



Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Report

Key delivery outcomes,
insights and lessons learnt

November 2022

Environment Planning and Sustainable
Development Directorate

Yuma

***Dhawura Nguna Dhawura Ngunnawal
Ngunnawalwari dhawurawari
Nginggada Dindi yindumaralidjinyin
Dhawura Ngunnawal yindumaralidjinyin***

Hello

***This is Ngunnawal Country
We always respect Elders, male and female
We always respect Ngunnawal Country***

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the ACT, the Ngunnawal people. We recognise the special relationship and connection that Ngunnawal people have with this Country. Ngunnawal people are a thriving community whose life and culture are intrinsically connected to this land in a way that is core to their physical and spiritual wellbeing, their cultural practices, law/lore, songlines and stories.

Ngunnawal people have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to these lands and waters for thousands of years.

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Glossary

Acronym or abbreviation	Term
ACR	Asbestos Contamination Report
ACTPS	ACT Public Service
AMP	Asbestos Management Plan
ANU	Australian National University
API	Australian Property Institute
CERG	Community and Expert Reference Group
CHAMPS	A change management program for preschool and primary school age children from Mr Fluffy households.
Commonwealth	The Australian Federal Government, responsible for the Australian Capital Territory until self-government in 1989.
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
EPSDD	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
ESSC	Eradication Scheme Steering Committee
FROR	First Right of Refusal for the previous homeowner (if eligible) to purchase a remediated block.
GP	General Practitioner
GST	Goods and Services Tax
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PST	Personal Support Team
PVA	Polyvinyl acetate
Register	Affected Residential Premises Register
Scheme	Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely
SLA	Service Level Agreement
Taskforce	Asbestos Response Taskforce
WBRMC	West Belconnen Resource Management Centre

Minister's foreword

The ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce was formed by the ACT Government on 25 June 2014 to provide a coordinated and compassionate response to the lasting impacts of 'Mr Fluffy' loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes.

Over its eight years of operation, the Taskforce administered the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme, and made significant progress to realise the ACT Government's goal of eradicating the ongoing exposure risks from loose fill asbestos insulation in our community.

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Taskforce up until its closure on 30 June 2022. The report provides an overview of the Taskforce's key delivery outcomes and reflects on the lessons learnt in seeking to address the 1,029 loose fill asbestos insulation affected properties across 56 Canberra suburbs.

I would like to commend the many ACT public servants who worked in the Taskforce over its lifetime, for their efforts and dedication, as well as the valued input from the Community and Expert Reference Group in supporting the Canberra community during this response.

Government has always recognised that the Scheme is not simply a program about bricks and mortar. It is a significant social, financial and community response that has touched the lives of homeowners, tenants and neighbours, and is part of our city's history.

The legacy work for how we as a community mark this part of our history and support households that are managing the impact of loose fill asbestos insulation continues.

Rebecca Vassarotti MLA

Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction

November 2022



Background

In Australia, most buildings constructed or renovated before 1990 may contain **asbestos**. It was used extensively in industrial products due to its strength, insulating features and resistance to fire.

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring mineral fibres. The most common asbestos types used in Australia were chrysotile (white asbestos), amosite (brown asbestos) and crocidolite (blue asbestos).

When asbestos is disturbed, either in its natural form or in an asbestos-containing product, asbestos fibres become airborne and can pose a health risk to people as asbestos fibres can be easily inhaled. Diseases related to the deposit and penetration of asbestos fibres can take a long time to develop after initial exposure to asbestos. While not everyone exposed to asbestos will get an asbestos-related disease, the chance of developing an asbestos-related disease increases with the cumulative exposure to asbestos fibres.

Due to its health and safety risks, asbestos became a **nationally banned product in 2003**. Asbestos is regulated in the ACT under the [Dangerous Substances Act 2004](#). There are also obligations in relation to management of the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres under legislation including the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) and the [Environment Protection Act 1997](#).

Loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra

‘Mr Fluffy’ is the commonly used name for the asbestos fluff insulation installed by Canberra-based D. Jansen & Co. Pty Ltd and its successor firms, which installed loose fill asbestos insulation between 1968 and 1980.

Contemporary advertisements (see Figure 1) of the asbestos fluff product promised ‘sure comfort and fuel savings’ to homeowners who paid less than \$100 to insulate an average house with what was claimed to be ‘CSIRO Tested and Approved’ as ‘the perfect thermal insulating material’. That material, loose fill asbestos insulation, was finely crushed raw asbestos. Under the microscope, a sample – the size of a 50-cent coin – can contain up to two million asbestos fibres. The finely crushed friable asbestos was blown into roof spaces as insulation and allowed airborne asbestos to settle across the battens and ceilings, and behind the cornices of people’s homes. The scale of the legacy from ‘Mr Fluffy’ in Canberra is unique as the installation of this type of loose fill asbestos insulation was not widely used in Australia or other parts of the world.

Over the course of the 20th century, there was growing awareness of health risks associated with exposure to asbestos fibres. During the 1970s, concerns were raised principally about the impact of exposure to asbestos for workers. In the 1980s, there was focus on the presence of friable asbestos in government buildings in Canberra, with removal programs for sprayed asbestos-containing products



Figure 1 Mr Fluffy advertisement from 1968

conducted at locations such as the National Library of Australia and some Canberra schools. Growing community concerns about the impacts of exposure to friable asbestos led to the 1988 decision by the Commonwealth Government to survey all Canberra houses built before 1980 to determine the number of homes in the ACT that contained loose fill asbestos insulation and fund a clean-up program of those houses.

In 1989, the Commonwealth and the newly formed ACT Government undertook a jointly funded **clean-up program** to remove visible and accessible loose fill asbestos insulation from over 1,000 Canberra homes. At the time the clean-up program was completed, the prevailing view amongst at least some of the owners of identified affected residential properties, and notwithstanding disclaimers to the contrary on the program's 'Certificate of Completion of Asbestos Removal Work', was that all loose fill asbestos insulation was removed from their homes.

After the clean-up program, the ACT Government continued to **periodically review** the management of loose fill asbestos insulation **affected properties** in the community. It wrote to the owners of affected properties in 1993 and 2005 reminding them of the presence of loose fill asbestos fibres in the structure of their homes. The ACT Government enacted the Dangerous Substances Act 2004, and then Dangerous Substances (Asbestos) Amendment Act 2004 that implemented a range of amendments to various laws, including the Building Act 2004 and Building Regulation 2004, to introduce a best practice asbestos management regime.

By 2006, changes had also been made to the presentation of information about affected properties on building files, and in the title searches conducted as part of conveyancing processes. However, a small number of houses the survey and clean-up program missed had consequently been discovered. In 2011, a house that had been missed in the original clean-up program was discovered in the suburb of Downer. Given the significant level of contamination found inside the Downer home, the ACT Government purchased the affected property in 2012 and conducted a forensic deconstruction of it in 2013. That process revealed new information on the extent to which asbestos fibres had migrated through the structure of the house.

Drawing on the report of the **forensic deconstruction** of the Downer house, in February 2014, the ACT Government again wrote to owners reminding them of the continuing presence of asbestos fibres in the structure of their homes, and recommended they be informed by having an asbestos assessment undertaken. Through asbestos testing and assessment of the affected properties, it emerged that there had been significant migration of loose fill asbestos insulation fibres within people's homes. Concerningly, this included many positive findings in living areas, cornices, and built-in cupboards. In some circumstances, the contamination was so significant that residents needed to vacate immediately and were issued a direct prohibition notice for the property under the Dangerous Substances Act 2004 from WorkSafe ACT.

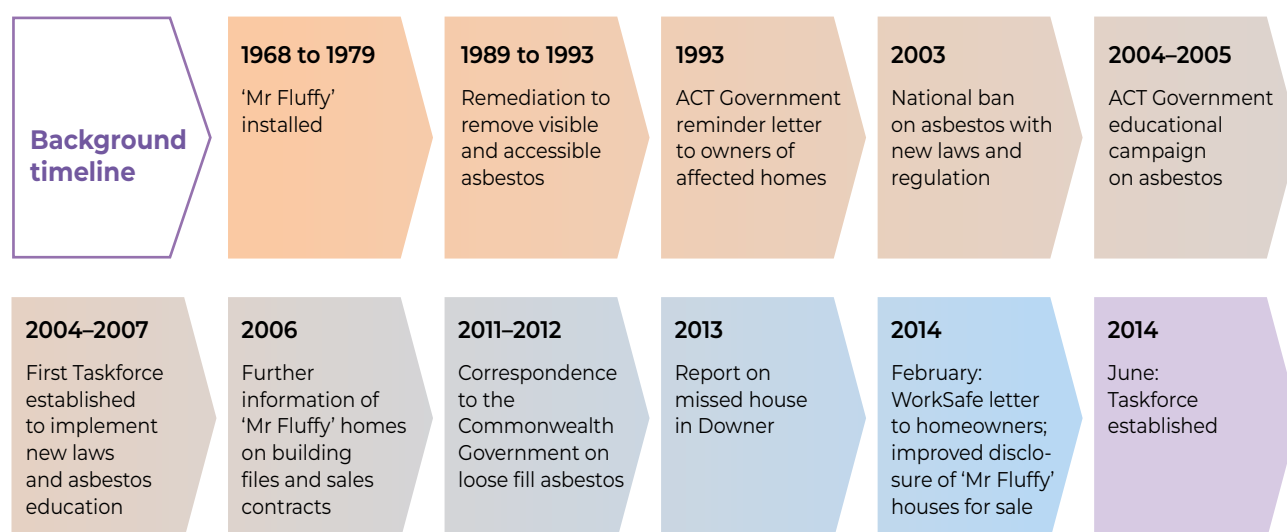


Figure 2 An early timeline

Asbestos Response Taskforce

In June 2014, the ACT Government established the Asbestos Response Taskforce (the Taskforce) to address the ongoing public health and safety risks posed by the continuing presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes. The previous Commissioner for Public Administration in the ACT Public Service was appointed as Head of Taskforce, and at its inception the Taskforce reported directly to the Chief Minister.

People and community were at the centre of the ACT Government's response to the management of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes. The Taskforce therefore operated as the key point of contact within government for access to practical assistance, information, and advice about properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra. The Head of Taskforce quickly brought together a dedicated team with the appropriate skills to deliver a coordinated, comprehensive and compassionate response to the issue of the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in the Canberra community.

Initially, the key objectives of the Taskforce were to:

- respond to the emerging needs of families in affected properties, including by administering the ACT Government's emergency financial assistance package
- provide information to families in affected properties and the wider community
- provide advice on approaches to securing an enduring solution to the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in the affected homes.

➤ Community and Expert Reference Group

Following the establishment of the Taskforce, the Chief Minister also announced the implementation of a Community and Expert Reference Group (CERG). Membership of CERG included representatives from the community of people with an affected property, regional community service providers, health officials, recovery experts, unions, industry, and government.

At its inception, the key role of the CERG was to:

- identify and communicate community issues in relation to the impacts of loose fill asbestos and to act as a conduit for this information to the Taskforce
- act as a 'sounding-board' for the work of the Taskforce, particularly with respect to community communications and education programs
- foster community involvement in the work of the Taskforce, such as supportive activities by industry and community organisations, consideration of donations and offers of assistance from the general public
- provide information and advocacy, rather than be a decision-making body, for the Taskforce.

Advice to government on the long-term management of loose fill asbestos in Canberra homes

In June 2014, relevant ACT Government agencies convened a roundtable of regulators and asbestos assessors. At this time, based on over 200 assessments of affected homes, the emerging view was that:

- contamination of subfloor areas was uniform (around this time, some assessors ceased sampling subfloor areas and presumed contamination in order to focus on potential penetration by fibres to living areas)
- entry of fibres through cracked cornices and other ceiling openings was common
- in some cases, visible fibre bundles had been located – especially in the tops of cupboards
- asbestos fibres had been detected in clothing, children's beds, soft furnishings and heating/cooling ducts.

To inform its advice, the Taskforce engaged with Australian Government colleagues in the Department of Employment, Safe Work Australia, the Department of Defence, Comcare, and the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency. In addition, the Taskforce consulted with domestic and international field and academic experts as well as officials from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.

In August 2014, the Taskforce reported on the legacy of Mr Fluffy loose fill asbestos insulation and made recommendations to remove the risk to homeowners, tenants and the broader community. Having listened to experts, asbestos assessors and homeowners, the Taskforce concluded that there was **no effective, practical and affordable method to render homes containing loose fill asbestos insulation safe to occupy in the long term**. The only enduring solution to the health risks posed by the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in homes, and their attendant social, financial, and practical consequences, was the demolition of each affected property. Details of this report and its advice were published in the **Long Term Management of Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation in Canberra Homes** at Appendix A.

➤ Emergency financial assistance

Emergency financial assistance packages were first made available just after the inception of the Taskforce to respond directly and quickly to the specific needs of households with unanticipated out-of-pocket expenses from the affected property. Where residents were advised by an asbestos assessor to dispose of contaminated items such as clothing, linen, soft furnishings or other household goods, these households were able to be reimbursed up to \$1,000 to assist in immediately replacing these items.

Drawing from the principles applied in previous financial assistance delivery to Canberrans impacted by the 2003 bushfires, financial grants of up to \$10,000 per household and an additional \$2,000 for each dependent child residing in the home then became available to assist households that:

- needed to pay for any immediate minor remediation works required to make an affected property safe to reside in for the short-term
- required alternate accommodation as a result of an assessment indicating the presence of asbestos fibres in living areas, especially where a prohibition notice was issued by WorkSafe ACT.

In a small number of cases where a household had been required to vacate their home and had faced significant complexities that resulted in them reaching their financial assistance package cap, access to a subsequent financial assistance package could be granted.

Community sentiments

The health, social and financial impacts for residents and homeowners were captured not only through Taskforce and CERG engagement, but importantly through the impacted community's own expressed words.

The first group impact statement prepared by the Fluffy Owners and Residents' Action Group – **Hope in grief: confronting Mr Fluffy's toxic legacy in Canberra and Queanbeyan** – was presented by the Chief Minister to the ACT Legislative on 30 October 2014.

“ We have three main concerns. First, the health and safety risks posed by our homes to our families, tenants, tradespeople, and the broader community. Second, industry advice suggests that our homes can never be fully cleaned. Third, following advice on the ongoing contamination of our homes we face crippling levels of economic loss, with difficulties selling and renting out our homes. Some banks no longer view our homes as providing sufficient security for mortgages.

— Brianna Heseltine 2014

A copy of the group impact statement is available at the ACT Heritage Library and provides an important insight into the experience and sentiments of the impacted community as expressed to government.

Expressions of community sentiments were also found in the media, in online forums, and in the arts. The digital storytelling series titled 'Surrender' was produced in 2015. It provides an insight into the personal experiences of nine homeowners who came together at Woden Community Services to creatively share their experiences with the broader community. 'Surrender' is available at <https://www.gensstories.com.au/surrender>.

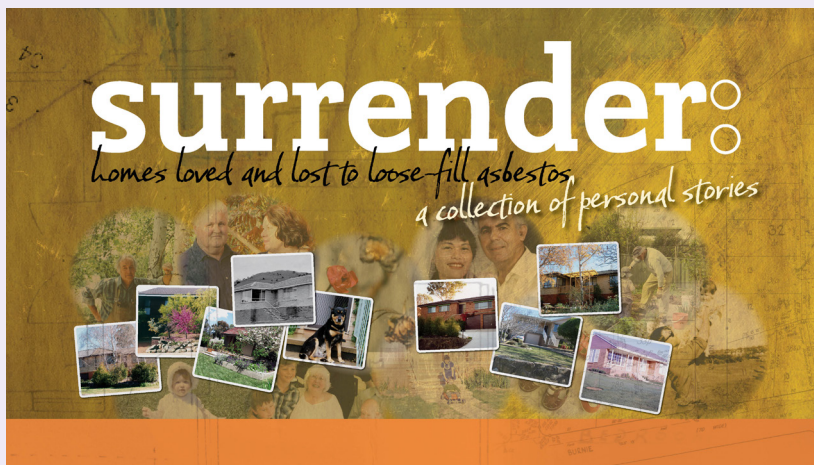


Figure 3 A community digital story telling project

Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme

Accepting the advice that demolition of each affected property was the enduring solution, the ACT Government secured significant financial assistance through a \$1 billion concessional loan from the Australian Government. It was able to announce its **preferred way forward** to the community on 28 October 2014.

The ACT Government's Preferred Way Forward Overview and Supporting Detail at Appendix B sets out the detail on the design, phases, and offerings of the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (Scheme).

The Scheme's objectives:

- To eliminate, by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation for homeowners, tenants, tradespeople and the wider community.
- To provide a fair outcome for owners of affected homes.
- To provide, so far as possible and reasonable, flexibility and options for informed choices to be made by owners of affected homes.
- To minimise overall net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government (thereby minimising the flow-on impact to other government policy and program delivery areas).

A key offering of the Scheme was the ACT Government offer to **purchase all affected residential properties** in the ACT through a voluntary buyback program. The buyback program provided homeowners with:

- the average market value for their properties ignoring the presence of loose fill asbestos and maintenance issues
- financial relocation support
- a Stamp Duty concession on purchase of a new house or block in the ACT
- First Right of Refusal to repurchase the remediated block (if applicable).

The Scheme, through buyback and demolition programs, needed to take account of the circumstances of individual families and enable them to make informed choices about their own homes and their own lives. It was a deeply personal experience for homeowners and residents of affected properties.

The Scheme also needed the cooperation of community, industry and government to achieve its intended removal-to-renewal outcomes (see Figure 4).

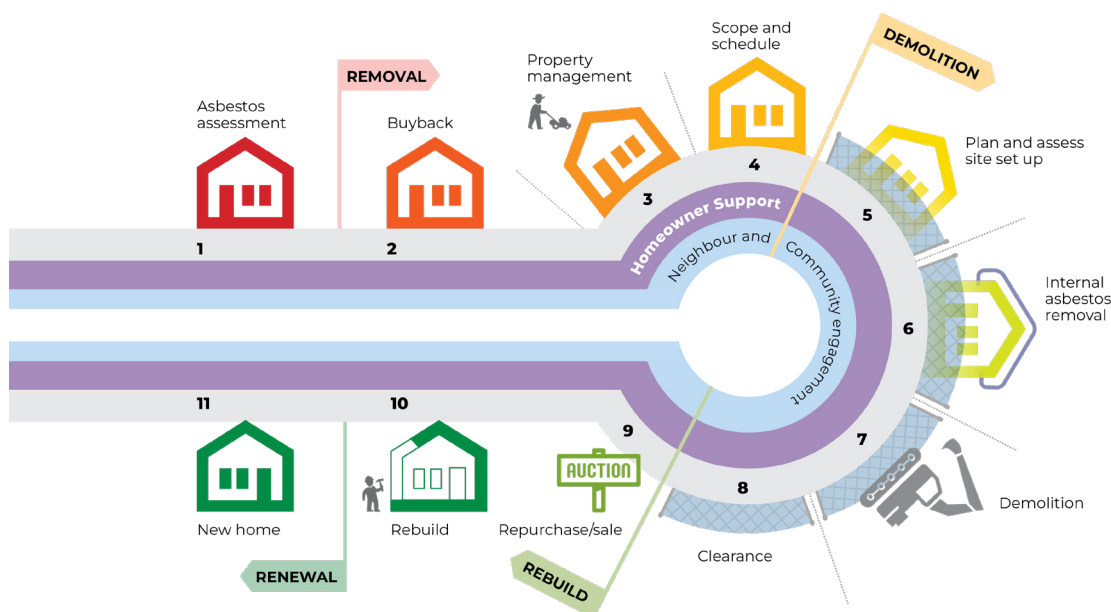


Figure 4 Removal to renewal

While homeowners took time to consider the Scheme and their options, a number of interim safety measures were implemented for affected properties in the Canberra community (see Table 1).

