a licenced asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist to identify potential hazards and they should only use licenced asbestos removalists because it's not worth the risk!"

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and Safe Work Australia's *Mesothelioma in Australia 2024* report (29 August 2025), over the past 40 years the number of cases of mesothelioma has continued to steadily increase so awareness of the risks of exposure is essential to saving lives.

The report comprising cases of mesothelioma (reported up until 1 May 2025), noted that more than 9 in 10 people who had been diagnosed with mesothelioma and completed an Australian Mesothelioma Registry (AMR) exposure assessment, were assessed as having a history of possible or probable exposure to asbestos.

The AMR noted that while men have historically been more likely than women to be diagnosed with mesothelioma due to occupational exposure in trades, 94% (1,323 of 1,409) of respondents who completed the questionnaire reported non-occupational exposure.

89% of mesothelioma patients (1,176) reported '*possible or probable asbestos exposure*' in non-occupational settings. Of these, 51% were exposed during major home renovations involving asbestos, 38% from living in a house while renovations

were underway, 13% from residing in a fibro home built between 1947 and 1987, and 21% from living with someone occupationally exposed who brought asbestos dust into the home.

Clare Collins, Chair of the Asbestos Education Committee and campaign director since 2011 said, “Because Australia was one of the highest consumers of ACMs, twenty-two years after the national ban on asbestos came into force (Dec 2003), Australia continues to record one of the highest incidences of mesothelioma in the world.

“Tragic cases of relatively young people being diagnosed with mesothelioma continue to be recorded because of exposure to fibres as children when their parents built homes using ACMs unaware of the risks,” she said.

“With the *Australian Government’s First Home Guarantee Scheme* expanding from 1 October 2025, considering property price caps, if young first homebuyers who are oblivious to asbestos risks purchase an older home requiring renovation, it’s vital they learn about asbestos risks and how to manage ACMs safely,” she said.

Ms Barber said, “Asbestos wasn’t just used in sheeting in the construction of fibro homes. Asbestos was used extensively in the manufacture of more than 3000 building and decorator products that can still be found in any brick, fibro, weatherboard, clad home or apartment built before 1990.

“Asbestos can lurk under floor coverings including carpets, linoleum and vinyl tiles, behind wall and floor tiles, in cement floors, internal and external walls, ceilings and ceiling space (insulation), eaves, roofs, around hot water pipes, fences, home extensions, garages, outdoor toilets, backyard and farm structures, chook sheds and even dog kennels. It was used everywhere!”

“Although in some states homeowners are permitted to remove up to ten square metres of bonded non-friable ACMs, people should avoid unnecessary asbestos risks and only use licenced asbestos professionals because the cost to homeowners, tradies and their families could be far greater if they’re exposed to the deadly fibres.”

“The message we want homeowners and tradies to hear is what NOT to do with asbestos! Don’t cut it! Don’t drill it! Don’t drop it! Don’t sand it! Don’t saw it! Don’t scrape it! Don’t scrub it! Don’t dismantle it! Don’t tip it! Don’t waterblast it! Don’t demolish it! Don’t dump it! And whatever they do...they should NEVER remove it themselves!” Ms Barber said.

Since 2011, Australia’s multi award-winning Asbestos Awareness campaign has been dedicated to saving lives by alerting renovators, property investors, managers and tradies to the asbestos risks and providing effective tools and information resources to ensure potentially hazardous asbestos materials are managed safely.

asbestosawareness.com.au is the world’s most comprehensive website for user-friendly information on identifying and managing ACMs with dedicated resources for renovators, investors and tradies including ***Asbestos in Homes: A Guide to Identification, Testing and Removal*** video; ***Asbestos 101 for Residential Property Owners, Managers and Tradies***; ***Asbestos in Your Home – The Ultimate Renovators Guide*** video, ***Asbestos Awareness Residential Property Checklist – A Homeowner’s Guide to Identifying Asbestos-Containing Materials***; ***Factsheets*** for homeowners and tradies, ***Trade-specific guides***; ***Asbestos Products Database***; ***Asbestos in Commercial Properties and Naturally Occurring Asbestos*** guidelines.

