

2011

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE  
ACT ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT REVIEW (2010) – REPORT

Presented by  
Ms Katy Gallagher MLA  
Minister for Industrial Relations

## **Government Response to the Review of ACT Asbestos Management Strategy**

### **Introduction**

The ACT Asbestos Management Strategy was agreed to by Government in 2005. It was agreed the Strategy would be reviewed after five years.

In 2010, an independent consulting company, Join the Dots, was contracted to undertake the scheduled Review. Whilst acknowledging that the majority of the recommendations contained in the 2005 Strategy had been completed, the Review has made five specific recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1**

*Establish a coordinated action response model for the management of significant asbestos incidents.*

#### Response

**Agree** – The Government agrees to establish the coordinated response model recommended in the review, including identifying a suitably qualified person to coordinate all asbestos related resources.

Whilst it was pleasing to note the significant achievements since implementing the recommendations of the Taskforce, the Government acknowledges that to continue protecting workers and members of the public, the management coordinator should provide a single point of contact to the public for information. The management coordinator will also be tasked with coordinating the activities of government directorates in respect of asbestos regulation, remediation, training, industry oversight and public awareness.

Asbestos has proven to be pervasive in nature, it is essential that the Government ensure that the approach to asbestos remains contemporary and that the Government can respond to changing circumstances. It is well documented that many tonnes of asbestos were used in some building materials and much of this is still present within our community today. Unfortunately regardless of all the best intentions or rigorous testing, asbestos will continue to pose a danger within our community.

### **Recommendation 2**

*Establish an Asbestos Regulators Forum*

#### Response

**Agree** - The Government will establish an Asbestos Regulators Forum, which will be made up of representatives from various directorates including Environment and Sustainable Development (ACTPLA and EPA), Health and Territory and Municipal Services (Land Management and

Stewardship) in line with the Review recommendations. To be chaired by the ACT Work Safety Commissioner, the forum will be responsible for overseeing the ACT Asbestos Management Strategy; exchanging information and data about the various legislation that each agency is responsible for; exchanging information and data in respect of responses each agency has managed; promoting information sharing about emerging issues and trends; and importantly, building collective asbestos management expertise across government.

### **Recommendation 3**

*Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the implementation and effectiveness of asbestos legislation*

#### **Response**

**Agree** – The Asbestos Regulators Forum will be tasked with developing mechanisms to ensure the ongoing review and assessment of the various asbestos legislation that exist in the ACT.

### **Recommendation 4**

*Asbestos Regulator Forum establish a strategic plan and oversee implementation*

#### **Response**

**Agree** – The Asbestos Regulators Forum will be required to formulate and oversight a strategic plan for asbestos management over the next five years. The strategic plan will identify priority activities, responsible agencies, timeframes and regular progress review points.

The 2010 Review identified a number of actions which could further progress the intent of the Asbestos Task Force recommendations. These actions will provide instructive guidelines for the Forum and will assist in the development of a strategic plan.

### **Recommendation 5**

*Community Awareness*

#### **Response**

**Agree** – The Government accepts that due to the nature of asbestos; particularly the period of latency between exposure and the onset of illness, that people may be less vigilant than they should when handling this material. The reality is, asbestos is a demonstrated human carcinogen and exposure to asbestos can have serious health consequences.

An ongoing awareness and education program to clear up misconceptions that the community may have in dealing with this dangerous substance will commence as soon as possible.