Table 1 Community safety measures

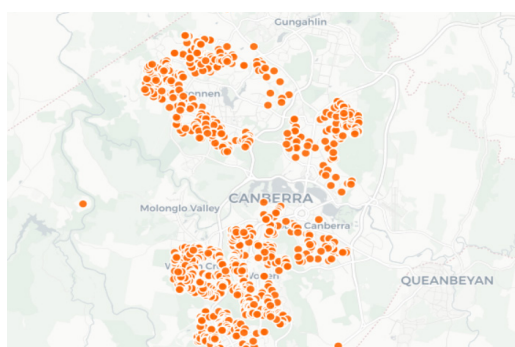
2014	2015	2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Asbestos Response Taskforce established, asbestos assessments for affected properties undertaken at ACT Government's cost. → Affected properties required to have a safety tag (warning sticker) displayed at the electrical meter box and switch board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Under the <u>Dangerous Substances Act 2004</u> affected properties placed on the Affected Residential Premises Register. → An administrative interest is placed on Title of affected properties. → Each affected property is required to have an Asbestos Contamination Report (ACR) and a compliant Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) lodged with WorkSafe ACT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → AMP required to be displayed in a case installed at the main entrance to the property. → Occupancy Prohibition introduced. → Restrictions on development and building works on standing affected properties are limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – works that are essential for health, safety or reasonable living conditions; or – works associated with the demolition, asbestos removal and structural demolition.

➤ The list and register of affected residential premises

The intention to publish a **List of Affected Residential Premises** that were eligible for the Scheme was part of the preferred way forward announcement in October 2014. The public release of the historical list supported improved community safety and enabled former residents, tradespeople, and the broader community to know whether properties are (or were) affected by loose fill asbestos insulation. On 1 July 2015, after the initial opt-in due date of the buyback program closed, the list of 1,022 known affected properties became publicly available. The suburbs and addresses were publicly available, though the personal details of homeowners were not included.

As the Scheme progressed, the status of known affected properties required updating and ongoing management. The **Affected Residential Premises Register** was established when community safety amendments were made to the Dangerous Substances Act 2004 in March 2015. The legislative amendments required the Minister to maintain the Register to identify the location of **all known affected properties**, whether they were acquired by government, and manage ongoing community safety measures that applied to affected properties under the Dangerous Substances Act 2004. Only upon evidence of remediation are blocks are removed from the Register.

Seven additional affected properties have been identified since the Register commenced.



1,029
affected properties
have been on the Register

Figure 5 Published interactive [map](#)

Neighbouring impacted properties

As the Scheme progressed, it became apparent that a small number of neighbouring properties connected to an affected property may pose a significant obstacle to demolition and remediation occurring. To address these challenges, the Taskforce implemented a comprehensive assessment methodology and policy framework for impacted properties (see Figure 6).

On 27 October 2015, the Building (Loose-fill Asbestos Eradication) Legislation Amendment Act 2015 established the Scheme's **voluntary buyback program for eligible impacted properties** that had structural dependencies, identified migration pathways, or that had been deemed to pose an obstacle to efficient demolition and remediation of an affected property.

Similar to the affected property buyback program, the impacted property buyback program provided homeowners with:

- the average market value for their property, ignoring the neighbouring property is an affected property marked for demolition
- financial relocation support
- a Stamp Duty concession on purchase of a new house or block in the ACT
- First Right of Refusal to repurchase the remediated block (if applicable).

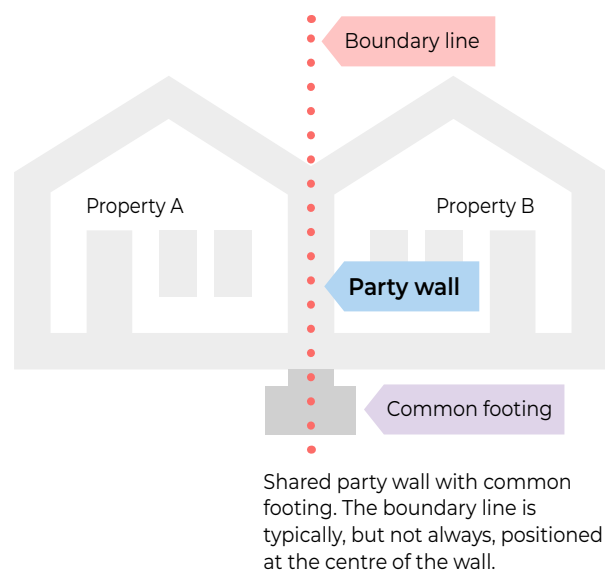


Figure 6 Impacted property example



19
neighbouring properties were
deemed eligible impacted properties

Scheme governance

Overview

The Taskforce established governance, assurance and risk management frameworks that supported best practice delivery of the Scheme, operational transparency and accountability. These frameworks provided confidence to the Minister, the ACT Legislative Assembly and the broader community that the Taskforce was safely achieving its objectives of the Scheme to provide an enduring solution to the loose fill asbestos insulation legacy in Canberra.

Key elements of the Taskforce governance, assurance and risk management frameworks included:

- a governance structure to support leadership and accountability
- assurance and risk frameworks to support effective compliance, risk management and continuous improvement.

Governance structure

In 2014, the Taskforce was a division of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD), operating within the same legal framework (including the [Public Sector Management Act 1994](#) and [Financial Management Act 1996](#)) as the rest of the ACT Public Service. It used the overarching CMTEDD governance structures for staff management, records management, financial management and reporting, freedom of information, public interest disclosure, annual, budget estimates and legislative reporting, ministerial support, and Cabinet and Legislative Assembly processes.

The overall operational and administrative delivery of the Scheme sat with the Head of Taskforce, who reported directly to the Head of Service and Chief Minister. The Head of Taskforce held director-general-equivalent procurement and recruitment delegations (for example, in relation to confidential elements of contracts or single select procurement processes) to facilitate timely responses, proper procurement process outcomes, and to maintain clarity between the work of the Taskforce and the wider directorate.

In addition, the Taskforce implemented a high-level governance structure that allocated responsibilities and avoided duplication. This was achieved by embedding key staff in the Taskforce while capitalising on the existing skills and capability in relevant areas of ACT Government across delivery streams. A key element of the Taskforce governance structure was the Eradication Scheme Steering Committee (ESSC), which provided oversight of the implementation of the Scheme, including assurance it met its objectives and was well administered.

Eradication Scheme Steering Committee

The ESSC had the following objectives:

- To monitor key milestone progress and performance for the four phases of the Scheme.
- To monitor and control the Scheme's budget through approvals and funding releases across the four phases.
- To monitor the effectiveness of identified Scheme risks and controls.
- To monitor community and stakeholder satisfaction and engagement with the Scheme.
- To request and receive recommendations from responsible phase directors on the Scheme's delivery.

The Head of Taskforce was the Chair. ESSC members or regular attendees included representatives from key ACT Government Scheme delivery partners, including:

- CMTEDD
- Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)
- Suburban Land Agency
- Major Projects Canberra
- WorkSafe ACT
- ACT Property Group.

The ESSC met monthly and over the duration of the Taskforce, 52 meetings of the ESSC were held. The ESSC supported an efficient and informed authorising environment for the delivery of the Scheme. It provided clear lines of authority to facilitate the escalation and resolution of complex issues with the relevant delivery partner executives.

Figure 7 provides an overview of the **organisational structure** of the Taskforce within ACT Government at its inception in 2014. The Taskforce had over 40 full-time staff members at the peak of Scheme activity.

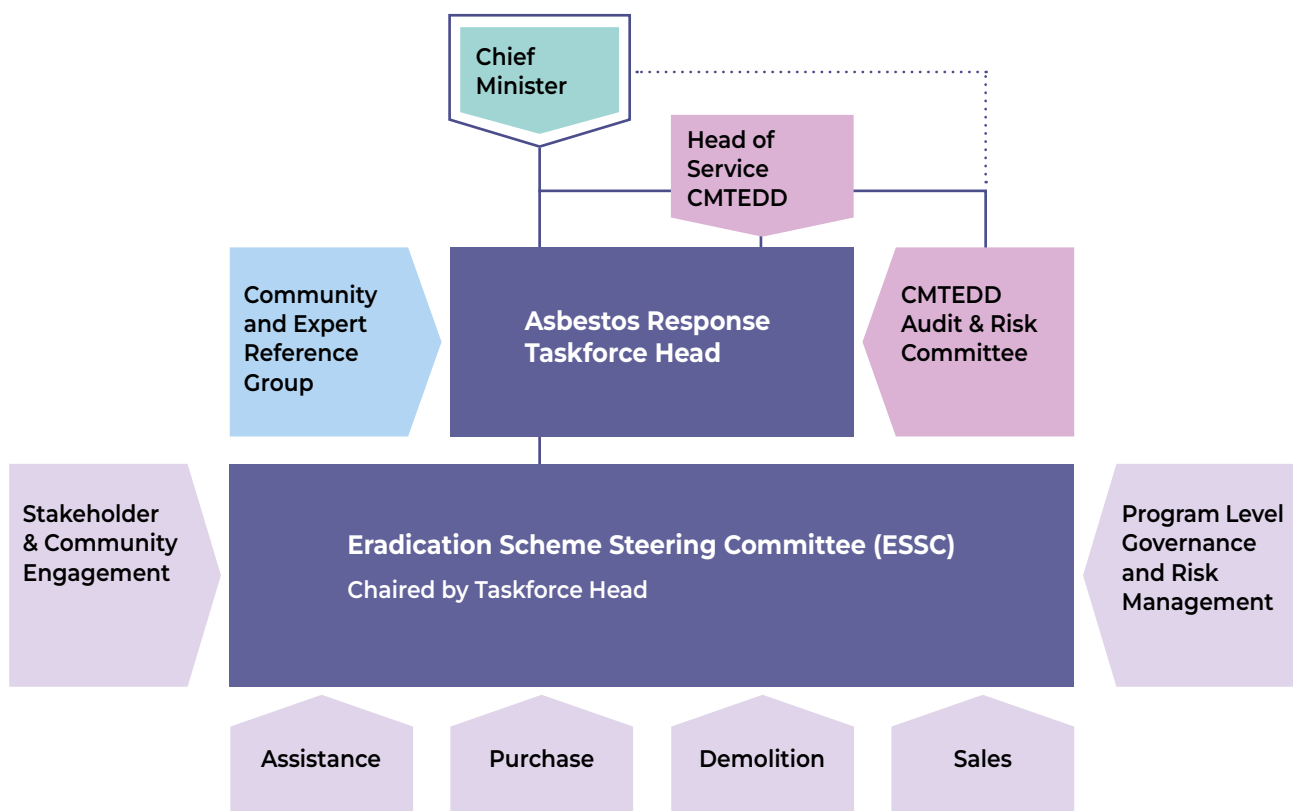


Figure 7 Taskforce structure in 2014

As the delivery of the Scheme entered its fourth year and was operationally stable, the Taskforce **transitioned** from an emergency response program to a business-as-usual government delivery model within EPSDD. However, the Taskforce retained its robust governance structure, and easily adapted to standard ministerial reporting processes.

Figure 8 outlines the organisational structure of the Taskforce within EPSDD from 2017 as a public sector business model. The number of Taskforce staff reduced over time to adapt to the changing delivery needs as the Scheme progressed. At the closure of the Taskforce in June 2022, the Taskforce had fewer than 16 staff remaining.

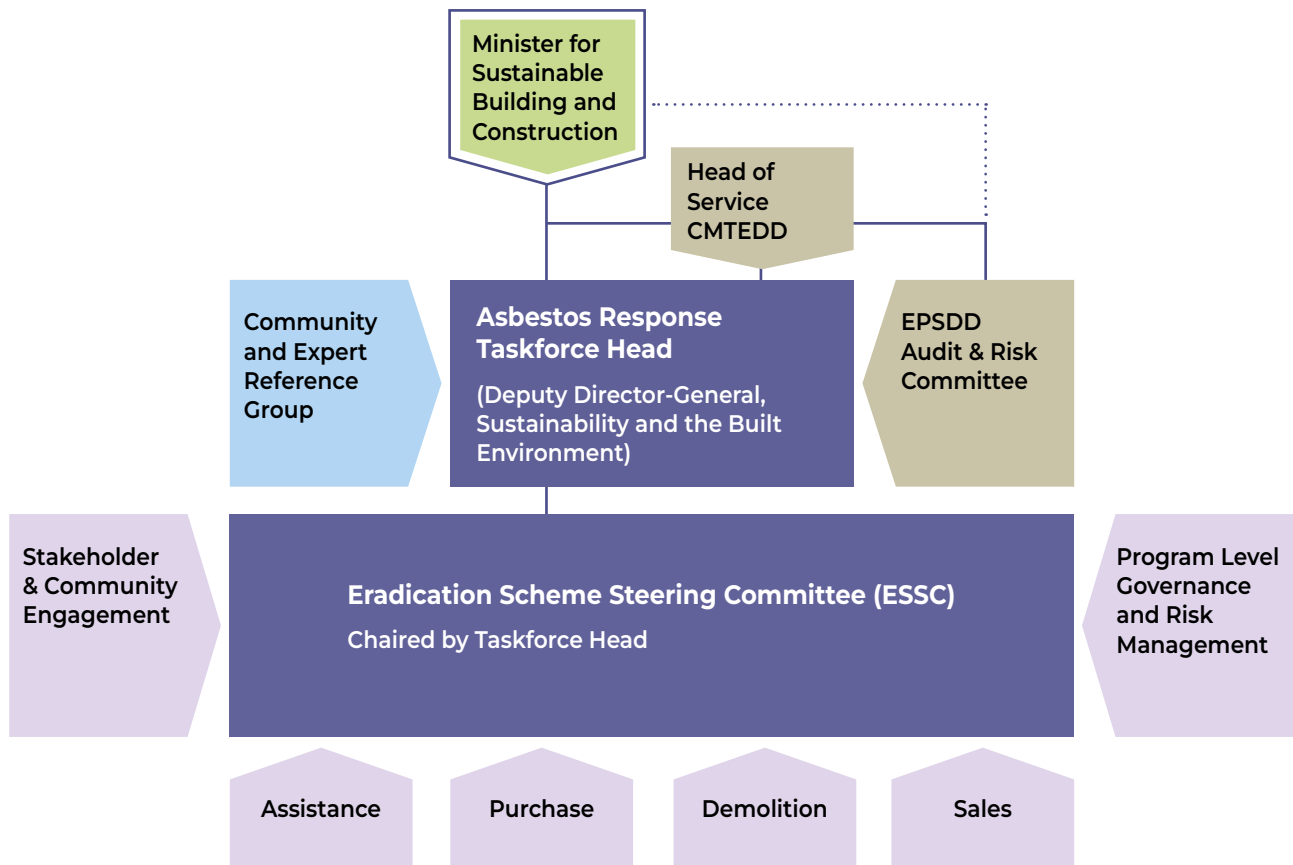


Figure 8 Taskforce structure within EPSDD

Assurance and risk management frameworks

Scheme delivery was broken into four key phases:

- assistance
- buyback
- demolition
- sales.

Under each of the phases there were clear outcomes, performance measures and output accountabilities monitored through the assurance and risk management frameworks.

To develop the assurance and risk management frameworks, the Taskforce:

- consulted with work health and safety experts and commercial litigators
- established comprehensive strategic, phase and program risk registers
- established frameworks to demonstrate accountability of Taskforce staff, ACT Government delivery partners and key industry stakeholders
- established an assurance and risk plan based on the organisation that was responsible for work health and safety legislation when developing compliance measures
- established a governance structure to record key decisions, including documenting discretionary decisions so there was confidence in decision-making processes
- established a robust Scheme audit program.

➤ Insight

Establishing a robust and comprehensive **assurance approach** from the outset satisfied the ACT Auditor-General and the ACT Government that the appropriate controls were in place for effective and efficient Scheme delivery. To support continuous delivery improvement the Taskforce maintained a comprehensive independent audit program.

More than 10 independent audits were undertaken over the duration of the Taskforce. These audits focused on reviewing early implementation of the Scheme, financial arrangements and risk management, evaluating the delivery of personal support, and evaluating each phase of the Scheme after its peak activity as well as at the closure of the Taskforce.

A summary of lessons and recommendations from previous audits by **focus area and topic** can be found in:

- the **McGrathNicol Scheme Delivery Closure Audit, Final Report** at Appendix C (see the report's Appendix C, page 49)
- the **RPS Group Lessons Learned Report** at Appendix D (see the report's Appendix B, page 48).

Figure 9 demonstrates how the assurance and risk management frameworks aligned with and supported the delivery of the Scheme in each phase.

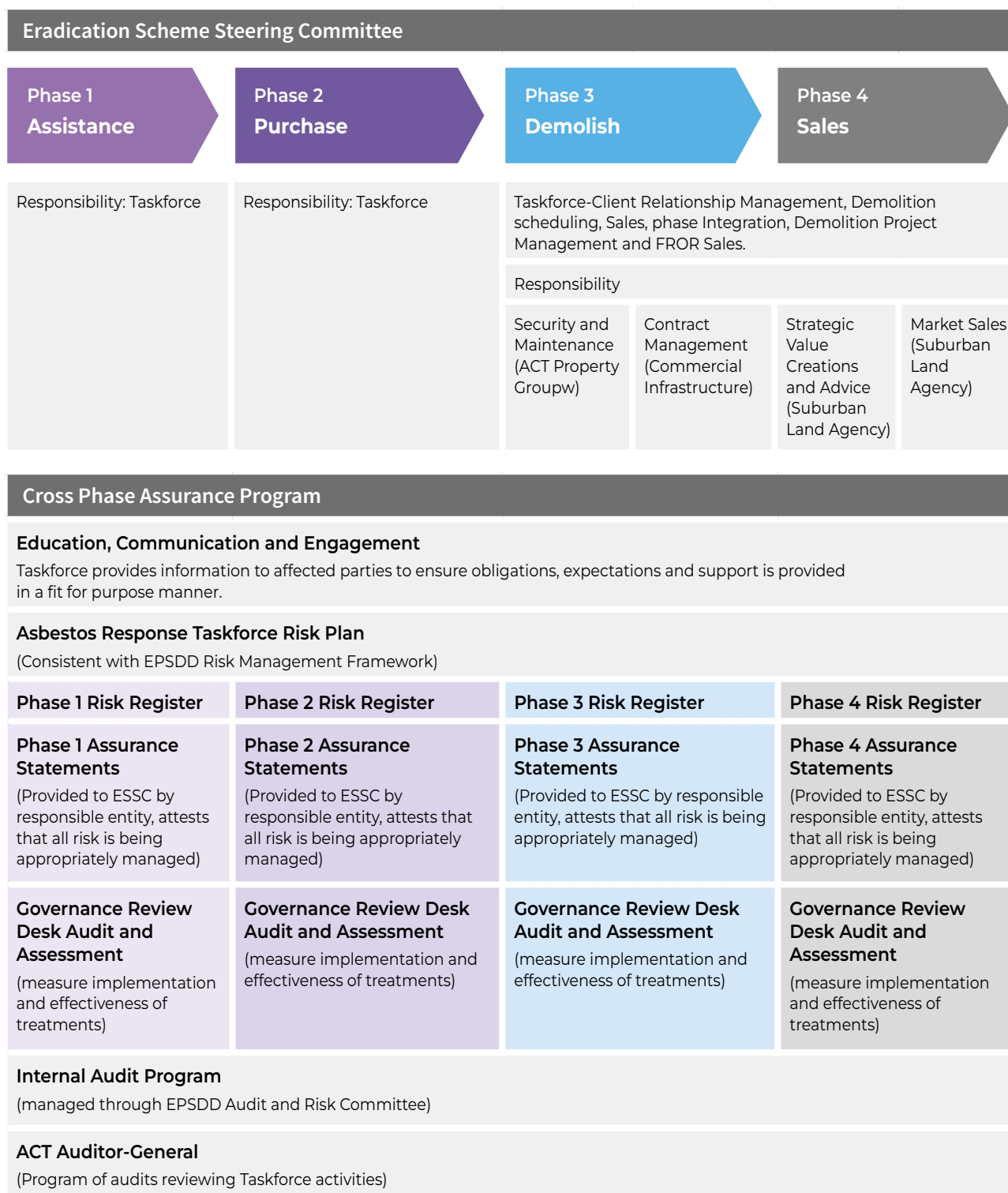


Figure 9 Alignment of assurance and risk frameworks

Assistance

Overview

The primary objective of the **assistance phase** was to provide information and support linkages to homeowners and residents of affected and impacted properties. The aim was to assist people to make informed decisions about their future and options to manage their affected properties.