To help save lives, in 2025 the Asbestos Education Committee continues the National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign and its long-standing leadership role of providing world-first, user-friendly and freely accessible education resources at asbestosawareness.com.au for anyone who might risk disturbing ACMs including homeowners, renovators, landlords, tradies, commercial property and regional property owners and managers.

-ENDS-

MEDIA CENTRE

To access asbestos information and resources, images and graphics of asbestos-containing materials or Asbestos Awareness Ambassador Cherie Barber, Australia’s Renovation Queen™, please refer to the Media Centre at asbestosawareness.com.au OR via

MEDIA CENTRE: <https://bit.ly/AsbestosAwareness-Media-Centre>

- **RELEASES & JOURNALIST NOTES:** <https://bit.ly/AsbestosAwareness-MediaReleases>
- **IMAGES & GRAPHICS:** Various images and graphics of asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) or Ambassador Cherie Barber visit: <https://bit.ly/AsbestosAwareness-Images>
- **FOOTAGE: VNR/BROLL -** <https://bit.ly/AsbestosAwareness-Footage> **PLAYLIST:** bit.ly/AsbestosAwareness-YoutubePlaylist

SOURCE:

Mesothelioma in Australia 2025 (29 August 2025): <https://mesothelioma-australia.com/publications-and-data/publications>

INTERVIEW REQUESTS

For detailed Journalist Notes or to arrange interviews with Cherie Barber or a variety of expert spokespersons listed below and case studies, contact Advocacy Australia on 02 9518 4744.

Clare Collins: 0414 821 957 ♦ clare@advocacyaustralia.org.au - Alice Collins: 0414 686 091 ♦ alice@advocacyaustralia.org.au

HASHTAGS

#AsbestosAwareness #AsbestosAwarenessMonth #RespectAsbestos #RenovationRoulette #RespectAsbestosRisks
#StopPlayingRenovationRoulette #DIY #Asbestos #Renovate #Renovating

ASBESTOS.AWARENESS.COM.AU

asbestosawareness.com.au is Australia's leading, most comprehensive, trusted online source of asbestos information dedicated to educating the community about the dangers of asbestos with a specific focus on homeowners, renovators, tradies, commercial property managers and the owners and managers of regional properties where naturally occurring asbestos can be found.

asbestosawareness.com.au, provides comprehensive asbestos information and user-friendly free resources:

- **Asbestos in Homes: A Guide to Identification, Testing and Removal** (Video guide on asbestos inspections and removal hosted by Australia's Renovation Queen™ and Asbestos Awareness Ambassador, Cherie Barber)
- **Asbestos 101 for Residential Property Owners, Managers and Tradies** (Education resource to help homeowners, tradies and property investors learn the facts about asbestos and how to manage it safely)
- **Asbestos in Your Home – The Ultimate Renovators Guide** (Easy to follow video hosted and produced by Australia's Renovation Queen™ and Asbestos Awareness Ambassador, Cherie Barber)
- **Asbestos Awareness Residential Property Checklist – A Homeowner's Guide to Identifying Asbestos-Containing Materials** (User-friendly step-by-step guide to identifying asbestos in the home)
- **Asbestos Awareness - 20 Point Safety Check** (Asbestos risks and how to manage asbestos safely)
- **Fact Sheets for Homeowners** (When, why and how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE))
- **Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talks** (10 Toolbox Talks to help employers better inform workers of asbestos risks)
- **Asbestos Awareness for Young Workers** (Education resource developed with SafeWork NSW)
- **Asbestos Awareness - 20 Point Safety Check** (Asbestos risks and how to manage asbestos safely)
- **Residential Checklist for Tradies – A Tradespersons Guide to Asbestos** (Identify the product types and locations)
- **Trade Specific Checklist for Tradies – A Tradespersons Guide to Asbestos** (Tailored to 23 specific trades)
- **Fact Sheets for Tradies** (When, why and how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE))
- **Asbestos Product Database** (Australia's first comprehensive online asbestos product database)
- **Asbestos Management for Commercial and Non-Residential Properties** (Australia's only comprehensive resource)
- **Naturally Occurring Asbestos – Asbestos Management Plan Guide** (Australia's only comprehensive resource)

