

In 2020 More Australians Will Die from Asbestos Exposure than COVID-19: Prevention is the Only Cure

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH. In 2020, over 4,000 Australians will die from asbestos-related diseases; 3000 more Australians than from COVID-19

SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA, November 4, 2020

/EINPresswire.com/ -- In 2020, more than 4,000 Australians will die from asbestos-related diseases caused from exposure to asbestos fibres either in the home or in the workplace – that's 3000 more deaths compared to the number of Australians who will have died from COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic.

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Annually, Asbestos fibres will kill over 4000 Australians, 3000 more than COVID-19 in 2020. With the cause directly linked to DIY and renovating, it's vital renovators take asbestos warnings seriously”

Cherie Barber, Asbestos Awareness Ambassador & Australia's Renovation Queen

However, unlike COVID-19, deaths in Australia from asbestos-related diseases have been ongoing for more than 100 years. Asbestos-related diseases include pleural disease, asbestosis, lung cancer and malignant mesothelioma which can develop 20-50 years after asbestos fibres are inhaled. There is no cure for mesothelioma and the survival time following diagnosis can be as little as 10-12 months.

As with COVID-19, the most effective means of preventing asbestos-related deaths is to prevent exposure – inhalation of deadly asbestos fibres. However, according to the Australian Mesothelioma Registry, Australia has one of the highest measured incidences in the world having recorded

a steady increase in mesothelioma cases over the past 40 years with two Australians (on average) diagnosed every day in the last year alone.*



The poster features a man in a hat and plaid shirt, John Jarratt, with a hammer and pickaxe crossed out by a red circle with a diagonal line. The text reads: "Renovating? Go Slow! ASBESTOS IT'S A NO GO". Below this, it says: "Are you playing renovation roulette? Visit asbestosawareness.com.au it's not worth the risk!". At the bottom, it says: "asbestosawareness.com.au". Logos for ADRI, Insight, and I-NEX are also present.

Professor Ken Takahashi, Director of the [Asbestos Diseases Research Institute](#) (ADRI) said, "Despite the sinister history of asbestos in Australia, and the prediction that deaths from asbestos-related diseases will continue to rise due to Australia's legacy of wide-spread use of asbestos-containing materials (ACM); Australians remain complacent about the dire consequences of disturbing ACM and continue to ignore the warnings."

"Just as Australians have heeded the serious warnings, worn PPE and taken the hard decisions and necessary precautions to prevent community transmission to dramatically minimise deaths from COVID-19; with asbestos-related deaths in Australia predicted to rise due to homeowners and tradespeople inhaling asbestos fibres during renovations or the maintenance of older properties, Australians must take the warnings about asbestos seriously to protect themselves and their families from avoidable exposure to fibres that can kill," Professor Takahashi said.

"Unlike COVID-19, where diagnosis may be confirmed within 24-48 hours, diagnosing asbestos-related diseases can take many years so if Australians continue to ignore the warnings about asbestos; in coming years families across Australia will be devastated when a loved one is diagnosed with a deadly asbestos-related disease that could have easily been prevented by managing asbestos safely."

With Australia among the highest consumers of asbestos in the world, and with the wide-spread use of ACM in the construction of homes built or renovated prior to 1987 and in commercial and non-residential structures prior to 31 December 2003, it's going to be many years (if ever), before



Cherie Barber Asbestos Awareness Ambassador for Asbestos Awareness Month



DIY Couple using Healthy House Checklist in laundry to check for Asbestos

all remaining ACM is completely removed from properties.

There are thousands of different types of products that contain asbestos and remain in one third of Australian homes built or renovated prior to 1987 including fibro, brick, weatherboard, clad homes and apartments as well as in many commercial and non-residential structures including buildings, fences and farm sheds.

If undisturbed, well maintained, and in a stable, sealed condition, asbestos is unlikely to pose health risks. However, the risk of inhaling asbestos fibres can occur during maintenance, removal, refurbishment or demolition of ACM when damaged, broken, cut, drilled, sawn, sanded, scraped, waterblasted or if disturbed when using tools - particularly power tools which releases a high concentration of fibres.

[Cherie Barber](#), Australia's Renovation Queen and Ambassador for National Asbestos Awareness Month who lost her Grandfather to an asbestos-related disease said, "With more than 4000 Australians dying each year from asbestos-related diseases and the cause directly linked to DIY and renovating, it's vital that during National Asbestos Awareness Month renovators, DIYers, tradies, property managers, demolition and construction workers make it their business to learn how to manage asbestos safely by visiting asbestosawareness.com.au.

"With Australia's passion for renovating fuelled by many popular DIY lifestyle programs and the increase in DIY during COVID-19, if Australians don't start taking the warnings seriously, we could be risking our lives and the lives of our loved ones including our children," she said.

The first wave of asbestos-related diseases in Australia resulted from mining. The second wave affected tradespeople who worked in transport, manufacturing and the installation of products that contained asbestos. Following the Australia-wide ban on asbestos on 31 December 2003, the third wave of asbestos victims are tradespeople and do-it-yourself home renovators who disturb ACM during the renovation process with the number of Australians diagnosed with asbestos-related diseases predicted to continue to rise in coming years.

Asbestos materials were used everywhere in homes and in commercial and non-residential structures - lurking 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, garages, roofs, around hot water pipes, fences, home extensions, garages, outdoor toilets, backyard and farm structures, water tanks, chook sheds and even dog kennels.

"It's important to follow the first rule of asbestos management - If you think a product might contain asbestos, play it safe and go slow - treat it as if it is asbestos and take all the necessary precautions including getting the experts in. Occupational hygienists or licenced asbestos assessors can inspect your property and if you need to remove asbestos, please only use licenced asbestos removalists because it's not worth the risk!" Ms Barber said.

Renovating? GO SLOW - Asbestos it's a NO GO! Visit asbestosawareness.com.au to find out what

you need to know!

-ENDS-

THE NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS MONTH CAMPAIGN & ASBESTOSAWARENESS.COM.AU ARE CURRENTLY UNFUNDED, AND CONDUCTED PRO-BONO BY INSIGHT COMMUNICATIONS & I-NEX TO HELP SAVE LIVES

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For images of asbestos-containing materials:

<https://asbestosawareness.box.com/v/AsbestosAwarenessImages>

Journalist Notes: For information about asbestos, resources and statistics see

<https://asbestosawareness.box.com/v/media-releases>

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