The assistance phase included community-focused and accessible:

- information
- personal support options
- financial assistance.

➤ Insight

Providing information, assistance, and support to the many Canberrans impacted by loose fill asbestos insulation was a priority for the ACT Government. While the assistance phase was established in 2014, and can be seen as the first phase of the Scheme, key elements such as community communication and personal support case coordination were **ongoing functions** for the Taskforce and Scheme delivery.

Information

A focus of the assistance phase was continuing the coordinated delivery of community-focused **communication and engagement** to support people to understand risks, and make informed decisions about their options and individual circumstances.

A wide and diverse range of communication methods were used to deliver information that was accessible and adapted to the needs of people impacted. Key methods included:



- **Communication platforms:** Web, social media, and email newsletters were established early, and their use remained adaptive as delivery needs changed or new needs emerged.



- **Centralised point of contact for client and community enquiries:** These were managed by a dedicated team of professional frontline responders, the Personal Support Team (PST), which was comprised of experienced call centre responders and human services case coordinators from within ACT Government.



- **Face-to-face community outreach:** PST case coordinators were accessible and available to meet with clients in face-to-face settings within key regional community locations across Canberra (Civic, Belconnen, North Canberra, Woden and Tuggeranong).



- **Executive meetings:** The Head of Taskforce and members of the Taskforce executive team were available to meet with clients when required.



→ **Seamless internal connection:**

Communication, engagement and support areas of the Taskforce embraced adaptive and responsive internal communication on matters as they arose.



→ **Publications and targeted communications:**

The Taskforce maintained ongoing and regular engagement with homeowners, tenants, neighbours, and the wider Canberra community through a wide range of letters, information sheets and publications. The PST was available to assist people with any consequent needs.



→ **Community forums:**

These were held to engage with the impacted community about the Scheme as well as community safety, health and wellbeing matters.



→ **Stakeholder and community group engagement:**

Early and frequent engagement to support community understanding, delivery partnerships and community recovery efforts.

Personal support options

A key part of **personal support** was ensuring appropriate access to a range of support options that understood the context of the impacted community and responded to the diverse presenting needs of individuals and households.

Personal Support Team

Experienced frontline contact centre staff and human services professionals were brought in from across ACT Government to form the PST. The skilled and dedicated team members of the PST were the **primary frontline responders** that managed the single point of contact for enquiries. The team worked directly with individuals or households to address a diverse range of issues and provide information and assistance.

PST case coordinators were available to:

- meet with individuals affected by residential loose fill asbestos insulation
- provide information and advice
- connect people with community, wellbeing and recovery support
- support tailored communication and engagement needs
- regularly engage with community service partners to improve outcomes
- engage with neighbours and the broader community.

Regardless of whether individuals had elected to participate in the Scheme or not, PST case coordinators provided personal support at any stage, including post-relocation.

Health and wellbeing support

The Taskforce worked collaboratively with a diverse range of **health, recovery, and community services** to provide individuals and households access to a variety of health and wellbeing information as well as support options for their individual circumstances.

Initially, the Taskforce partnered with Capital Health Network to improve health care engagement. The ACT Chief Health Officer also developed and presented tailored health resources. However, a more detailed understanding of the long-term health effects of living in a house with loose fill asbestos insulation was required, so the ACT Government commissioned the Australian National University (ANU) to undertake the **ACT Asbestos Health Study**.

In addition to the services available through the PST and existing community support mechanisms, the Taskforce liaised with individual support service providers and community services for tailored and priority support considerations. **Individual supports** were made available to people who lived in or owned an affected property. These included:

- A General Practitioner (GP) payment voucher to support individuals to have a detailed health and wellbeing discussion with their GP about their individual circumstances.
- Priority access or referrals to immediate supports for individuals or families experiencing crisis through ACT Health's community and mental health services, the Capital Health Network's low or high intensity psychological support programs, and Relationships Australia.
- Tailored support for children and young people through the ACT Education Directorate, the early intervention and emotional wellbeing programs delivered by the ACT Community Services Directorate, as well as Headspace ACT.
- Immediate and ongoing support through ACT Regional Community Services, including access to individualised support services, connection to community groups and seniors' morning teas, and tailored volunteer services to safely assist seniors with practical tasks associated with relocation such as packing and garden maintenance.
- Tailored support for seniors through the Council on the Ageing ACT, which provided advocacy and case management services through its housing options worker.
- Tailored practical support from the Real Estate Institute of the ACT through its Mr Fluffy Advisory Service.
- Opportunities for health and wellbeing responses developed by the community such as the Mr Fluffy Walking Group and the early childhood CHAMPS workbook.

To enhance its delivery of **recovery-focused** responses and personal support information, the Taskforce also engaged early with specialist training from Australian Psychological Society and internationally recognised disaster recovery expert Dr Rob Gordon. Dr Gordon worked with the Taskforce on several occasions to develop resources and presentations as well as host a community forum with CERG for the impacted community in 2015. Then in 2017, Dr Gordon evaluated the delivery of the personal support model employed by the Taskforce (see Appendix E), provided training to health and community sector workers, and delivered a number of group sessions with residents and homeowners.

So that further **group support** opportunities were available to the impacted community on their individual recovery journey, the Taskforce worked with local psychological support providers CatholicCare to establish a therapeutic support group program to meet every two months. The support group program was delivered by CatholicCare's trained psychologists between 2020 and 2022 to provide tailored and recovery-focused support for members to connect, share experiences, access support, and be informed on recovery strategies.

Financial assistance

Timely financial assistance was available for residents and homeowners of affected properties outside the voluntary buyback program, including payment for an initial **asbestos assessment**. After meeting eligibility requirements, other financial assistance included:



For families required to leave their home on the advice of an asbestos assessor, the government-agreed land rates applying to properties that were not able to be lived in for an extended period of time were **temporarily deferred**. If eligible, the homeowner would receive a waiver of rates from the date they were required to vacate until surrender of their affected property to the Territory, or until they undertook private demolition and remediation of their affected block.

When an eligible occupying homeowner or tenant of an affected property permanently vacated to participate in the buyback program or progress private demolition, they could access a **Relocation Assistance Grant** to assist with the costs associated with transitioning to a new home. The relocation assistance payable was a capped lump sum payment of up to \$10,000 per household plus \$2,000 per dependent child living in the affected property. Financial assistance was also available to lessors of affected properties which were tenanted via the **Lessor Assistance Grant**. Up to \$5,000 was available to compensate for unexpected lost rental income.

Upon settlement of an affected property surrendered through the voluntary buyback program, \$1,000 was provided to the homeowner to contribute to the cost of **legal fees**. Stamp duty concessions were made available for homeowners of affected properties who chose to proceed with surrendering their home under the buyback program. This stamp duty concession could be applied to the purchase of a new home in the ACT.

Concessions and considerations offered by the business community were available to residents and homeowners. Utility service providers and banks provided concessions, while individual local businesses offered support for households transitioning to new accommodation.

Delivery outcomes: Assistance phase



74

Taskforce
e-newsletters



27

community
forums held
for affected
households



856

Personal
Support Team
Community
Outreach
meetings



75,115

contacts with the Personal
Support Team



1,125

assistance grants
to a value of

\$12.67
million



704

homeowners accessed Stamp
Duty Concessions to a value of

\$17.47
million

Case study: Tangible assistance via a 'letter of comfort'

In 2014, the Chief Minister at the time, Katy Gallagher MLA, wrote to banks and other services to request they provide a **compassionate and responsive** approach to their Canberra customers affected by loose fill asbestos insulation, with many services responding positively.

With endorsement via a 'letter of comfort' from the ACT Government, homeowners and residents could confidently talk with their bank about their financing needs. They could seek tailored assistance from utility and telecommunications providers, and connect with local businesses and community services for services and support.

Banks

Following the intervention from the Chief Minister, various banks agreed to provide advice and support. These initial offers came from Members Equity Bank, Beyond Bank, Commonwealth Bank, National Australia Bank, Suncorp, and Teachers Mutual Bank. Some of the banks provided dedicated relationship managers, implemented hardship and relief support, or offered the option of servicing two loans rather than customers needing to take on a bridging loan.

The Commonwealth Bank established a \$10,000 **special assistance payment** for its ACT home loan customers. It is estimated that the Commonwealth Bank helped nearly 250 customers with the much-needed payment.

In time, most banks came on board with an individual support offering for homeowners.

Utilities

For homeowners and tenants of affected properties, ActewAGL and Icon Water **waived fees** for the disconnection of electricity and/or gas from the affected or eligible impacted property, reconnections at the new residence, and establishing new accounts.

Telstra offered concessions for home phone and Bigpond internet services. These included free call diversions with fixed line rates, and free number reservation for up to 12 months to allow the same number to be used at the resident's new address. Plus, there was an option for free connection of a fixed phone service at one temporary residence. To avoid early termination charges or fees, Bigpond services could be relocated within 12 months.

Solar panels and inverters were able to be removed from affected properties where they complied with the Scheme's Fixtures and Fittings Guide. The Taskforce worked with ActewAGL to facilitate the transfer of existing solar tariffs to new premises for numerous homeowners. ActewAGL also provided a concession to transfer tariff arrangements to a new system.

Income support

A range of rules and **exemptions** were put in place by Services Australia for those receiving payments under the buyback program. For example:

- Payments were deemed as compensatory, meaning payments were exempt from the income test.
- Payments were not assessed as an asset under the social security asset test.
- Any actual interest from the investment of buyback proceeds was not assessed as income under the social security income test. Deeming rules were also not applied.

Exemptions were available for 12 months from the receipt of the buyback proceeds for those receiving the Age Pension and other social security income support payments, with the option for an extension under special circumstances.

Rent Assistance was also able to be paid during the asset test exemption period if the income support recipient was renting while building or buying a new home.

Businesses

Discounts and special offers from local businesses helped eligible households replace affected items.

Homeowners and tenants could access these special offers from the Good Guys in Tuggeranong and Belconnen, Rodney's Garden Supplies in Pialligo, select retailers in the Canberra Outlet Centre in Fyshwick, and horticulturalists Mick Burgess and Dennis Dempsey.

Some storage facilities also offered discounted packing materials.

Insurers

While there was no broad commitment, some insurers such as NRMA implemented supports for their members. Any eligible homeowner was contacted directly by their insurer.



“ We want to help people access a special discount rate to replace their washing machines, vacuum cleaners or other household items, so that they have a bit more extra cash that they can put toward something else they need. We will help each individual customer and tailor pricing to their needs.

– Liz Barrington, The Good Guys Tuggeranong

“ Every tree tells a story, every backyard or garden does the same. This is why we cant to help.

– Mick Burgess, local landscaper

“ Gardens that we build over time are emotional spaces, and that is why we are really happy to meet with people affected by ‘Mr Fluffy’ to work through how they might be able to take part of their garden with them.

– Dennis Dempsey, local landscaper

Figure 10 Business assistance

Buyback

Overview

The primary objective of the buyback phase was to offer to purchase all residential properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation or those deemed an eligible impacted property for their **market value** through one of **two voluntary buyback programs**.

There were also other government acquisition pathways for homeowners whose circumstances changed after they elected not to participate in the buyback program.

➤ Market value offer

Valuations to determine the market value offer of the buyback program were coordinated by the Australian Property Institute (API). Two independent valuers conducted valuation inspections, paid for by the Taskforce. When the valuations took place, the valuer ignored the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation and minor maintenance or presentation issues. It was presumed it was a transaction between **willing buyer and willing seller**. The ACT Government made a written offer to buy back the affected property based on the average of the two valuations.

If the homeowner was not satisfied with the government's offer, they could request a Presidential Determination by the API, or if the original two valuations varied by over 10%, then the ACT Government could also request a Presidential Determination. Regardless of who requested the Presidential Determination, this became the final buyback offer from the ACT Government.

Voluntary buyback program for affected properties

An **affected property** is a house that contains, or has contained, loose fill asbestos insulation. An affected block is the land (that is the subject of a Crown Lease) on which the affected property is built. Only the ACT Government could determine whether a block was an affected block.

An **eligible homeowner** is the person who owns an affected block and was invited to participate at the announcement of the Scheme or the date the affected property was added to the Affected Residential Premises Register.

The original voluntary buyback program for affected properties offered:

- A market value offer for the affected block (house and land) based on the average of two independent valuations that treated the block as though it was not contaminated by loose fill asbestos insulation. The offer date would reflect the market value as at the date the Scheme was announced on 28 October 2014 or for premises identified after Scheme announcement the market value as at the date the premises was added to the Affected Residential Premises Register.
- A \$1,000 (GST inclusive) contribution towards legal fees incurred in attending to the surrender.
- The option through First Right of Refusal to purchase the affected block, at market value, after it remediation (available only on blocks with a separate Crown Lease).
- A stamp duty concession on the purchase of a residential dwelling in the ACT.
- Access to other financial concessions.

In exchange for the program offerings provided above, the homeowner gave up upon providing vacant possession to the Territory, certain rights in respect to the affected block:

- Their interest in the affected block was surrendered. They would no longer be the registered owner/Crown Lessee, i.e. would no longer own the house and land, or be entitled to live in the house or on the land.
- Their right to pursue legal action against the Territory and the Commonwealth in relation to any financial loss as a result of purchasing, living in or any other interest in the affected block. This waiver did not include any sickness or health claims that they or any other person may have as a result of living in or being exposed to contamination in the property.

➤ Insight

The buyback program initially had a 30 June 2015 opt in closure date. However, the Taskforce subsequently reviewed and changed this position so homeowners had the flexibility to opt in and nominate a surrender date that would meet their needs – up until the closure of the buyback program, which was initially to close on 30 June 2020.

As part of the Pathways to Eradication package in 2019, **transition assistance** (see case study: offering transition assistance) was developed to support eligible homeowners with complex health and/or financial circumstances with a flexible surrender option under the buyback program.

However, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic public health directives and lockdowns presented barriers for homeowners surrendering their affected property by 30 June 2020. The Taskforce accordingly **extended** the 2014 buyback program's closure date to 17 August 2021.

Delivery outcomes: Affected properties



1,043
offers sent



67
Presidential
Determinations
undertaken



975
properties
acquired

Voluntary buyback program for eligible impacted properties

An **eligible impacted property** is a property that shares a block with, or is structurally connected to, an affected property. A decision on whether or not a potentially impacted property is an eligible impacted property was made on a case-by-case basis once – and only when – the owner of the affected property agreed to surrender the Crown Lease of the affected property or sell the affected property to the Territory (if a unit).

Eligible impacted property homeowners could then be invited to participate in the voluntary buyback program for eligible impacted properties.

The voluntary buyback program for eligible impacted properties offered:

- A market value offer for the block (house and land or unit), ignoring the fact that the neighbouring property was an affected block marked for demolition at the date the Minister deemed the property an eligible impacted property.
- A \$1,000 (GST inclusive) contribution towards legal fees incurred in attending to the surrender.
- A \$5,000 (GST inclusive) contribution towards removal and other relocation costs, payable once the property had been vacated. This assistance was available to tenants or owner occupiers.
- The option through First Right of Refusal to purchase the impacted block, at market value, after remediation (available only on blocks with a separate Crown Lease).
- A stamp duty concession on the purchase of a residential dwelling in the ACT.
- Access to other financial concessions.

In exchange for the program offerings provided above, the homeowner gave up upon providing vacant possession to the Territory, certain rights in respect to the eligible impacted property:

- Their interest in the eligible impacted block was surrendered. They would no longer be the registered owner/ Crown Lessee, i.e. would no longer own the house and land or unit, or be entitled to live in the dwelling on the land.
- Their right to pursue legal action against the Territory and the Commonwealth in relation to any financial loss as a result of purchasing, living in or any other interest in the eligible impacted property. This waiver did not include any sickness or health claims that they or any other person may have as a result of living in or being exposed to contamination in the property.

Delivery outcomes: Eligible impacted properties



Other government acquisition pathways

At the closure of the buyback program, the remaining options under the Scheme for homeowners of privately owned affected properties were **purchaser of last resort** or through **request for acquisition for deceased estates**.

Purchaser of last resort

In May 2015, the ACT Government made a standing offer to purchase any remaining affected properties on the Register that were not surrendered under the buyback program and were unable to be sold through the open market.

Purchaser of last resort provided homeowners with the market value for their property, taking into consideration the presence of loose fill asbestos and maintenance issues, and provided financial relocation support. Unlike the buyback program, purchaser of last resort did not provide stamp duty concession or the option through First Right of Refusal to repurchase the block.

Request for acquisition for deceased estates

On 18 August 2021, the option to request for acquisition for deceased estates commenced as a part of the ongoing buyback program. Request for acquisition for deceased estates allowed the Territory to acquire an affected property after the current eligible homeowner had passed away. Either the executor of the deceased or the registered owner, as a result of inheritance, could apply under the initiative.

Request for acquisition for deceased estates provided the market value for their property, taking into consideration the presence of loose fill asbestos and maintenance issues, and provided financial relocation support. Unlike the buyback program, request for acquisition for deceased estates did not provide stamp duty concession or the option through First Right of Refusal to repurchase the block.

Delivery outcomes: Buyback phase

Total properties acquired by the Territory



991
properties acquired to the value of
\$714.2 million

Case study: Offering transition assistance

Wherever possible, the Taskforce sought to work with individuals to address their barriers to participating in the Scheme.

Meeting with homeowners was the best method for understanding the complex personal, financial and family circumstances facing each individual. While some homeowners expressed a genuine interest in participating in the buyback program, certain personal barriers meant they couldn't simply surrender their affected property within defined timeframes.

In certain circumstances, some homeowners opted to **delay the surrender** of their affected property. Yet as the surrender period neared, it became evident that some homeowners faced complex circumstances and sequencing barriers which would prevent them from moving forward with the planned surrender of their affected property under the voluntary buyback program.