MEDIA SPOKESPERSONS

Cherie Barber – ASBESTOS AWARENESS AMBASSADOR

Cherie Barber is widely known as Australia's Renovation Queen™. Cherie is a regular TV renovator, highly sought-after public speaker, author and award-winning businesswoman with her renovating for profit career spanning more than 30 years. Cherie lost her grandfather to asbestos-related disease and has been a dedicated Ambassador for the National Asbestos Awareness campaign to educate homeowners and DIYers on how to renovate homes with asbestos safely since 2013.

Bret Baker JP

Bret Baker is President of the Asbestos & Hazmat Removal Contractors Association of NSW (AHRCA). Bret is a Civil and Environmental Engineer and is the Managing Director of Beasy Pty Ltd with more than 25 years experienced in asbestos removal and demolition. Bret is a long-time industry representative on a number of government asbestos and demolition advisory committees including SafeWork NSW Demolition & Asbestos Consultative Committee and the Asbestos Safety & Eradication Agency of Australia – Management and Removal Committee Member. Bret has presented at state and national asbestos forums on asbestos-related industry issues. Bret is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

John Batty

John Batty is one of the founding members and President of the Asbestos & Hazardous-Materials Consultants Association (AHCA) and Managing Director of EDP Consultants, a global provider of Health, Safety and Environmental Services. John has more than 20 years' experience in asbestos and hazardous materials management and is a consultant to a number of government departments and private organisations. John is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

Clare Collins

Clare Collins is the Director of the National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign and asbestosawareness.com.au. Clare is the Managing Director of Insight Communications, the creators and managers of the Asbestos Awareness campaign since 2011. Working in consultation with government experts and industry leaders, Insight are the creatives behind the multi-award winning campaign and asbestosawareness.com.au. Insight has presented the campaign to stakeholders and industry leaders in the UK, Europe and Australia. Clare is the Chair of Advocacy Australia and the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

Greg Cummings

Greg Cummings has previously served as Mayor and Councillor on the former Holroyd City Council since 2004. He was elected as the first Mayor of Cumberland since inception in 2017. Greg has been instrumental in the initiation of the Workplace Tragedy Memorial and Reconciliation Day. Greg is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

Mathew Klintfält, Asbestos Awareness Advocate and son of the Late Carol Klintfält OAM

Mathew Klintfält is the son of the Late Carol Klintfält OAM who was honoured with an Order of Australia in Queen's Birthday Honours Roll 2015 for her tireless Asbestos Awareness advocacy following her mesothelioma diagnosis. Mathew advocates for the prevention of asbestos-related diseases and is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

Phillip Smith

Phillip Smith is the Group Executive for Environment, Health, Safety and Quality and Business Technology at SHAPE Australia Pty Limited. Phil has over 30 years' experience in the building industry and holds trade, construction, strategic leadership and WHS qualifications. Phil is a member of the Asbestos & Hazmat Removal Contractors Association and the OFSC Industry Reference Group, and strongly advocates for asbestos awareness causes, industry associations and charitable organisations. SHAPE has a strong focus on asbestos management, education, and awareness, with industry leading asbestos management systems. Phil is a member of the Asbestos Education Committee for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign.

Joanne Wade

Joanne Wade is the Head of National Asbestos and Dust Diseases for Slater and Gordon Lawyers and is a respected thought leader in advocating for the needs of people with asbestos related diseases since 1996. Joanne brings a unique credibility and very personal experience to the role, as her father is a victim of asbestos disease, which has led her to a career she is passionate about. Ms Wade was a founding member of Australia's first Asbestos Education Committee for the Asbestos Awareness Campaign aimed at educating homeowners and renovators about the dangers of asbestos.

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