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NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK: RESPECT ASBESTOS

Asbestos Education Committee urges Aussies to respect asbestos risks to help save lives!

ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK 20-26 NOVEMBER - FRIDAY 24 IS ASBESTOS AWARENESS DAY 2023

During National Asbestos Awareness Week (20-26 November), Australia's Asbestos Education Committee is urging DIYers, residents and tradies who renovate homes to respect the ever present dangers of asbestos to help prevent asbestos-related diseases that kill more than 4,000 Australians every year – 235% more than died on Australian roads in 2022.

Clare Collins, Chair of the Asbestos Education Committee said, “With one-in-three homes containing asbestos and with the continuing DIY boom, serious concerns have been raised that DIYers and tradies who renovate homes might be risking their lives and the lives of families by playing renovation roulette if they fail to respect the potentially life-threatening risks if asbestos is not managed safely.”

If asbestos-containing materials are disturbed during maintenance, renovation or demolition and minute fibres are released which can be inhaled, this can lead to asbestos-related diseases including asbestosis, lung cancer and malignant mesothelioma. There is no cure for mesothelioma, a cancer that can develop between 33 and 44 years after inhaling asbestos fibres with the average survival time following diagnosis, just 12 months.

“With a staggering number of deaths each year from asbestos-related diseases and with deaths predicted to continue to rise among workers and those exposed to fibres during renovations; it's vital that homeowners and tradies respect asbestos risks when renovating any home built before 1990,” she said.

“Renovators need to be aware that asbestos fibres were used in the manufacture of more than 3000 building and decorator products that lie hidden in one third of Aussie homes, and that asbestos detection is not included in a standard building report. It's vital that before homeowners take up tools, they visit www.asbestosawareness.com.au to learn what they need to know to ensure asbestos is managed safely and in line with regulations, and have a licenced asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist inspect your property” said Ms Collins.

While many renovators may think that only tradies are at risk of asbestos-related diseases; according to the most recent Australian Mesothelioma Registry (AMR) Report (April 2023), 83% of respondents were assessed as having had ‘possible or probable’ exposure to asbestos fibres in non-occupational settings – primarily homes.

Of the patients surveyed, the dominant non-occupational exposure to asbestos fibres (51%) occurred when undertaking major home renovations. 38% said they'd lived in a house undergoing renovations. 20% said they'd lived in the same home as someone who was exposed to asbestos at work and brought the fibres home, and 12% said they'd lived in a house made of fibro that was built between 1947 and 1987.

“Most Australians don't know asbestos-containing products are not just lurking in fibro homes, they were used widely in brick, weatherboard, clad homes and apartments and other structures commonly found on properties including backyard sheds, fences, garages, chook sheds and even dog kennels. It could be anywhere!” she said.

If undisturbed, well maintained and in a stable, sealed condition, these products are considered unlikely to pose health risks. However, if disturbed during renovations, maintenance, removal or the demolition of older homes and other structures such as fences, sheds or garages, and minute fibres are released that can be inhaled, homeowners and tradies can be putting their lives and the lives of their families at risk.

“We're urging homeowners and tradies to respect asbestos and avoid risking exposure when renovating older properties by engaging an occupational hygienist or licenced asbestos professionals who are trained to identify, remove and dispose of asbestos safely in accordance with regulations,” Ms Collins said.

Cherie Barber, Australia's Renovation Queen™ and Ambassador for the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign is Australia's foremost expert on renovating having featured on many current affairs and lifestyle programs and in international media forums over her 30+ year award-winning renovating career.



Cherie who lost her grandfather to asbestos is passionate about educating homeowners and DIYers on how to renovate properties with asbestos safely because she knows the devastating impact it can have on families.

“While asbestos remains hidden in one third of Australian homes, it will continue to pose a very real and present danger to homeowners and tradies for many years to come so it’s vital we respect asbestos and manage asbestos-containing materials safely to prevent releasing fibres that can kill.

“By respecting the dangers of asbestos, it just may save your life or the life of a loved one,” Ms Barber said.

“The bottom line is, if your home was built before 1990 and you suspect it may contain asbestos, before taking up tools engage a licenced asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist to inspect your property and if you need to remove asbestos, only use licenced asbestos removalists who will remove and dispose of it safely,” she said.

“It’s time homeowners, renovators and tradies stop being complacent and learn to manage asbestos safely by visiting Australia’s most comprehensive, trusted source of asbestos information, asbestosawareness.com.au.”