As part of the **Pathways to Eradication** package in 2019, **Transition Assistance** became available under the buyback program. Transition Assistance was developed to support eligible homeowners with complex health and/or financial circumstances. After meeting eligibility criteria, homeowners could access a portion of equity they held in their home to address expenses related to transitioning to their new living arrangements. This was also supported by a detailed transition pathway plan to help homeowners move within six months.

Since its introduction, Transition Assistance has been essential in helping six homeowners – hampered by complex circumstances – to participate in the buyback program. It has been successful in helping homeowners to:

- access equity in their home to allow payment of upfront costs associated with purchasing or building a new home
- access extra time to deal with time-critical health issues
- reduce the need for multiple moves – especially important for elderly homeowners
- access extra time for the construction of purpose-built housing
- access extra time to move due to complex cognitive or personal needs.

For these homeowners, Transition Assistance has made moving from their affected homes to safe new living arrangements achievable.



Figure 11 Personal support

Demolition

Overview

The primary objectives of the **demolition phase** were to:

- safely and securely maintain all properties purchased
- safely demolish and remediate all properties as efficiently as possible
- maintain value for money by minimising property holding costs and demolition costs
- maintain local community and stakeholder confidence.

Safely maintaining acquired properties

The Taskforce engaged ACT Property Group, ACT Government to secure, manage, maintain and monitor vacant affected properties acquired through the buyback program. When a vacant property was surrendered, ACT Property Group decommissioned and secured the property. Neighbours were advised of the regular monitoring and scheduled maintenance program that would be in place for the acquired property, and given contact points should concerns arise.

To reduce the impact on neighbouring residents and the amenity of the street, most properties were not boarded up, however, some properties required internal shielding of some windows and/or temporary fencing. Front yards were maintained through mowing and garden upkeep to also minimise impact on the streetscape. ACT Property Group maintained management of the properties until a demolition contractor was appointed.

Demolition

The Taskforce engaged the expertise of Major Projects Canberra (formerly Procurement and Capital Works) to implement and oversee its safe, effective and efficient demolition program.

The **safe demolition** of affected properties was undertaken by experienced licensed demolition contractors with oversight from WorkSafe ACT. Removing an affected property involved the following stages:



Stage 1 – Planning and assessment

No two houses were the same. To understand the complexity of each affected house and site, detailed scoping and assessment work was undertaken by the Taskforce, asbestos assessors, and demolition contractors. The Taskforce prepared a **demolition pack** for each house that included a settlement checklist, recent maintenance reports, special considerations and, if needed, historical files. Licensed asbestos assessors undertook work to inform the methodology to safely manage all forms of asbestos in the property, and contractors prepared temporary traffic management plans and erosion control plans appropriate to the site. All necessary documentation was submitted to WorkSafe ACT and appropriate building approvals were sought.

Stage 2 – Site set up

Prior to works commencing, temporary fencing was erected around the property and fence wrap installed. Site signage on the fence provided information on when asbestos removal was expected to start, when demolition was scheduled to begin, and the contractor's contact details.

Site preparation works were then undertaken, including a range of activities such as installing equipment, trimming trees, creating access pathways, and removing non-contaminated fixtures and furniture.

Stage 3 – Internal asbestos removal

The internal asbestos removal process involved the encapsulation of the affected property, installation of negative air pressure units (to create a negative air environment to ensure that no fibres escaped during the removal works) and installation of decontamination units and air monitors.

Once the property was prepared, the property was deconstructed internally. Ceilings, walls and asbestos fibres were vacuumed and sealed in heavy duty plastic bags which were processed through a decontamination unit and transported for disposal. The remaining internal structure of the house was then coated with a coloured PVA glue or paint to bind any residual fibres to the structure prior to demolition. Only when a clearance certificate for both friable and non-friable asbestos removal was issued by an independent licensed asbestos assessor could the house progress to demolition.

Stage 4 – Demolition

In undertaking the structural demolition process, noise, traffic management, dust and rubble removal were all considered.

Following confirmation of asbestos removal clearance, demolition excavators were used to pull the house down, during which time water was sprayed onto the structure and rubble to suppress dust. Once the property was demolished, the rubble was loaded into covered trucks for disposal.

Stage 5 – Soil testing

Once the rubble was cleared, a layer of soil was removed from the demolition site. This soil was sent for testing. If asbestos fibres were found, further soil was removed, and additional testing carried out.

This process could take several weeks, and continue until all samples were clear. The soil clearance report, along with the demolition certificate and the asbestos clearance certificate, were then provided to the Taskforce, to allow the remediated block to be **removed from the Register**.

Keeping the community informed

The Taskforce undertook community-focused communications and engagement throughout the demolition process. It established several mechanisms to inform former homeowners, nearby neighbours and the broader Canberra community about demolition activity.

Former homeowners were contacted when demolition contracts were awarded, and if they elected to, were kept informed about key demolition activity as it progressed. The Taskforce website and communication channels provided information on how affected properties would be managed from vacancy to demolition, as well as offering short videos on topics such as the asbestos removal and demolition process.

Indicative demolition schedules and demolition resources were released to the community. Prior to intensive demolition activity occurring, the Taskforce engaged with neighbours through door knocking and via regional information sessions. Nearby neighbours received direct correspondence. Onsite signage about key activity was regularly updated as demolition works progressed.

➤ Insight

There were a number of **complex properties** that posed a unique set of challenges in terms of their management, demolition and sale. From mid-2017, with the majority of the demolition schedule well progressed, the Taskforce began working to address the safe and efficient demolition of 53 complex properties across 33 locations. Of these 53 complex properties, 38 were affected properties and 15 were impacted properties.

Additional engagement, administrative processes, development applications and adjusted demolition methodologies were required for these sites. To support the approach each property required, the complex properties were grouped into six categories:

- duplexes
- dual occupancy (not unit titled)
- dual occupancy (unit titled)
- shared garages
- 'strings' of properties
- unit complexes.

Detailed scoping and analysis of the individual complexities for each of these properties was undertaken. This included obtaining expert advice from asbestos assessors and structural engineers, engaging with impacted neighbours, seeking neighbour and owners corporation authorisation, and seeking appropriate planning approvals before works could proceed.

The Taskforce remediated and addressed 29 complex property locations prior to its closure.

Private demolition assistance

Homeowners who privately demolished and remediated their affected property could, if eligible, access assistance for contaminated waste disposal through the Scheme.

A **tip fee waiver** at the West Belconnen Resource Management Centre (WBRMC) was implemented in June 2014 for the disposal of all demolition and remediation waste from all loose fill asbestos affected properties. The tip fee waiver was available until 2018 when WBRMC closed as a disposal site for contaminated demolition rubble.

In 2019, the Taskforce implemented **waste disposal fee relief** for eligible homeowners looking to undertake private demolition and remediation works. Waste disposal fee relief covered up to six days' access to the asbestos waste disposal areas at an ACT NOWaste facility. Eligible homeowners needed to opt in to access waste disposal fee relief prior to the closure of the buyback program on 17 August 2021.

Delivery outcomes: Demolition phase



1,006
affected
properties
remediated
from loose
fill asbestos
insulation



Deregistration of
976
affected properties
through the Taskforce



Deregistration of
30
affected properties through
private demolition



14
impacted
properties
demolished
to support the
remediation
of an affected
property



2
demolition
publications

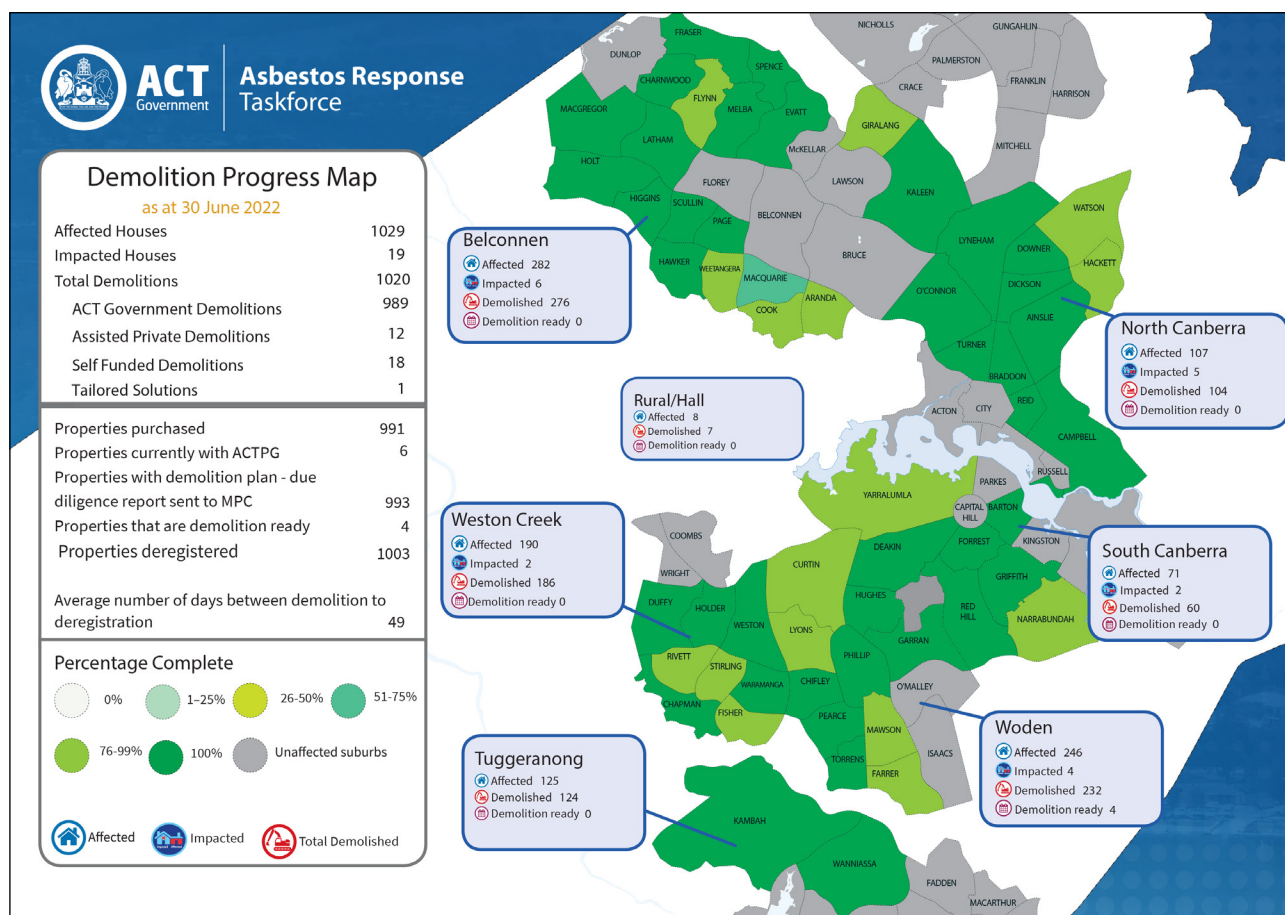
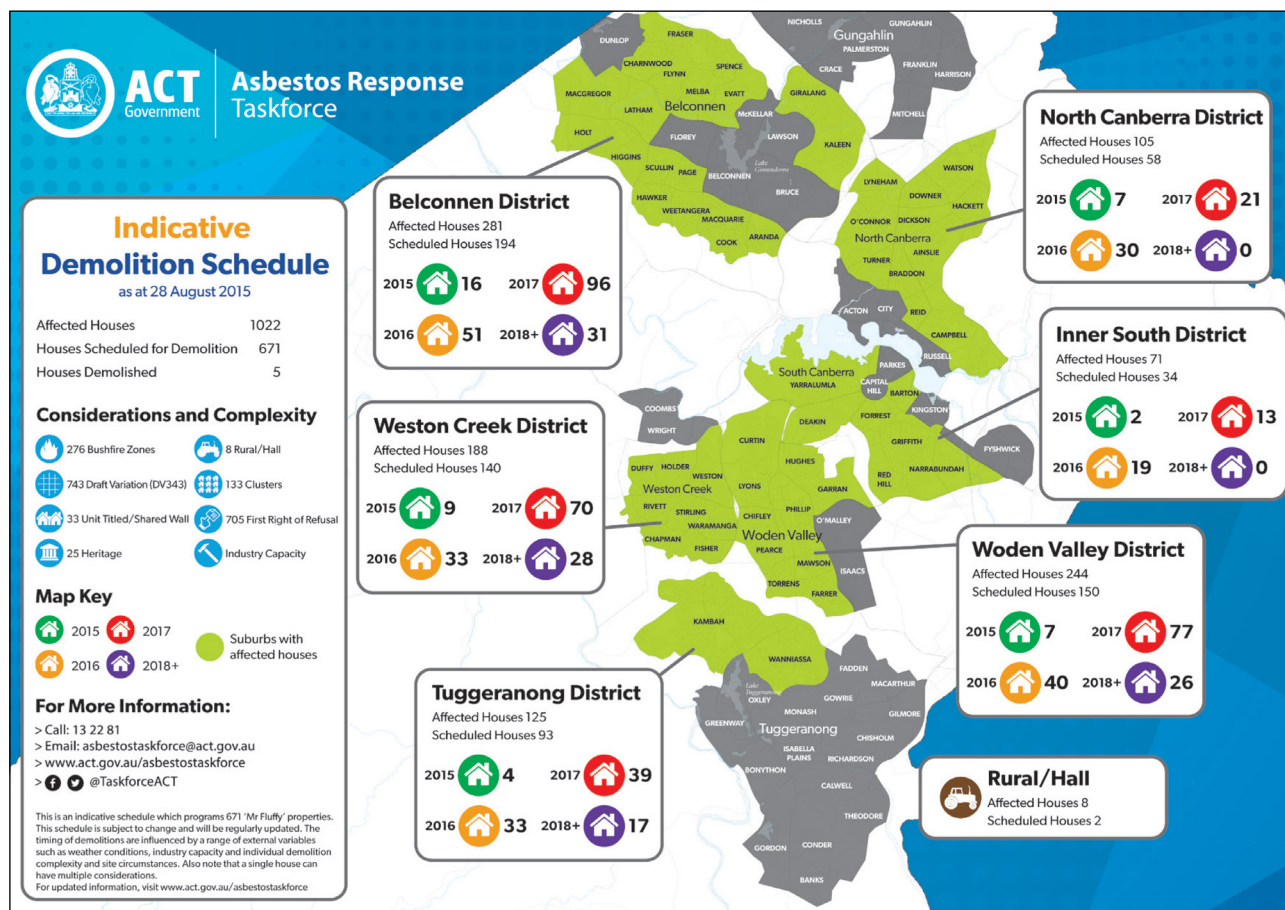


8
demolition community
information sessions



20
community council
meetings

Figure 12 Comparative demolition schedule and progress maps – 2015 and 2022



Case study: Intensive demolition scheduling

The demolition program involved more than 1,000 houses across 56 suburbs, which required the development of a well-considered demolition schedule.

Preparing for a demolition program of this size required extensive planning and consultation about procurement and contract management, waste management, work health and safety regulations, industry skills and funding requirements, as well as consideration for the impact on the community. The Taskforce worked collaboratively with **delivery partners and industry** to address capability and capacity to deliver this complex demolition program.

An initial demolition methodology was tested through a pilot program involving five properties in mid-2015. This was an effective trial that upskilled delivery partners and helped inform the **intensive demolition program**.

No two houses were the same. The detailed research at each affected property was critical to develop a demolition program that could address site features effectively and coordinate efficiencies. Factors such as property age, condition and construction, geographical clustering, location in a bushfire zone were key considerations for the demolition schedule. Properties that would require more planning, time and experience, such as heritage-listed or those that shared a wall with another property, were managed at the later end of the schedule.

As expected, the schedule was also influenced by variables such as weather conditions, industry capacity and flexible extended settlement arrangements. Over the years of intensive activity, the demolition schedule was regularly updated to reflect changes in circumstances. The Taskforce also maintained **regular contact** with former homeowners of the affected properties, providing an indicative window of time for their scheduled demolition, which could take between four to six weeks.

The ACT community was also a key stakeholder of the ongoing communication on upcoming demolitions. Neighbours and the broader community could access tailored information about the demolition program and process through the Taskforce website and social media channels. The Taskforce organised face-to-face community information sessions, and undertook door knocking and letterbox drops. The team also engaged with the local media on the latest updates.

Experienced frontline **engagement staff** were available to provide information, answer questions and support any individual throughout the entire demolition process.

Sales

Overview

The primary objectives of the **sales phase** were to support community renewal and assist the ACT Government in defraying overall costs of the Scheme through the sale of remediated blocks acquired through the buyback program.

Remediated blocks for sale had a new 99-year Crown Lease issued and the sale price for a remediated block was determined by the Suburban Land Agency based on independent market valuations.

Remediated blocks were sold via three sales pathways:

- First Right of Refusal (for former homeowners)
- ACT Government agencies
- public sales.

First Right of Refusal

Homeowners eligible for the buyback program became First Right Holders if they:

- entered the buyback program for affected or impacted properties (and was not a Units Plan)
- elected to retain a First Right of Refusal in their Deed of Surrender, and
- surrendered the Crown Lease on their affected block in accordance with the Deed of Surrender.

First Right Holders did not need to compete at public auction to repurchase their block. Remediated blocks would not sell for less than the valuation price offered to the former homeowners.

ACT Government agencies

Remediated blocks not sold through the First Right of Refusal process were offered for sale to ACT Government agencies. This provided an opportunity for agencies outside of the public sales process to acquire suitable residential blocks that met the requirements to progress other government initiatives.

The offer price for remediated blocks sold to government agencies was not less than the price originally offered to former homeowners through the First Right of Refusal process.

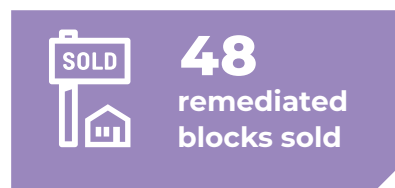
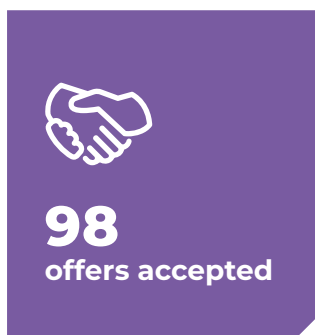
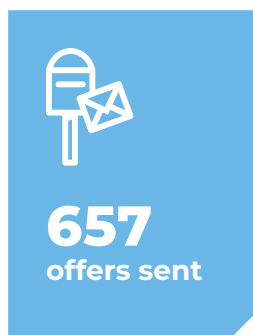
Public sales program

If an ACT Government agency elected not to purchase a remediated block, these blocks were then programmed for public sale. The public sales program auctioned remediated blocks through nominated sales agents with undisclosed reserve prices. The sales price for remediated blocks sold via the public sales program was not less than the price originally offered to former homeowners through the First Right of Refusal process.

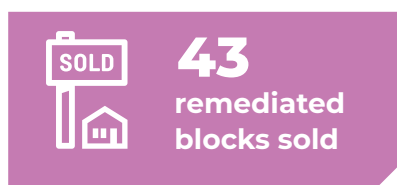
Blocks that failed to sell at auction then became available for sale over the counter at the reserve price on a 'first in, first served' basis. Some blocks which were less suitable for sale by auction could be offered directly over the counter. ACT Government agencies could also purchase over the counter remediated blocks, if required.

Delivery outcomes: Sales phase

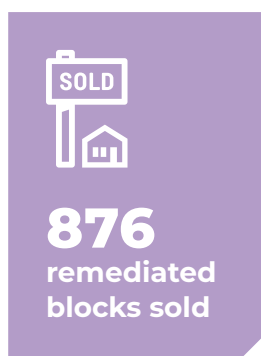
First Right of Refusal



ACT Government Agency sales



Public sales



Case study: Improved rebuilding options for large blocks

The ACT Government implemented modest planning changes to support renewal and **improve the resale potential** of large single residential blocks that had been remediated. The intent was to give purchasers greater rebuilding options by making simple zoning changes.

What changed?

A variation was introduced on 17 February 2016. It only applied to surrendered single residential Mr Fluffy blocks that were:

- zoned RZ1
- over 700m²
- not listed or provisionally listed as a heritage place.

It was called the Territory Plan Variation 343 (V343).

Before the introduction of V343, you could build two houses on an RZ1 block if it was at least 800m², but you could not sell those houses as separate dwellings.

V343 gave purchasers of these remediated blocks the option to undertake dual occupancy development and apply unit titling. This meant that the purchaser could build two dwellings, which could be bought and sold separately in the future.

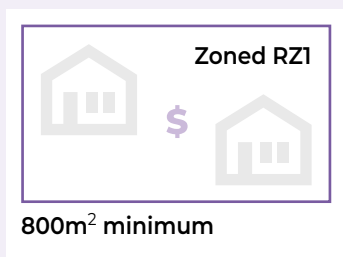


Figure 13 Before V343

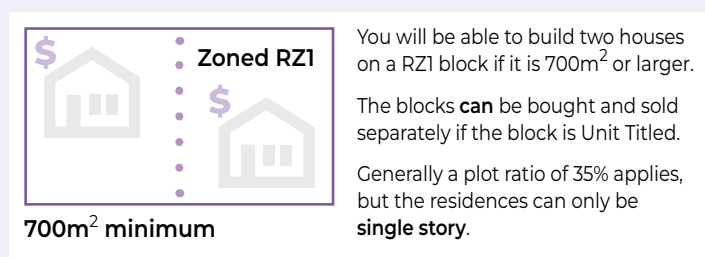


Figure 14 After V343



706

remediated blocks had the ability to utilise V343 in the rebuild options they pursued

Financials

Overview

The Scheme was designed to eliminate the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation through the demolition of affected properties. The **financial arrangements** of the Scheme needed to cover costs to meet the ACT Government's commitment to provide timely financial assistance as well as acquire, demolish and safely dispose of all known affected properties.

Funding arrangements

In September 2014, a budget was prepared to allocate funding over six financial years to:

- acquire and remediate properties
- undertake the administrative tasks associated with the Scheme.

Remediated land sales were initially forecast to generate proceeds totalling around \$519 million, resulting in a net cost of the Scheme of \$366 million. To finance the Scheme, the ACT Government sought assistance from the Australian Government.

The Australian Government provided significant financial assistance to the Territory with a loan to support the financing of the Scheme. The total loan of \$1 billion was provided in two tranches:

- \$750 million on 29 January 2015 at a fixed interest rate of 2.605%
- \$250 million on 15 July 2015 at a fixed interest rate of 3.015%.

The loan term was approximately 10 years, from January 2015 to 30 June 2024. The weighted cost of the loan was 2.708%.

Financial arrangements for the Scheme costs delivered by the Taskforce were grouped into three key categories (see Table 2):

- acquisition costs
- demolition and remediation costs
- Taskforce costs.

Acquisition costs

Acquisition of properties included the property valuation, conveyancing fees and the purchase of the property. Homeowners were required to confirm they had sought their own legal advice and in return they received a fixed contribution toward their legal fees as part of the purchase price.

Demolition and remediation costs

The costs associated with demolition, disposal and remediation of affected properties included:

- asbestos assessment and removal
- soil validation
- surveys
- development applications

- property demolition and disposal at a suitably prepared site vetted by the Environmental Protection Agency
- remediation of some of the unit complex sites through a like-for-like rebuild.

The original budget also included the costs associated with investigation of capping and possible remediation of the former asbestos waste disposal site.

Taskforce costs

The Taskforce costs included:

- financial assistance to homeowners, landlords and tenants
- holding costs for property maintenance and security
- staffing and on-costs
- legal fees paid to external consultants
- land sales expenses made up of valuations, temporary fencing, conveyancing, marketing and agent's commissions.

Financial delivery outcomes

Over an eight-year period, the overall net cost of the Scheme to the Canberra community was \$268.38 million, which is 27% less net cost than originally forecast.

Principal repayments of the loan to the Australian Government commenced on 30 June 2018 and were to be paid annually until 30 June 2024 at which time the loan would be fully repaid. The ACT Government repaid the outstanding balance of the loan in full on 1 November 2019.

Between Scheme commencement in 2014 and Taskforce closure:

- The **buyback program** acquired 95% of all known affected properties. Property acquisition costs under the buyback program were 12% higher than the initial forecast budget due to higher market value buyback prices and a small number of affected properties being identified after Scheme announcement.



991
properties acquired
to the value of

\$714.2 million

- The **demolition program** (with the inclusion of private demolitions) resulted in the remediation of 98% of all known affected properties. The demolition and remediation costs were 24% less than the initial forecast budget. The scale of the program resulted in increased efficiencies (and savings) in demolition scheduling and licensing of contractors from outside the ACT. Through the implementation of the lessons learnt in the pilot demolition program, we also achieved cost savings.



1,006
affected properties remediated from loose
fill asbestos insulation at a cost of

\$128.7 million

- The **Taskforce costs** were 5% less than the initial forecast budget in 2014. Cost savings were achieved through:
- staffing arrangements that were closely managed to be aligned with delivery needs
 - the demolition program being ahead of the initial forecast schedule, which reduced security and property maintenance holding costs
 - the scale of the sales program allowed for the negotiation of a reduction in sales agent fees and commissions; and the proceeds of the sale of remediated land were 25% higher than anticipated in the initial forecast budget due to market uplifts across the ACT property market.



967
remediated blocks sold
for a total of

\$646.4 million

Table 2 Budget¹

	Original Budget	As at 30 June 2022	Variance	Variance
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%
Acquisition Costs	639,600	714,242	74,642	12%
Demolition and Remediation Costs ²	170,080	128,706	(41,374)	-24%
Taskforce Costs	75,766	71,897	(3,869)	-5%
Total	885,446	914,845	(29,399)	3%
Land Sales	519,152	646,463	127,311	25%
Net Result	(366,294)	(268,382)	97,912	-27%

¹ These figures are GST exclusive.

² This includes money spent/reserved for waste disposal and rebuild purposes.

Figure 15 Summary of financials



Notes:

1. **1,019**: 1002 Offers accepted, 12 Assisted private, 5 Housing ACT
2. **991**: Inclusive of those in ACT Govt program only; 16 Impacted, 975 Affected
3. **1,020**: 990 ACT Govt owned* (*this includes one property surrendered to the Territory post-demolition), 12 Assisted private, 18 Self-funded
4. **969**: 876 Public sales, 50 FROR Sales, 43 Direct Sale to Agency
5. **967**: 876 Public sales, 48 FROR Sales, 43 Direct Sale to Agency

Taskforce closure

The Taskforce has made significant progress towards delivery of the ACT Government's enduring solution. With 97.76% of known affected properties remediated, the Taskforce was able to be formally closed on 30 June 2022. Noting that the Scheme remains an ongoing program of government, a smaller coordination team was established to be responsible for delivering the remaining work in the management of the properties that remain affected by loose fill asbestos within the ACT.

In planning for Taskforce closure, the following key activities were undertaken:

- staff transition planning
- evaluation of Scheme delivery by the Taskforce
- reflection on Taskforce experiences
- Scheme delivery transition.

Staff transition planning

Taskforce staff demonstrated significant aptitude while delivering a program of unprecedented profile and risk. Employees often joined the Taskforce via secondment from another directorate, and numbers fluctuated to meet operational delivery requirements but gradually declined over time. The Taskforce recognised that the successful transition of staff out of the Taskforce at the right time was critical to ensuring the required resources were retained to deliver the remaining work of the Scheme. From 2017, the Taskforce introduced key learning and development initiatives to support staff transition into the broader ACT Public Service (ACTPS), through tailored support for individual needs, professional career guidance, and other employee assistance programs.

The eight-year duration of the Taskforce presented unique challenges and opportunities in staff transition. While periodic contact was made with nominal directorates, the lengthy duration of many staff placements in the Taskforce resulted in some disconnection between staff and their previous organisation/role. Many staff developed different skill sets and career aspirations as a result of exposure to different types of complex work. Consequently, staff often opted to pursue new opportunities within the ACTPS rather than return to their nominal roles.

Evaluation of Scheme delivery by the Taskforce

In line with the Taskforce assurance and risk management frameworks and best practice, the Taskforce evaluated its delivery of the Scheme and consolidated lessons learnt for future program management.

In December 2021, the Taskforce commissioned McGrathNicol to undertake a Scheme delivery closure audit. The audit reviewed Taskforce governance, communications and overall strategic management of the Scheme. It sought to understand the value of methods used to achieve Scheme objectives and identify lessons learnt for future taskforces and programs of a similar nature.

Undertaking the audit **just prior** to Taskforce closure provided an opportunity to address any recommendations and to support best practice in transitioning the delivery of the Scheme.

The audit found that overall there were strong indicators that the Taskforce achieved the delivery objectives of the Scheme. Three recommendations for the closure process, and two recommendations for future program management, were made by the audit (see Table 3).

Table 3 Scheme delivery closure audit recommendations

#	Recommendation	Priority
1	Current Taskforce Recommendation To align with program management better practice, and to provide transparency regarding the effectiveness of the Taskforce in achieving the Scheme's objectives, the Audit Team recommends the Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan includes an appropriate approach regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → the notification of internal and external stakeholders regarding the cessation of the Taskforce → an assessment of the performance of the Scheme against its original objectives → the assessment of whether original Scheme benefits were realised, and capture additional benefits realised by the Taskforce → an approach for developing ongoing arrangements with service delivery partners. 	Medium
2	Current Taskforce Recommendation To ensure future taskforces and programs are provided with assistance to establish robust frameworks, systems, and controls to manage disaster responses efficiently and effectively, the Audit Team recommends the Taskforce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → develop a lessons learnt report as part of the Taskforce closure process which includes identified better practice and areas for improvement (including a lessons learnt checklist) → ensure the lessons learnt report is stored in a location that is easily identifiable and accessible. 	High
3	Current Taskforce Recommendation To increase the likelihood that key Taskforce information artefacts, including lessons learnt, policies, frameworks and reports can be easily located by future disaster response programs, the Audit Team recommends the Taskforce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → identify a suitable location within the ACT Government's information management framework to store key Taskforce information artefacts → develop and apply a systematic and effective metadata taxonomy to each information artefact so they are appropriately searchable and located easily. 	Medium
4	Future Program Recommendation To provide appropriate assurance that future disaster response programs' strategic objectives and benefits are being delivered as intended, the Audit Team recommends that future ACT Government programs ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → program objectives (benefits), outcomes, outputs and performance measures are linked appropriately → performance measures are linked to the objectives of the program → performance measures meet the SMART performance measure criteria → performance measures that cannot be assessed, or are no longer relevant, are changed by obtaining approval from the governing body or steering committee → specified performance measures are reported on systematically throughout the life of the scheme/program. 	High
5	Future Program Recommendation To minimise the effort required to establish and manage a new disaster response program or Taskforce, the Audit Team recommends that future programs consult the lessons learnt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → checklist included in the Audit Report → report developed by the Taskforce as part of its closure process. 	High

A copy of the complete audit is at Appendix C. All recommendations were addressed in line with the Taskforce assurance and risk management framework through the EPSDD Internal Compliance Assurance Program.

Reflection on Taskforce experiences

In line with best practice for Taskforce closure and to support continuous improvement, the Taskforce undertook a reflective self-evaluation process to document lessons learnt throughout the duration of the Taskforce.

In line with performance against Taskforce and Scheme objectives, the themes explored included:

- governance
- systems and processes
- collaboration and people.

RPS Group facilitated evaluation workshops with the Taskforce and undertook a literature review of audits and lessons documented throughout the program to develop a final report. The report identified 11 core recommendations designed to leverage and replicate areas of better practice that were implemented by the Taskforce, with others focused on driving improvement to manage risk and make management easier for future taskforces from their inception (see Table 4).

Table 4 Summary of recommendations: Lessons learnt

Ref.	Summary of recommendation	Context
R1	Data governance framework and systems: develop and implement appropriate naming conventions and systems for data governance and records management, with consideration to future reporting requirements.	While this was implemented progressively throughout the life of the Taskforce, it would benefit future taskforces to implement a detailed data framework from inception.
R2	Single source of truth: implement a 'single source of truth' for governance structures – where all relevant governance frameworks and documentation are stored and easily accessible.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce once progressively implemented – future taskforces should implement from inception.
R3	Priority reporting lines: maintain a positive and inclusive culture while implementing appropriate reporting lines – for example, taskforces remaining attached to central government until policy and program commitments are completed.	This was implemented in the beginning of the Taskforce, and was beneficial – future taskforces should consider keeping the arrangement in place until closure.
R4	Start with the end in mind: identify a 'trigger point' for closure early in planning (at both a Taskforce and Phase level) – once the trigger point is hit, implement a pre-planned closure strategy.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce for many of its work areas – future taskforces should replicate this at a taskforce level.
R5	Recruitment and retention: ensure interagency agreements developed at inception provide a framework for consistent, equitable recruitment and retention for the life of the Taskforce.	While this was implemented with varying success by the Taskforce, it would benefit future taskforces if the ACT Government reviewed policy instruments to allow consistent application in future taskforce inception.
R6	Simple financial reporting: future taskforces should develop a financial dashboard that clearly summarises the overall financial health of the program.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated.

Ref.	Summary of recommendation	Context
R7	Consistent, tailored communication approach: take an open and transparent approach to communications, considering the relevant audiences and ensuring communications are accessible.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated.
R8	Develop and implement engagement guidelines: develop, update and maintain robust engagement guidelines, or 'rules of engagement', to manage community and reputational risk and ensure the wellbeing of community members.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated.
R9	Interagency agreements: in the early phases, establish Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and memoranda of understanding (MOU) to guide interagency coordination.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated – with potential to improve by scheduling and frequently updating these instruments to ensure they are appropriate at each phase of the Taskforce lifecycle.
R10	Lessons learnt process: implement a formalised, systematic lessons learnt process at inception, to be completed at various pre-defined trigger points throughout the life of the Taskforce.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce across some areas – future taskforces should implement a systemised process at taskforce inception.
R11	Taskforce Toolkit: develop an ACT Public Service-specific Taskforce Toolkit to align with ACT Government processes, using the Australian Government's Taskforce Toolkit (Australian Public Service Commission, 2021) as a guide.	The Australian Government Toolkit referenced did not exist when the Taskforce was created so it was not possible for the Taskforce to leverage this. However, it would provide a good base for a similar, ACT Government-focused, toolkit to guide future taskforces.

The complete RPS Group report is available at Appendix D.

Scheme delivery transition

From 1 July 2022, the new Loose Fill Asbestos Coordination Team was established to provide continuity in existing service delivery standards, focusing on:

- supporting homeowners still in affected homes
- ongoing remediation works to continue to eradicate loose fill asbestos from the Canberra community
- finalising the delivery of key legacy projects.

This team also administers the ongoing Scheme, including the buyback program for any newly identified affected properties which commenced in August 2021. The team continues to operate within existing governance, assurance and risk management frameworks established by the Taskforce. Reporting on Scheme implementation and key milestone progress and performance occurs through existing reporting, performance, and assurance mechanisms within the EPSDD corporate structure.

Legacy responses

The government's response was, and still is, not simply about bricks and mortar but is one that recognises the **impact** this dangerous substance had on the lives of residents, homeowners, neighbours and the broader community. The ACT Government continues to work towards addressing the ongoing legacy impacts that are a part of our city's history through the following pathways.

ACT Asbestos Health Study

In 2015, the ANU conducted the [ACT Asbestos Health Study](#). The results of the study were published in August 2017 and established a better understanding of the health concerns and risks from living in a loose fill asbestos insulation affected residence. Due to the time it takes diseases such as mesothelioma to present in patients, the initial study noted it would be useful to re-run the data linkage and analysis component after several years.

In 2022, the Taskforce commissioned the ANU to undertake a second Asbestos Health Study. This will repeat the data linkage component of the first study on the rates of mesothelioma and other asbestos-associated cancers that occurred in residents. It is expected that the results of this study will be published in approximately two years' time.

Asbestos Disease Support Scheme

A number of former residents engaged with the ACT Government when they contracted an asbestos-related disease after living in an affected property. While the Taskforce worked with individuals to provide guidance and assist them to access health services, there remained significant financial costs in accessing treatments for incurable asbestos-related diseases such as mesothelioma. The Taskforce collaborated with ACT Health, CMTEDD and people impacted by an asbestos-related disease to develop an **ongoing health response** that addressed financial barriers to accessing treatment.

On 5 May 2021, the ACT and Australian Governments jointly announced an agreement to establish an asbestos disease support scheme, to be administered by the ACT Government through CMTEDD. This scheme provides financial support payments for people who have contracted an asbestos disease after living in a loose fill asbestos insulation affected property in the ACT and had no substantial occupational exposure to asbestos that would allow a workers compensation claim to be made.

ACT Government response to the Mr Fluffy Legacy Project

'Mr Fluffy' is a legacy the Canberra community has grappled with for over 50 years. The CERG sought to understand how this legacy should be further responded to by the ACT Government.

In 2019, CERG undertook a consultation with homeowners to seek community views on ways to tangibly acknowledge the impacts of Mr Fluffy loose fill asbestos insulation within the Canberra community (the Mr Fluffy Legacy Project). The findings were presented in the **Mr Fluffy Legacy Project Consultation Outcomes Report and Recommendations**.

In May 2020, the Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety tabled the [ACT Government Response to the Mr Fluffy Legacy Project](#) in the ACT Legislative Assembly. A number of recommendations were **agreed** and **agreed in-principle** by government and progressed by CERG and the Taskforce. Key legacy themes included:

- learning lessons and documenting knowledge
- tracking ongoing health impacts
- supporting families now, and in the future
- recording stories and personal experiences
- establishing a place of reflection
- supporting education and research.

Following the tabling of the ACT Government response CERG continued to provide valuable advice and worked with the Taskforce to progress legacy project actions. The final and 54th CERG meeting was held in June 2022, yet former CERG members remain committed to having a continuing role in finalising the delivery of legacy projects within our community.

A Legacy Project Working Group consisting of former CERG members has been established and continues to work with the Loose Fill Asbestos Coordination Team to finalise the delivery of legacy projects.



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ACT
Government

**Asbestos Response
Taskforce**

Long Term Management of Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation in Canberra Homes



August 2014

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Executive Summary

Mr Fluffy

Since the late 1960s an unknown and perhaps unknowable number of Canberrans have lived in homes affected by loose fill asbestos insulation. Some of them paid to have it installed, but many have only discovered its presence in their homes in recent times. In the late 1980s and early 1990s a joint Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government program sought to remove visible and accessible asbestos from affected homes. For a while it was thought by many that the asbestos was gone altogether, or that at least it was confined to roof spaces and wall cavities.

We now know that is not the case.

Loose asbestos fibres remain in the roof spaces, wall cavities, and subfloors of affected homes. In recent times they have also been found, sometimes in visible quantities, in cupboards, heating and cooling ducts and vents, living rooms and bedrooms.