The website contains an extensive range of free, user-friendly information for homeowners, property managers, renovators and tradies with the newly developed **Asbestos 101 for Residential Property Owners, Managers and Tradies** education resource developed for anyone who might do work on residential properties.

Developed in accordance with government Work Health and Safety Regulations and Codes of Practice, *Asbestos 101 for Residential Property Owners, Managers and Tradies* is a comprehensive resource that provides Australians with vital information as to why asbestos is dangerous; the risks of working unsafely with ACMs; the steps to take if they come across materials they suspect may contain asbestos; the importance of engaging an occupational hygienist or licenced asbestos assessor to confirm if asbestos is present; and, why it’s vital to only use licenced asbestos removalists to ensure hazardous asbestos materials are removed and disposed of safely in accordance with government regulations.

When it comes to 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! And whatever you do... Don’t dump it! Visit asbestosawareness.com.au - It’s not worth the risk!

-ENDS-

INTERVIEW REQUESTS & IMAGES

For more information about asbestos and resources refer to the Campaign Notes & Website Quick Links on page 3 or visit asbestosawareness.com.au where high resolution photographs can be downloaded.

For detailed Journalist Notes about asbestos risks and resources or to arrange interviews with Cherie Barber or a variety of expert spokespersons and case studies, contact Insight Communications on 02 9518 4744.

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IMAGES & GRAPHICS

For various images and graphics of asbestos-containing materials or Asbestos Awareness Ambassador Cherie Barber, Australia’s Renovation Queen™ visit: <https://asbestosawareness.box.com/v/AsbestosAwarenessImages>

HASHTAGS

#AsbestosAwareness #AsbestosAwarenessMonth #RespectAsbestos #RenovationRoulette
#StopPlayingRenovationRoulette #RespectAsbestosRisks

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AWARENESS CAMPAIGN NOTES & WEBSITE QUICK LINKS

NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH 2023

Marking 12 years campaigning in the prevention of asbestos-related diseases

2023 marks the 10th anniversary of National Asbestos Awareness Month and 12 years as Australia's longest-running, multi-award winning annual asbestos education campaign warning homeowners, renovators and tradies of the dangers of asbestos and directs them to Australia's most comprehensive source of asbestos information and resources at asbestosawareness.com.au where they can learn how to manage asbestos safely.

Since launching asbestosawareness.com.au in 2011 for Asbestos Awareness Week, the campaign has grown into National Asbestos Awareness Month winning multiple peer-reviewed awards both nationally (7) and internationally (2) and has been acknowledged in parliaments across Australia and global medical journals as a leading initiative in the prevention of asbestos-related diseases. In December 2022 Advocacy Australia was recognized with two Golden Target Awards for the 2021 campaign.

The importance of continuing the National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign and the asbestosawareness.com.au website in the prevention of asbestos-related diseases cannot be overstated. With funding for the campaign ceasing in 2018 and funding to keep the website live concluding in January 2019, to help save lives the campaign is being conducted in a pro-bono capacity. To continue the campaign and keep the website live beyond 2023, funding is desperately needed.

ASBESTOSAWARENESS.COM.AU

asbestosawareness.com.au is Australia's leading, most comprehensive trusted 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.

Since launching on Monday 21 November 2011, the asbestosawareness.com.au website has had:

- ◆ Over 2.5 million pageviews
- ◆ Over 1.1 million sessions
- ◆ Over 815,000 unique users
- ◆ Asbestos information resources accessed from the website:
 - Over 1500 resources are available to the public to download. 107 are flyers, fact sheets, posters and templates with the remaining being images, graphics, presentations and videos.
 - These resources have been accessed over 600,000 times

Visit asbestosawareness.com.au for information and useful, practical resources including:

- ◆ [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 online resource)
- ◆ [Naturally Occurring Asbestos – Asbestos Management Plan Guide](#) (Australia's only free online resource)

SOURCES

- ◆ Mesothelioma in Australia 2021 - Published 3 April 2023 - [Mesothelioma in Australia 2021 \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/034ebfb9-554f-4eb7-8f0f-ad56d9d3c5ae/aihw-can-152.pdf?v=20230605165739&inline=true)
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/034ebfb9-554f-4eb7-8f0f-ad56d9d3c5ae/aihw-can-152.pdf?v=20230605165739&inline=true> Accessed 23 Oct 2023