‘Mr Fluffy’ is the commonly used name for the asbestos fluff insulation installed by D. Jansen & Co. Pty Ltd and its successor firms which installed loose fill asbestos insulation between 1968 and 1978–79 in Canberra and, it is believed, the surrounding region. Contemporary advertisements promised ‘sure comfort and fuel savings’ to homeowners who paid less than \$100 to insulate an average 11 square house with what was claimed to be ‘CSIRO Tested and Approved’ as ‘the perfect thermal insulating material’¹. That material comprised raw asbestos, crushed and blown into roof spaces and allowed to settle across the battens and ceilings, and behind the cornices, of more than 1000 Canberra homes².

It is crucial to the subsequent history of this issue that in this application asbestos was finely crushed and not blended with any other materials. This is because a sample of asbestos fibres just visible to the naked eye contains around 20,000 fibres, and a sample the size of a 50 cent piece up to two million.

The stated claims as to efficacy of Mr Fluffy insulation are true. Asbestos is a very good insulator and fire retardant material, but it has a darker side.

Historical overview

Between 1989 and 1993, the Commonwealth and ACT Governments undertook a jointly funded program to remove visible and accessible loose fill asbestos insulation from affected homes in the ACT. That program, designed by the Commonwealth before the commencement of self-government for the ACT in 1989, was largely delivered by the newly-formed ACT Government. It has been publicly acknowledged that loose fill asbestos insulation was also installed in a number of properties in Queanbeyan, but it is also understood to have been installed in an unknown number of additional properties in New South Wales (NSW). NSW homes were, however, outside the scope of the original removal program.

The prevailing view at the time of that program, amongst at least some of the owners of affected homes, and notwithstanding disclaimers to the contrary on the program’s completion certificates, was that all loose fill asbestos insulation was removed.

The ACT Government wrote to the owners of affected homes in 1993 and 2005 reminding them of the presence of loose fill asbestos fibres in the structure of their homes. In 2005–06 it also made changes to the presentation of information about affected houses on building files held by the ACT Planning and Land Authority, and in the title searches conducted as part of conveyancing processes. The language of visible and accessible asbestos being removed and residual fibres remaining in the walls remained current in ACT Government documents in 2012–13 when a house that had been missed in the original removal program came to light in the suburb of Downer. It emerged that the level of contamination in the living areas of that house was very significant.

¹ See Appendix I

² See Appendix II for a contemporary description of that process

The ACT Government again wrote to residents of affected homes in February 2014, drawing on the report of the forensic deconstruction of the Downer house, reminding them of the continuing presence of asbestos fibres in the structure of their homes, and recommending they have an asbestos assessment undertaken. For many owners, the February letter constituted the first time they had been made aware of the fact that theirs was an affected home. That letter was addressed to 'the Resident' so in some cases went unread.

Following increasing public concerns about loose fill asbestos insulation, and the findings of the early asbestos assessments (some of which saw families vacate their homes, in some cases having been so directed in a prohibition notice issued by WorkSafe ACT under the *Dangerous Substances Act 2004*), in July 2014 the ACT Government established its Asbestos Response Taskforce (the Taskforce). The Taskforce's role is to provide a coordinated, comprehensive and compassionate response to this issue across three key functions:

- responding to the needs of affected families including by administering the ACT Government's emergency financial assistance package
- providing information to affected families and the wider community
- providing advice on approaches to securing an enduring solution to the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in the affected homes.

In pursuit of the third task which is the subject of this report, the Taskforce has received invaluable assistance from Australian Government colleagues in the Department of Employment, Safe Work Australia, the Department of Defence, Comcare, and the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency. In preparing this advice, it has also liaised with officials from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development. It has consulted a list of experts recommended for this purpose by the Chief Executive Officer of Safe Work Australia³. The Taskforce has also made contact with the United Kingdom's Health and Safety Executive Asbestos Policy Unit and International Unit, which has advised it has limited current experience in relation to loose asbestos insulation in a residential setting. The Taskforce is also liaising with Region 8 of the United States' Environmental Protection Agency with the view to sharing experiences and learnings from that agency's management of asbestos contamination in vermiculite insulation in Libby, Montana.

The Taskforce is particularly grateful for the willingness of asbestos experts to share their knowledge and advice as it has worked through this issue. While there has been from the outset consensus as to the course of action required, this report draws on those discussions and others the Taskforce has had with licensed asbestos assessors and ACT Government colleagues including the Chief Health Officer and Work Safety Commissioner, and constitutes the advice of the Taskforce to the ACT Government. It has, however, been reviewed in its entirety and endorsed by Dr Ian R Gardner MBBS MPH FAFOEM, Senior Physician in Occupational & Environmental Medicine in the Department of Defence.

Where to now?

More than 20 years on from the original removal program, there exists a more nuanced understanding of the health impacts of exposure to airborne asbestos fibres than existed when that program was being designed, even if the contemporary conclusions in relation to the causal links between exposure and disease that underpinned it have not changed. Certainly, much more is known now about the extent of contamination of affected homes.

The consistently held view throughout the Taskforce's consultations on this issue is that there is no effective, practical and affordable method to render houses containing loose fill asbestos insulation safe to occupy in the long term. It is the similarly consistent view that most houses can, with significant effort, be rendered safe to occupy in the short to medium term. To do so would, however, require a level of restriction of the normal use of a property, vigilance and ongoing assessment and remediation that would be economically and socially unsustainable in the long term and for some people even in the short term.

³ See Appendix III

Appendix A

The Taskforce has concluded, having listened to experts, asbestos assessors, and homeowners, that demolition of affected homes is the only enduring solution to the health risks posed by the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in homes, and their attendant social, financial and practical consequences. The practicalities of living in homes that cannot easily be worked on or maintained, the already manifest negative market responses from prospective renters and purchasers, the social isolation – self-imposed and otherwise – of people fearful about contamination in their homes affecting family and strangers, and above all the risks to mental and physical health are so great as to demand what at first may seem an extreme response.

The Taskforce recognises the enormous reluctance and sadness with which this advice will be received by owners of affected homes, and that it may indeed be rejected by some. However, if the answer uniformly given when informed people are asked, ‘Would you live in one?’ is ‘No’, then with eyes open about how hard that will be for affected families and for the broader community, it is time to move on. Twenty years ago, significant effort and funds were expended in an ultimately failed attempt to deal with this issue. That cannot be allowed to occur again.

The Taskforce notes that even if demolition were not so strongly recommended, the nature of the work involved in the unavoidable second attempt at cleaning affected homes – which is likely to entail a full internal demolition and rebuild – is very significant and not that much different from that required to completely demolish an affected home. Furthermore, any approach short of demolition will leave loose fill asbestos fibres behind, likely contaminating the subfloor and attached to the remaining structure of houses. These fibres will remain a risk to the health of residents, tradespeople and visitors alike until the home is eventually demolished at the end of its useful life. A second cleaning process also does not deal with the stigma attaching – if not already attached – to affected homes, nor the attendant anxiety and mental health impacts of concerns for the safety and value of homes into the future.

The choice, therefore, is not between minor works now and demolition now: it is between significant works followed by demolition now; or significant works followed by ongoing physical and practical restrictions on the use of homes that will, even when works are completed, still be affected by loose fill asbestos insulation.

Given the original removal program’s unsuccessful attempt to solve this problem, the inevitable second program should, in the view of the Taskforce, place a premium on certainty and comprehensiveness. Above all, and recognising the magnitude of what is being recommended, it must pursue an enduring solution.

Recommendations

With these criteria in mind, the Taskforce recommends all Canberra homes affected by loose fill asbestos insulation be demolished, and at least their carpets and curtains disposed of as contaminated waste.

In the interests of ensuring other people are not unknowingly exposed to loose fill asbestos fibres in another missed house the Taskforce recommends:

- all owners contemplating any renovations or maintenance work on homes built before 1980 be required to have an asbestos assessment undertaken before any work commences
- the contract of sale for any home built before 1980 include a full asbestos assessment.

Andrew Kefford
Head – Asbestos Response Taskforce
August 2014

What we know about asbestos

Asbestos is regulated in the ACT under the *Dangerous Substances Act 2004*⁴, although obligations in relation to management of the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres also arise under legislation including the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*⁵ and the *Environment Protection Act 1997*⁶.

Asbestos is the name collectively given to six mineral fibres which fall into two broad groups:

- the serpentine group – comprising only chrysotile (white asbestos)
- the amphibole group – comprising amosite (brown asbestos), crocidolite (blue asbestos), anthophyllite, tremolite, and actinolite⁷.

The majority of Canberra homes affected by loose fill asbestos insulation contain amosite. Based on records from the original removal program, a small number contain crocidolite which experts determine poses an even greater risk to health than amosite.

Asbestos is a Class 1 carcinogen and poses a risk to health when fibres of a respirable size become airborne and are inhaled. This occurs most commonly in industrial settings or, in the domestic context when bonded asbestos products (e.g. roof or wall sheeting) are cut or decay or, relevantly for these purposes, asbestos is present as loose fill insulation. It is also the case that ingestion of asbestos fibres has been linked to subsequent disease, although at much lower prevalence rates than when airborne fibres are inhaled.

Asbestos was a relatively cheap, durable and effective insulating material. Due to its ability to withstand heat, erosion and decay, and for its fire and water resistant properties, asbestos was widely used in building materials for houses until it started to be phased out in the 1980s before ultimately being banned. Most jurisdictions introduced a ban on the mining of asbestos and the manufacture, importation and installation of products containing crocidolite and amosite from 31 December 1984. On 31 December 2003, a national ban on all uses of chrysotile asbestos came into effect⁸.

As is the case around Australia, Canberra houses built before 1990 are likely to contain at least some bonded asbestos in a number of locations including the eaves, garage, bathrooms, laundries, and kitchen (including underneath flooring tiles). They may also have asbestos roofing and/or fencing material or pipe lagging⁹.

While asbestos was a common building material in commercial and residential buildings, the Taskforce is aware of only two non-residential properties that contain loose fill asbestos insulation: a former house once used as a childcare centre in Aranda (now closed), and a section of the Ainslie Shops which remains at the time of writing under a prohibition notice from WorkSafe ACT. While friable asbestos fibres have been detected in commercial buildings in Canberra, they are most often the product of decaying bonded or sprayed asbestos products (i.e. asbestos mixed with cement and sprayed onto surfaces usually as a fire retardant material) as opposed to loose fill asbestos insulation.

Asbestos related disease

There are a number of medical conditions that are known to be caused by inhalation of asbestos fibres including:

- pleural plaques (thickening of tissue around the lungs) which are usually benign and asymptomatic but are a marker of past exposure
- asbestosis (scarring of lung tissue)

4 See <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2004-7/current/pdf/2004-7.pdf> especially Chapter 3A

5 See <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2011-35/current/pdf/2011-35.pdf>

6 See <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/1997-92/current/pdf/1997-92.pdf>

7 Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (2013) *National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management 2013–2018*. Australian Government, Canberra, p.3

8 Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (2013) p.3

9 http://cdn.justice.act.gov.au/resources/uploads/Asbestos/Publications/Fact_Sheets/AA_Colour_HR.pdf

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- lung cancer
- mesothelioma (a fatal malignant tumour that can develop around the lining of the lungs).

Even limited or short-term exposure to asbestos fibres can be dangerous, but exposure does not make development of an asbestos related disease inevitable:¹⁰

- just because a person has been exposed does not mean they will necessarily develop any asbestos related medical conditions.
- the chance of developing an asbestos related disease increases with the cumulative exposure to asbestos fibres over time.
- most people who develop asbestos related disease have been exposed to a significant quantity of fibres – either infrequently at higher concentrations or through more frequent exposure at lower levels.
- there is no evidence that ‘one fibre can kill’ although the safe level of exposure (if any) is difficult to determine
- cigarette smoking significantly increases the risk of most asbestos related diseases except mesothelioma.

Australia has the highest reported per capita incidence of asbestos related disease in the world, including the highest incidences of mesothelioma. In 2010, 642 Australians died from mesothelioma¹¹.

Is there a safe level of asbestos exposure?

The National Public Health Partnership’s enHEALTH guide *Management of asbestos in the non-occupational environment* states there is ‘no known safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres’¹². This position is generally adopted by work health and safety regulators around Australia including WorkSafe ACT. While arguably effective in raising awareness of the dangers posed by asbestos, especially in the domestic environment, the incorrect translation of this conclusion into a ‘one fibre can kill’ message complicates the nature of risk communication in relation to asbestos exposure. This has been a feature of community discussions on loose fill asbestos insulation.

The Taskforce notes that in urban settings there is a background level of asbestos fibres present in the air from building materials, natural sources, and historical applications such as in brake pads, which means an adult will inhale between 10 and 100 fibres every hour¹³. For this reason, references to risks and levels of exposure refer to risks above background levels.

Most studies of the health impacts of exposure to asbestos fibres have been conducted in industrial settings. The leading Australian studies of domestic exposure risks come from Wittenoom in Western Australia where crocidolite was mined up until the mid-1960s, and studies of home renovators in Western Australia. The Taskforce acknowledges that a significant number of current and former owners and residents of affected homes have reported undertaking renovation works on their homes without being aware they contained loose fill asbestos insulation.

There are, however, no specific studies of the health impacts of exposure to loose asbestos fibres present as insulation in homes. The ACT Public Service’s Health Directorate is developing an approach to conducting such a study but in the meantime reference is made to the studies mentioned above in the drawing of comparisons of asbestos exposure risk. Those studies indicate that it is relatively rare for an individual to develop asbestos related disease even with significant exposure¹⁴. However, if large numbers of people are exposed to even a low risk of disease then this increases the probability that one or more people will be

10 <http://asbestosafety.gov.au/top-5-questions-asbestos>

11 Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (2013) p.4

12 <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-enhealth-asbestos-cnt.htm>

13 Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR): *Toxicological profile for asbestos* (2010). <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/ToxProfiles/tp61-c1-b.pdf> accessed June 2014

14 Olsen N, Franklin P, Reid A et al. (2011). Increasing incidence of malignant mesothelioma after exposure to asbestos during home renovation. *MJA.*; 195(5): 271–274 p. 273 graph 3; Hansen J, De Klerk N, Musk A et al. Environmental exposure to Crocidolite and mesothelioma – exposure response relationships. *American Journal of Critical Care Medicine* 1998; 157: 69–75

affected. That is not to suggest that what is being experienced in affected homes is acceptable. It merely serves to provide context in the discussion of the rates of exposure to respirable asbestos fibres over time and the likelihood of contracting asbestos related disease.

There is, however, an important difference between analysis of health risks of historical exposure on the one hand, and determination of what steps might be justified to minimise risks to health and wellbeing from such exposure into the future on the other. While it is not possible to determine the actual likelihood of one or more people developing asbestos related disease if the size of the cohort of people exposed to loose fill asbestos insulation was allowed to continue to increase in the future, it would be likely to increase over time.

In addition to these physical health concerns, the Taskforce recognises the expressed stress, anxiety and guilt experienced by affected families about their physical health and that of their children in particular, as well as in relation to the value of affected homes. The Taskforce also acknowledges the deep community concern about the historical exposure to asbestos fibres of former residents and tradespeople working on affected homes. The significant personal impact and costs of mental health and psychological concerns associated with this issue should not be underestimated, and must figure in the weighing of options for providing an enduring solution in the future.

Exposure in affected houses

Loose fill asbestos insulation is a particularly dangerous form of asbestos. In this form, the asbestos is friable and is not blended with other binding agents. For this reason it poses a significantly greater risk to health than bonded asbestos which may become friable if cut or decayed, but which is otherwise relatively stable in a domestic setting provided it is well maintained.

Based on evidence gathered from assessments of affected homes undertaken since February 2014, the Taskforce considers the level of exposure to asbestos within affected homes is likely to be higher on an ongoing basis than background levels, and significantly higher in the event of major renovations or accidental damage, and in some cases even without that sort of disruption to the structure of the building. Furthermore, unlike occupational exposure where duration is limited by work patterns, the presence of loose asbestos inside homes presents an ongoing risk to occupants.

Managing Mr Fluffy

1968–1989

Over the course of the 20th century, especially in industrial contexts, there was a growing awareness of the risks to health of exposure to asbestos fibres. In July 1968, Mr Gersh Major, a leading industrial hygienist then of the Occupation Health Section, observed having reviewed the installation process being used¹⁵:

Some thought should be given to whether D. Jansen & Co. Pty. Ltd., should be dissuaded or even prevented from using asbestos as insulation material in houses. Not only are men unnecessarily exposed to a harmful substance in the course of their work, which is against the best public health practices, but there is some evidence that community exposure to asbestos dust is undesirable. This evidence is not completely convincing but is being taken seriously by experts in the field and, in light of the present state of knowledge about the health effects of asbestos, it would be prudent to limit asbestos to essential uses only ... With the present demand for insulation, Canberra may become a large market for asbestos insulation with many people in the community exposed because some asbestos will be carried out of the roof space by air currents.

Later that year the ACT Health Services Branch wrote to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, and the Secretary-Manager of the National Capital Development Commission that:

It is considered desirable that D. Jansen and Company Pty. Ltd., should be dissuaded or even prevented, if possible, from using asbestos fluff insulation material in houses ... in light of the present state of knowledge of the health effects of asbestos dust, it is prudent to limit asbestos to essential uses only and then in solid form ... In view of the harmful nature of this substance the use of asbestos fluff for the purpose of insulating should be discontinued and less hazardous material such as rockwool, insulwool or fibre glass should be substituted.

During the 1970s concerns were raised from time to time in Canberra, although principally about the impact of exposure to asbestos for workers rather than residents. In 1978, for example, the Capital Territory Health Commission (CTHC) issued a statement that 'the CTHC did not agree that undisturbed asbestos fluff in place in domestic ceilings poses a health risk to occupants of the dwellings. However, the Commission has for some time opposed use of asbestos fluff for insulation'. That statement concluded that 'widespread testing of ceiling insulation materials is uncalled for.'

In a paper prepared by the Building Section of the then Department of the Capital Territory in January 1980 canvassing the use of asbestos in buildings, it was noted that:

Following press reports in November 1978 on the subject of the use of sprayed asbestos and asbestos fluff insulation in buildings the Health Commission clarified its earlier advice and said that a distinct hazard to all persons exists unless proper care had been taken to ensure that they do not inhale excessive quantities of asbestos dust ...

The Department of Housing and Construction has decided that sprayed asbestos and asbestos lagging of any kind shall no longer be used in buildings built for the Commonwealth. The National Capital Development Commission has never used asbestos insulation in houses constructed by it and no longer uses sprayed asbestos in buildings.

Through the 1980s there was a growing focus on the presence of asbestos in government buildings, and removal programs were conducted of sprayed asbestos containing products at locations including the National Library of Australia and some Canberra schools. This reflected a growing community understanding of the health risks of exposure to asbestos fibres.

¹⁵ See Appendix II

1989–1993: the original removal program

Reflecting these growing concerns, between 1989 and 1993 the Commonwealth and ACT Governments undertook a jointly funded program to remove visible and accessible loose fill asbestos insulation from affected homes. This program, designed by the Commonwealth before the commencement of self-government for the ACT in 1989 and largely delivered by the newly-formed ACT Government, operated only in the ACT.

The original removal program had three phases:

- surveying the approximately 65,000 Canberra houses then in existence for the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation
- sealing of affected homes at all points where it was considered asbestos could enter into living areas
- removal of loose fill asbestos insulation involving encapsulation of the roof and vacuuming and sealing accessible areas.

Contrary to popular contemporary and indeed subsequent belief, the original program did not, as is now recognised, remove all loose fill asbestos insulation:

- The removal phase involved cleaning loose asbestos from the ceiling cavity and accessible wall cavities, but it was accepted that because of the nature of the task and of asbestos itself it was likely that some asbestos would still be present in places such as internal and external wall cavities, subfloor spaces and behind cornices.
- The inside roof and accessible wall cavities were sealed with a spray designed to bind any remaining asbestos fibres to the structure of the house to minimise the risk posed, but this spray was not able to fully penetrate wall cavities.

In 1991, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Commonwealth and ACT Governments in relation to the original removal program¹⁶. That document recorded the operational and financial parameters for the program, including the intended allocation of financial responsibility between the Commonwealth and ACT Governments. Importantly for current purposes, that MOU records a clear contemplation and intent on behalf of both governments that it may be necessary to remediate further houses in the future, or to return to remediated homes to undertake further work.

1993–2012

At the completion of the original removal program, homeowners were provided with information outlining additional obligations placed on them in terms of maintenance and renovation work on their house. At this time owners were made aware that asbestos fibres remained in inaccessible areas of the home, and appropriate precautions must be exercised when undertaking tasks such as replacing power points, removing wall heaters and disturbing walls.

A letter sent to affected homeowners in 1993 specifically advised that ‘residual fibres may remain in wall cavities’¹⁷. A *Certificate of Completion of Asbestos Removal Work* was provided to homeowners and attached to the building file of affected properties. While stating asbestos had been removed from the house, it also indicated ‘residual fibres may still be present in the wall cavities of the building. Prior approval of the Building Controller is to be obtained for any building work involving the alteration of wall sheeting or external brickwork.’

The ACT Government’s understanding of the impact of loose fill asbestos insulation has continued to evolve over time largely through ad hoc experience. Coinciding with the ban of asbestos products generally, the ACT Government established an asbestos taskforce in the mid-2000s that provided advice to the ACT Government and community on a range of matters including for this purpose, loose fill asbestos insulation. The ACT Government implemented a number of measures – including writing to affected homeowners again – to provide owners of affected properties with information on the possible presence of loose fill asbestos

¹⁶ See Appendix IV

¹⁷ See Appendix V

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insulation in the home and the need to take precautions when undertaking activities such as maintenance, renovation and extension or demolition which may release those fibres¹⁸.

In 2005–06 the ACT Government also introduced the requirement for a contract for sale of a residential property to include a number of documents including a lease conveyancing inquiry report. If the property in question was on the list of homes identified as affected by loose fill asbestos insulation, the lease conveyancing inquiry report indicated that ‘a form of asbestos is or has been present on the land’. The form of words for properties not on the list of remediated homes read, ‘Records held by ACTPLA indicate that loose asbestos was not identified in the ceiling cavities of these premises (but not including any shed or garage on the property) during the government programme conducted in the early 1990’s’.

2013–14: From Downer to the Taskforce

Of the five ‘missed’ houses that have been identified since the original removal program, the most recent – a house in Downer – has received the greatest prominence. While the general approach for missed houses had been to remediate to the original program standard, given the degree of contamination inside the Downer home, the ACT Government purchased the building and conducted a forensic deconstruction of it in 2013. That process revealed new information on the extent to which asbestos fibres had migrated through the structure of a house¹⁹.

Taking account of information that came to light in the Downer house, in February 2014 the ACT Work Safety Commissioner wrote to homes that were part of the original removal program re-emphasising the need for careful management of loose fill asbestos insulation and encouraging homeowners to engage a licensed assessor to provide advice in relation to their property²⁰. The Work Safety Commissioner’s letter explained:

- the original remediation program aimed to remove visible and accessible asbestos insulation, but some asbestos insulation material remained in wall cavities, subfloor spaces and behind cornices
- while loose fill asbestos insulation in wall cavities is unlikely to present a risk if left undisturbed, precautions should be exercised to avoid the risk of exposure when undertaking even minor renovations, alterations or repairs within the house.

Following that letter, a number of homeowners privately engaged asbestos assessors to examine their homes. There was no obligation for homeowners to provide a copy of the report to the government or regulators, though some did for the purpose of seeking further advice. Some asbestos assessors notified WorkSafe ACT when fibres were detected in living areas in order to satisfy their duty to report serious events under the *Dangerous Substances Act 2004*.

It also became apparent during the first half of 2014 that assessors and ACT Government agencies were very often interacting with families who were previously unaware that they owned an affected home.

In light of the growing level of concern and feedback from licensed asbestos assessors, meetings were convened in May 2014 between ACT Government agencies including the then Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate (Office of Industrial Relations) and WorkSafe ACT and the Australian Government Department of Employment and Safe Work Australia. The concerns of assessors centred on a lack of consensus and technical advice around robust methodologies for the quantification as distinct from identification of risk, agreed standards for testing for contamination inside affected homes, and appropriate methodologies for demolishing affected homes.

In June 2014, in response to the developing situation including heightened homeowner and community concern about contamination of the living areas of affected homes, relevant ACT Government agencies convened a roundtable of regulators and asbestos assessors. At that time, based on around 200 assessments, the emerging view of affected homes was that:

¹⁸ See Appendix VI

¹⁹ See http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/open_government/foi/cmcd/asbestos-report-on-a-property-in-downer-act

²⁰ See Appendix VII

- contamination of subfloor areas was uniform (around this time some assessors ceased sampling subfloor areas and presumed contamination in order to focus on potential penetration by fibres to living areas)
- entry of fibres through cracked cornices and other ceiling openings was common
- in some cases visible fibre bundles had been located – especially in the tops of cupboards
- asbestos fibres had been detected in clothing, children’s beds, soft furnishings and heating/cooling ducts.

In July 2014 the Chief Minister announced the establishment of the Asbestos Response Taskforce.

Living with Mr Fluffy – the current state of affected Canberra homes

Assessment of affected homes

The principal recommendation of the Work Safety Commissioner's February 2014 letter was that homeowners should have an asbestos assessment undertaken by a licensed asbestos assessor. It is clear from the response of recipients of that letter and to a subsequent one sent by the Taskforce²¹ that a significant number of current owners of, and residents in, affected homes did not know their house was affected. Another significant cohort had been aware of clearance certificates but had not necessarily appreciated the impact of the disclaimer that residual fibres may remain.

It is also the case that neither ACT Government officials, nor licensed asbestos assessors, understood in the way they now do the extent to which loose fill asbestos insulation fibres remained not only in the structure and subfloors of building, but were also penetrating the living areas.

Following the Commissioner's letter, around 400 asbestos assessments have now been conducted, reports of which are now being provided to the Taskforce.

The following photographs give a sense of the nature of contamination in affected homes.

Figure 1 – asbestos in an external wall (of an unremediated home)



Photo courtesy of Robson Environmental

21 See Appendix VIII

Figure 2 – asbestos in an interior wall (note new cable penetrating stud at top left)



Photo courtesy of Robson Environmental

Figure 3 – an unremediated roof space



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Figure 4 – roof space during remediation



Figure 5 – roof space during remediation (note gap to wall cavity)



Figure 6 – asbestos remaining behind a cornice

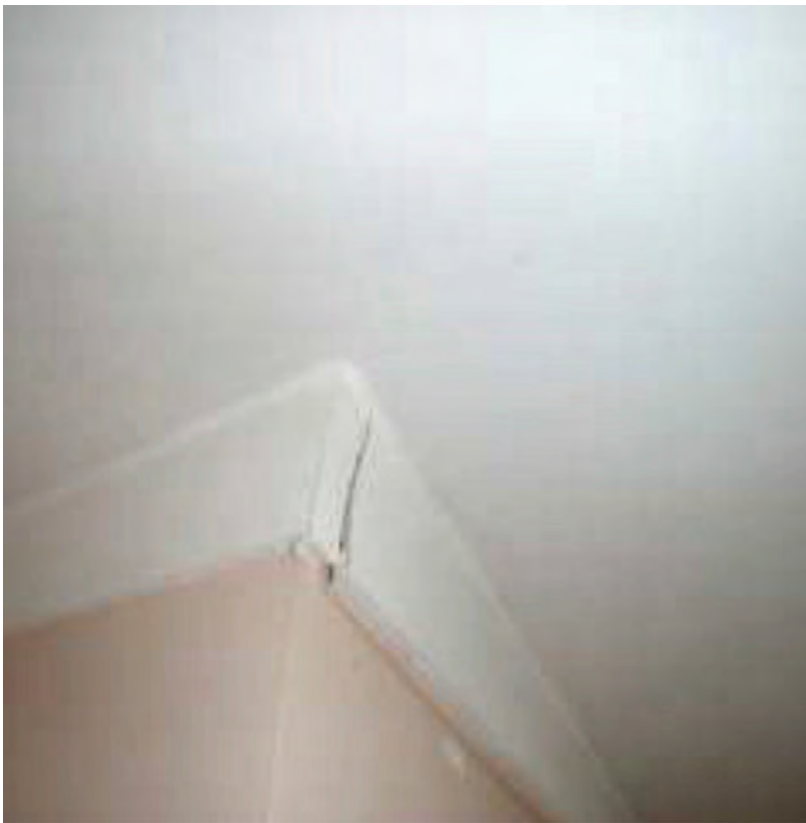


Figure 7 – asbestos in an internal wall



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Figure 8 – cracked cornice in which amosite asbestos was detected



Asbestos assessment reports – an overview

Asbestos assessment reports²² provide information on the presence of asbestos fibres in a home, as well as suggested approaches to remediation of identified hazards. They generally provide a table setting out details of dust samples taken (including whether or not asbestos is detected and the type) as well as providing a description of the general state of the property.

Risk of asbestos exposure and its likely impact is assessed using a matrix that records the:

- condition encompassing:
 - severe – material in very poor condition
 - poor – deteriorated material and considerable damage
 - fair – minor damage
 - good – well sealed stable material
- risk rating encompassing:
 - very high – exposure to airborne asbestos likely as a consequence of minor disturbance
 - high – exposure to airborne asbestos possible as a consequence of minor disturbance
 - medium – exposure to airborne asbestos unlikely during normal building use
 - low – negligible exposure to airborne asbestos during normal building use.

On this scale detected amosite or crocidolite fibre bundles in a living area generally attract a severe/very high rating.

Assessment reports also provide advice on appropriate remediation of identified hazards. In some cases, these reports have recommended a home be vacated immediately such has been the degree of contamination. In these cases, the Taskforce notes affected properties have been occupied without restriction by families up until the point the assessment was conducted.

Current assessment methods are based on analysis by a National Association of Testing Authorities accredited laboratory of collected surface dust samples and a visual inspection by an assessor, sometimes supported by air monitoring. Airborne fibre monitoring is, however, unlikely to produce elevated results except when undertaken during an uncontrolled internal demolition or wall cavity disturbance. Remediation works following an assessment report are generally limited by the parameters outlined above and are related to observed hazards only. The view expressed by assessors is that increasing the number of samples in any house will simply increase the number of positive results although factors which may affect the likelihood of detecting fibres include:

- the state of the cornices – freshly sealed and painted interiors will make it difficult to find fibre bundles (especially if the window and doorway architrave top ledges are sealed)
- replaced carpets which are unlikely to have accumulated fibre bundles
- hard surfaces which are unlikely to accumulate fibre bundles due to regular cleaning.

Indeed, one of the implications of the fact that there is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres is that questions in relation to long-term sustainability and minimisation or elimination of risk must pass through a yes/no gate rather than a graduated measure based on an assessment of risk and severity of consequence. This position must better guide the formation of any response.

Addressing hazards identified in an assessment makes a house safer than it would otherwise be, but does not eliminate risk entirely or provide a long-term sustainable position. A house that has been tested and remediated could develop a new crack tomorrow allowing fibres to enter the home. Indeed, the Taskforce is of the view that the long-term risks are so great and the remediation approach so complex, that it is better to demolish affected homes and remove the risk than attempt to remediate to moderate risk and manage remaining loose fill asbestos in place.

²² See Appendix IX

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The list

The ACT Government has an advantage in responding to this issue because it knows the location of affected houses remediated under the original removal program. The Taskforce has written to the owners of the around 1030 homes thought to be still standing, but continues to work with the ACT Public Service's Environment and Planning Directorate to conclusively settle that number.

It is important to note in this context that while there is confidence in the list of known remediated homes, it is not possible to provide a definitive 'no' to the question of whether a particular house is affected by loose fill asbestos if it is not on the list. Such an answer can only come from an assessment.

With this in mind, and acknowledging the original program encompassed around 65,000 homes from which five missed homes have emerged to date, the Taskforce recommends:

- all owners contemplating any renovations or maintenance work on homes built before 1980 be required to have an asbestos assessment undertaken before any work commences
- the contract of sale for any home built before 1980 include a full asbestos assessment.

What do the assessments tell us?

Homes that were part of the original removal program still contain loose fill asbestos fibres. They are uniformly contaminated in the roof space, wall cavities and in the subfloor. More than 50 per cent of homes assessed since February 2014 have had asbestos fibres detected in living areas. While not all homes assessed have had samples taken in subfloor and roof spaces, where they have been taken they have returned positive results.

With this in mind, it is impossible to say with certainty that fibres have not penetrated the living areas in a particular house. It must also be remembered that the test results from samples taken are definitive, but they are only a sample of the whole house.

As at 19 August 2014, 40 families are unable to continue to reside in their homes as a result of asbestos contamination. While the majority of these homes have been affected by amosite asbestos, crocidolite has been found in two.

While there is a delay – due largely to industry capacity constraints and the number of assessments being undertaken – in the timing of receipt of written reports of assessments by homeowners, and then in their provision by homeowners to the Taskforce, the verbal advice to the Taskforce from assessors about more recently assessed homes is in keeping with received reports.

Common findings

A review conducted by the Taskforce of assessments shows:

- loose fill asbestos insulation fibres that were bonded to surfaces (including roof tiles, trusses, brick and timber) with sealant as part of the original removal program are at increasing risk of becoming friable again due to deterioration of the sealant – and that in some homes this has already occurred
- even homes in good general condition have clear entry points for fibres into living areas
- insulation fibres can migrate to living areas in the absence of damage, alterations, renovations or neglect to the home.

It is an unsurprising finding given the history of the homes that they are contaminated in the roof space, wall cavities and subfloor areas. The impact of subfloor contamination has been more significant where that area contains the garage or a storage area and a number of families have remarked to the Taskforce that they use this space to store the Christmas tree, camping gear, and the rollaway bed for guests.

It is also worth noting in passing that contamination of the soil (while varying from house to house) is a significant concern. At the Downer house, for example, a pre-determined 300 mm of soil was removed from the block to ensure removal of all asbestos contamination. The Taskforce understands 100 mm of soil was removed, consistent with national minimum standards and testing results, after an affected house was demolished in July 2014.

The actual amount required to be removed will vary from site to site, and must be guided by testing results.

Frequent findings

Common points identified in assessments for the entry of asbestos fibres to living spaces include:

- cracks in cornices (from visible cracks in the plaster including paint cracks) and cracked walls
- tops of built-in wardrobes and other cupboards
- exhaust fans and other openings in the ceiling or walls
- ventilation gaps above refrigerators and microwaves
- light fittings (down lights in particular)
- accessible basement areas via cavity walls in brick veneer homes.

Worst case findings

In the most extreme cases, where families have left their homes, asbestos (including crocidolite) has been located often in visible quantities:

- in cupboards
- on top of the refrigerator or microwave
- in the heating and cooling system
- in bedding.

Assessors' collected observations

The Taskforce has met on a number of occasions with licensed asbestos assessors, both collectively and individually, to review progress and share learnings.

A defining feature of these conversations has been the extent to which the ACT Government's and assessors' knowledge about the presence of asbestos fibres within the living areas of affected homes has changed over time. A key area of focus has been a deepening awareness of the differences that exist in the quality of the cleaning completed as part of the original removal program between different houses at different times. While understandable in the context of continuous improvement, this factor also correlates with the nature of current contamination within the living areas of affected houses. It would seem to be generally better to have a house cleaned later in the original program than earlier. Unfortunately, however, even where there is evidence of a good clean, fibres are still being detected in living areas.

In a number of cases, assessors have reported not only inconsistent or incomplete application of the bonding spray inside the roof cavity, but that where it has been applied it is showing signs of deterioration. This is understandable 20 years later, but at the same time, increases the likelihood of fibres becoming mobile again and moving through the building structure and into living areas.

Assessors have also pointed out the extent to which the original removal program's specifications which did not permit modification to the structure of the house beyond the removal of roof tiles, means that more asbestos than might otherwise have been the case was left behind in cornice cavities. It has proven to be the case that the volume of fibres that can be seen in the roof space behind cornices is a good predictor of the likelihood of fibres being detected in the living areas.

Another key determinant of the presence of asbestos fibres in living spaces has been the quality of construction of a particular house. Well-constructed homes where the cornices' function is largely decorative in covering a narrow gap between ceiling and wall, generally have a more restricted space through which fibres might enter a living space than a less carefully constructed one. Where the internal linings of cupboards – as has been found – do not join at all or have no cornices, there is a clear path to the internal structure of the house through which fibres can travel.

Assessors have also noted the extent to which the nature of the ground and soil type in particular suburbs renders houses more likely to move and therefore crack. It is also a significant determinant of the extent to which fibres will penetrate the subsoil. Other influences in this regard include the extent to which subfloor

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areas have over time been subject to water flows including from blocked or damaged pipes. The propensity of Canberra soil to expand and contract with climatic variation as well as rainfall events is relevant to the enduring sustainability of remediation options into the future.

On more than one occasion it would appear rodents and/or possums have played their role in spreading fibres and opening access pathways for fibres to enter living spaces.

While assessors have, with greater knowledge, been able to better assess the likelihood of fibres being present inside living areas of a particular home, it is not routinely the case that a well-maintained home will return better testing results than a more dilapidated one. It has been the case, for example, that down lights and heating and cooling vents in extensively renovated homes have provided entry pathways for fibres into living areas from the roof and/or subfloor.

A further challenge faced by assessors, and by families seeking to make a judgement about risk, is that there is no reliable way to assess the impact of historical exposure that was not quantified at the time. A significant proportion of affected families have raised concerns about the fact that they may have been exposed to high levels of asbestos fibres during renovation work done either without knowledge, or complete understanding, of the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in their home. While undeniably relevant to an assessment of the likelihood of exposure leading to a risk of asbestos related diseases, it has proven difficult to provide specific advice to families on assessing risk when it is impossible to know the extent of, rather than the fact of, historical exposure of this sort. Also complicating this task is the fact that in relation to malignant mesothelioma, the time period from exposure to airborne asbestos fibres until the confirmation of the development of disease can be up to 70 years.

It is also impossible to rule out – without a full environmental clean and perhaps not even then – that fibres released through such works or indeed other entry pathways over time will not remain present in soft furnishings including carpets and curtains, and in linen and clothes.

The view has been expressed by more than one assessor that ‘if we look long enough in one of these houses we will find asbestos fibres’. In part, this might be said of all houses, and especially those built before 1990, given the background levels of asbestos fibres in the air and higher risks from decaying bonded asbestos products. Nevertheless, evidence from assessments conducted since February 2014 demonstrates there is a significantly stronger likelihood of higher readings in affected houses. It is also the case that affected homes have, in addition to positive amosite tests, returned positive samples for chrysotile asbestos likely from decayed bonded asbestos products.

Perhaps the most telling response of all from licensed assessors to the current and future risks faced by residents in affected homes has been the numbers who have indicated they would not live in an affected house, nor raise their children in one.

Removing Mr Fluffy

Having listened to licensed asbestos assessors, experts and homeowners, the Taskforce has concluded that demolition of affected homes is the only enduring solution to the risks posed by the presence of asbestos as loose fill insulation in homes. The practicalities of living in homes that cannot easily be worked on or maintained, the already manifest negative market responses from prospective renters and purchasers, the social isolation – self-imposed and otherwise – of people fearful about contamination in their homes affecting family and strangers, and above all the risks to mental and physical health are so great as to demand what at first may seem an extreme response.

The Taskforce's recommended approach is consistent with the publicly stated views of the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Government's Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, Mr Peter Tighe, that affected homes should be demolished: '... these Mr Fluffy homes are a ticking time bomb as far as I am concerned. There is no amount of cleaning that can be done to make them safe and I certainly would not allow my family to live in one of them.'²³

None of the experts recommended by Safe Work Australia contradicted that general approach as the only enduring solution.

Managing risk

It is well beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to canvass all that has been written about the risks posed by asbestos in the industrial and domestic context, or the significant body of academic literature that exists in relation to the consequences of exposure to asbestos fibres. Suffice it to say for these purposes:

- asbestos is a known carcinogen
- there is no known safe level of exposure
- the risk of contracting disease is, in general and subject to genetic predispositions, the cumulative function of intensity of exposure over time
- loose fill asbestos insulation is a particularly dangerous form of asbestos (and even worse in relation to those homes known to contain loose fill crocidolite).

In relation to the affected homes:

- there is a significant body of verifiable evidence that shows not only is asbestos present in the roof space, wall cavities and subfloor, it is consistently penetrating living areas
- any hole or gap in the ceiling, floor or walls is a potential entry point for asbestos fibres
- houses are susceptible to further cracking as they age and climatic variations affect ground stability
- all of them will have a level of contamination of asbestos ranging from higher than background levels to extreme in a smaller number of cases.

Much has been written about approaches to managing risk of exposure to asbestos in the industrial and domestic settings. Safe Work Australia's national *Code of Practice on How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace*²⁴ (the Code) outlines principles for managing asbestos. It establishes that when choosing the most appropriate control measure for possible asbestos exposure, the following hierarchy of controls must be considered:

- eliminating the risk (for example, removing the asbestos)
- substituting for the risk, isolating the risk or applying engineering controls (for example, enclosing, encapsulation, sealing or using certain tools)
- using administrative controls (for example, safe work practices)
- using personal protective equipment²⁵.

23 <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/homes-with-mr-fluffy-asbestos-insulation-should-be-demolished-says-safety-chief-20140410-36gcp.html#ixzz39ccpNIHF>

24 <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/about/publications/pages/manage-control-asbestos-cop>

25 Safe Work Australia (2011) p.37

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The Code also establishes, in relation to friable asbestos, that ‘instances where removal should be of the highest priority would include friable asbestos that is in poor condition and is located in an area where it poses a significant risk of exposure.’²⁶ It also observes (emphasis added) that ‘specific instances where removal may be the best control measure include:

- asbestos lagging on pipes
- asbestos in plant
- **asbestos-contaminated dust (ACD)**
- **loose fibre insulation**
- cracked or damaged fibreboard containing asbestos²⁷.’

A second removal program

The Taskforce has proceeded on this basis, adopting a precautionary stance that recognises the shortcomings of the original removal program and the lack of knowledge about the actual impact on health of exposure to fibres from loose fill asbestos insulation in a residential setting. The Taskforce also recognises that while the prevalence of asbestos related disease and mesothelioma in particular is low in absolute terms, that is not a reason not to take significant steps to eliminate a potentially grave risk to future health and wellbeing.

Furthermore, the ongoing anxiety about the presence of asbestos fibres and fears parents have for the health of their children in particular, are likely to have a more pressing and immediate impact on the lives of affected families than any future asbestos related disease. The Taskforce has received reports of grandparents refusing to permit their grandchildren to visit the home in which their parents grew up, and school friends not being allowed to visit.

Doing nothing is not an option. Affected homes will require a very significant program of works to remove loose fill asbestos fibres regardless of whether demolition ultimately occurs. Given the original removal program’s unsuccessful attempt to solve this problem, this inevitable second program should, in the view of the Taskforce, place a premium on certainty and comprehensiveness. The Taskforce notes demolition of affected homes was considered and discounted in the design of the original removal program.

In short, there are three choices available:

- demolition – to remove the risk
- a second attempt at cleaning – to reduce the risk
- sealing and cleaning (as a medium-term response to meet individual choice) to manage the risk.

Demolition

Demolishing affected homes, while a very significant, costly, logistically challenging, and emotionally traumatic approach, provides the only certain and enduring solution to the health risks and attendant social, financial and practical problems created by the presence of loose fill asbestos in Canberra homes. Any option short of demolition carries with it an ongoing management obligation and an unresolved risk that inevitably still present asbestos fibres may once again penetrate living areas and present an exposure risk to occupants living in, or tradespeople working on, affected homes. Demolition avoids all future costs of risk management, assessment, remediation and emergency rectification work.

At the end of the process of demolition and remediation of an affected block (i.e. removal of contaminated soil and replacement with clean fill) the risk of further exposure to loose fill asbestos fibres would no longer exist. Certainly the process of demolition would need to be carefully managed and undertaken with appropriate supervision and proper safety precautions. Nevertheless, there is a consensus amongst experts including licensed asbestos assessors and removalists, that a house affected by loose fill asbestos insulation can be demolished safely. There would likely be differences in methodologies between brick veneer and double brick homes, as the latter may need to be encapsulated in a ‘bubble’, but the outcome would be the same.

²⁶ Safe Work Australia (2011) p.37

²⁷ Safe Work Australia (2011) p.37

Demolition of affected homes also removes lingering uncertainty about future exposure to asbestos fibres and minimises the risks of social isolation – as has already been observed – through self-imposed restrictions on families and friends visiting affected homes. It also alleviates the ongoing mental health and social costs of uncertainty about future health risks, stigmatisation of affected homes, and concerns about future house values. It has the advantage of providing assurance to tradespeople, personal carers and others who may from time to time work in Canberra homes that they are not at risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos fibres. Of course they will need to remain vigilant in relation to bonded asbestos products and pipe lagging, but the particular dangers of loose fill asbestos to the wider community would have been eliminated in relation to known homes.

Even if demolition were not so strongly recommended, the nature of the work involved in the unavoidable second attempt at cleaning affected homes – which is likely to entail a full internal demolition and rebuild – is very significant and not that much different from that required to completely demolish. Furthermore, any approach short of demolition will inevitably leave loose fill asbestos contamination in the subfloor and attached to the remaining structure of houses that will remain a risk to the health of residents, tradespeople and visitors alike until the home is eventually demolished at the end of its useful life.

It would seem prudent, therefore, to take the final step to demolition in any event, rather than rebuilding a clean internal skin in what would still be a contaminated shell.

The choice, then, is not between minor works and demolition now: it is between significant works followed by demolition now, or significant works followed by ongoing physical and practical restrictions on the use of homes that will inevitably still be affected by loose fill asbestos insulation until they are eventually demolished.

Even more cleaning

The Taskforce has nevertheless explored options for removing asbestos short of demolition, in part due to the need to recognise that some people may not want to demolish their homes. These approaches take two broad streams:

- a further, more invasive attempt to clean houses – involving in effect internal demolition and rebuild
- a rigorous program of sealing and encapsulation.

Undertaking a second attempt at cleaning would, in effect, necessitate a full internal demolition and rebuild. All internal walls and ceilings could be removed, remaining asbestos vacuumed up, surfaces coated in a bonding agent, and then the internal structures could be rebuilt. It would be difficult in this scenario to be certain that all the contaminated soil had been removed from the subfloor given the need to maintain structural integrity of foundations.

Separately, it has been proposed that an internal lining could be built within the current house to encapsulate the asbestos behind, in effect, a second skin. While theoretically possible, and sometimes done in a commercial setting, there is unlikely to be sufficient room to practically achieve this in a home, and in any event, the restrictions on daily and future use and maintenance requirements would remain.

It has been suggested to the Taskforce that management options of this nature amount to maintaining the current problem for resolution in the future. Considering asbestos was applied as loose fill insulation into difficult to access cavities such as ceiling and wall spaces, and the asbestos has migrated to subfloor cavities, it is considered unlikely that 100 per cent removal of the asbestos could be achieved. Furthermore, it is considered unlikely that even the best industrial vacuum cleaner could achieve 100 per cent removal. If that were the outcome, then the risk of exposure will continue to exist into the future.

While it is theoretically possible to undertake another clean, the question to be answered is, 'Is this practical in a family home?' Even if it is practical in the short term, it will ultimately be ineffective and necessitate a third removal and cleaning program at some stage in the future.

Appendix A

Seal it and leave it there

It is possible to manage the risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos fibres in the short to medium term when perhaps the impacts of mitigation measures might be more tolerable for at least some people. The necessary sealing of all potential entry points for asbestos fibres would involve very significant impositions on the practicalities of life and the ordinary amenity of homes. It is not a solution to risks posed by the inadvertent, deliberate or accidental disturbance of walls, ceilings or seals in place which might be caused by inattentive tradespeople, children (through curiosity, carelessness, exuberance or accident), intervention of animals, general accidental damage, or storm damage or other emergencies.

One particular drawback of this approach is that subfloor areas and wall cavities cannot be sealed off without risking damp, mould and other problems inside affected homes. The roof space could not be entered without special equipment. Even simple maintenance tasks like lighting the pilot light for the central heating would require supervision by asbestos experts.

Such measures amount at best to risk mitigation which might be sustainable in the medium term until a house is eventually demolished. The risks of reopening entry points, and hence recreation of the current circumstances where loose fill asbestos fibres are present in the living areas of affected homes would increase over time as buildings age and soil moves and expands with changing climatic conditions. In addition, the evidence from the original removal program shows that bonding agents break down over time.

The impact on the wellbeing of home owners and residents, on normal social interactions and on normal family life of the likely mitigation measures necessary to prevent all entry of asbestos fibres into living areas are all very significant.

What would sealing-up entail?

A short- to medium-term sealing program might assist in the staging of any program of demolition, but it should not be viewed as a practical long-term solution. A program of this nature could be developed to:

- restrict and seal access to the ceiling cavity
- restrict and seal access to subfloor including:
 - basements and garages
 - storage areas and cellars
 - internal and external vents
- seal all fibre entry pathways from the ceiling to living areas including:
 - all cornices and cracks
 - internal cupboards and wardrobes
 - light fittings, down lights and exhaust fans
 - ducted heating and air conditioning vents
 - ventilation (e.g. bathroom vents, vents or gaps over fridges, microwaves, etc.)
- seal all fibre entry pathways from wall cavities to living areas including:
 - cracks
 - door frames
 - light switches
 - window frames
 - skirtings
 - cavity sliding doors (which would need to be sealed permanently open)
- seal all fibre entry pathways from subfloor to the outside of homes and living areas, including:
 - gaps or holes in floorboards
 - external or internal vents and grills
 - steps or decks that are exposed to the subfloor.

Clearly, interventions of this sort would significantly impact the functionality and liveability of affected homes including by:

- rendering down lights inoperable
- rendering many underfloor garages or storage areas unusable
- rendering air conditioning and heating systems inoperable
- affecting privacy
- impacting the long-term integrity of the structure of homes.

It is worth noting contemporary records indicate a similar program of sealing at the time of the original removal program led to increased moisture in homes and the growth of mould. At the time the government provided fans to affected households as a temporary means to combat the lack of ventilation.

In addition to these measures, residual asbestos insulation within accessible cavities, such as the ceiling space, would also need to be (re)sprayed with an appropriate sealant.

Furthermore, all hard surfaces and hard furnishings within the affected houses would need to be vacuumed using an appropriate filtered industrial vacuum cleaner.

What about soft furnishings?

Even for short-term habitation, considering (sometimes visible) asbestos has been identified in the living spaces of affected homes, all porous items such as carpets, and soft furnishings such as curtains, lounges, bedding and clothing may have to be removed and disposed of as asbestos contaminated waste. Although clothing could feasibly be washed, there is no validated technique to test that such clothing (and other porous items) are free from asbestos fibres.

It has proven the case that vacuum cleaners, washing machines and dryers cannot be remediated.

Where fibres are detected during an assessment in the living areas of a home, it is reasonable to assume that furniture and other contents may be contaminated. There is no reasonably practicable way of assessing the extent of any contamination or to guarantee decontamination of these possessions. However, providing goods have not been stored in the subfloor or roof cavities, the extent of any contamination is likely to be low.

Considerable distress could be caused by home occupants not being able to take potentially contaminated personal possessions when vacating a home. The Taskforce is developing a proposed approach to dealing with potentially contaminated contents that focuses on safety but also practicality, and supports informed choices being made by affected homeowners. Requiring destruction of all items would be distressing and potentially wasteful, but it is also possible that professional cleaning is not likely to be cost effective in some cases.

It is, however, possible for personal items with hard wettable surfaces to be decontaminated by a licensed asbestos removalist using an approved asbestos HEPA-vacuum cleaner and wet wiping. Soft furnishings, toys, linen and clothing cannot be conclusively decontaminated in this way.

The ACT Government has previously waived tip fees for homeowners who demolish or undertake further remediation of their homes including disposal of contaminated contents.

Conclusion

It is the view of the Asbestos Response Taskforce that all Canberra homes affected by loose fill asbestos insulation should be demolished because there is no effective, practical and affordable method to render them safe to occupy, except perhaps in the short to medium term. Even in that time frame, the risks of exposure to the form of asbestos present in affected homes demand a very significant level of restriction of the normal use of a property.

The Taskforce has reached this conclusion cognisant of the practicalities of the necessary sealing measures, the reality of living in ageing homes that cannot easily be worked on or maintained, the already manifest

Appendix A

negative market responses from prospective renters and purchasers, the social isolation – self-imposed and otherwise – of people fearful about contamination in their homes affecting loved ones and strangers, and above all the risks to mental and physical health.

Any program of demolition will need to take account of the desires of individual families and permit them to make informed choices about their own homes and their own lives. The Taskforce also acknowledges that demolition of more than 1000 homes would be a very significant undertaking and would take a number of years.

The detail of that program is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is something to which the Taskforce has already begun to give consideration on a contingency planning basis.

Appendix I – Advertisement from 1968

For Sure Comfort and Fuel Savings



**NEW
'ASBESTOSFLUF'**

The perfect thermal insulating material
C.S.I.R.O. TESTED AND APPROVED

Greatly reduces internal summer temperature. Retains winter warmth. Large savings on winter heating bills. ASBESTOSFLUF is the perfect insulating treatment for all types of homes, offices, restaurants, machine rooms and other industrial areas, in fact anywhere insulation is desirable. Completely incombustible — 2in thickness of ASBESTOSFLUF has much greater insulating and sound absorbing properties than equivalent thickness of any other type of material. It sprays on to ceiling area quickly and cleanly.



Prices range from \$82-50 for average 11 square home. Finance readily available on 10% deposit with repayments over 12 months.

ASBESTOSFLUF
a product of
ASBESTOS COATINGS

division of
D. JANSEN & CO PTY LTD
P.O. Box 6, Lyons, NSW
Phone 211831

FREE QUOTATION - NO OBLIGATION

The perfect thermal insulating material C.S.I.R.O. TESTED AND APPROVED

Greatly reduces internal summer temperature. Retains winter warmth. Large savings on winter heating bills. ASBESTOSFLUF is the perfect insulating treatment for all types of homes, offices, restaurants, machine rooms and other industrial areas, in fact anywhere insulation is desirable. Completely incombustible — 2in thickness of ASBESTOSFLUF has much greater insulating and sound absorbing properties than equivalent thickness of any other type of material. It sprays onto ceiling area quickly and cleanly.

Appendix II – Historical Advice



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

A.C.T. HEALTH SERVICES BRANCH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

C.M.L. Building, Darwin Place, Canberra City, A.C.T. Telephone 49 8077 P.O. Box 825, Canberra City 2601

In reply please quote A:3641

20 DEC 1968

The Director,
Department of Works,
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2607

COPY ONLY

Asbestosfluff Insulation

I refer again to your memorandum 68/928 of the 16th July, 1968 wherein you requested a report on the health aspects of asbestosfluff.

It is considered desirable that D. Jansen and Company Pty. Ltd., should be dissuaded or even prevented, if possible, from using asbestosfluff as insulation material in houses. Not only are men being unnecessarily exposed to a harmful substance in the course of their work, which is against the best public health practices, but there is evidence that community exposure to asbestos dust is undesirable.

In the light of the present stage of knowledge of the health effects of asbestos dust, it is prudent to limit asbestos to essential uses only and then in solid form.

It is believed that another company, Bowers Asphalt Pty. Ltd., of Rozelle, is considering commencing operation in Canberra, using asbestos in particle form.

With the present demand for insulation, Canberra may become a large market for use of asbestos in the form of fluff for insulation. Many people in the community will be exposed because some asbestos dust will be carried out of the roof space by air currents.

The results of our investigations have disclosed what appears to be a serious exposure to asbestos dust. In view of harmful nature of this substance the use of asbestos fluff for the purpose of insulating should be discontinued and less hazardous material such as rockwool, insulwool, or fibre glass should be substituted.

(Arthur D. Spears)
Acting Director

ASBESTOS HAZARD

On 11th July, 1968, I visited Canberra following a request from the A.C.T. Health Services Branch, to investigate the possible hazards which might arise from the use of asbestos as insulating material for houses. In the company of Dr. M. Ryan, the Medical Officer of Health and Mr. D. Kruger, Chief Health Inspector, I inspected two houses in which this work was being done by the Asbestos Coatings Division of D. Jansen & Co. Pty. Ltd., a Canberra firm. The workmen involved were Mr. M. Calder who described himself as the manager of the Division and a Mr. Jansen, an apprentice plasterer aged about 18 years, the son of the owner. No other workmen are engaged in this work by this company.

Method of Use

The principle associated with this work is quite simple: a centrifugal fan mounted in a small motor truck blows asbestos fibre through a 2½ inch diameter p.v.c. hose into the roof space of a house so that the ceiling is covered with a layer of "asbestos fluff" to a depth of 2-2½ inches. About 250 lbs of asbestos is used for the usual three bedroom house and it takes about 1½ hours to do each job; two men insulate 4 houses each day. Two men are engaged in the work, one in the motor truck feeding asbestos from bags into a hopper whilst the other is in the roof space directing the asbestos stream from the hose.

The asbestos is received in paper lined hessian bags containing 100 lbs and is carried in the truck which has a specially made body 7 feet 6 inches long, 6 feet wide and 6 feet 3 inches high. The bags are branded EGNEP Pty. Ltd., South Africa, and bear a shipping mark JH (presumably James Hardie), the asbestos is grade S33 and Mr. Simpson, Chief Chemist of James Hardie Pty. Ltd., has informed me that it is undoubtedly amosite because EGNEP does not mine, package or market any other asbestos mineral. The truck, in addition to carrying the asbestos and other equipment, has a hopper 24 inches x 18 inches x 18 inches which contains a simple device by which the fibres are fluffed up and further opened. The hopper is connected to a 14 inch centrifugal fan driven by a ½ h.p. electric motor and this fan extracts the fibre from the hopper and delivers it to the application hose which is about 50 feet long. The man feeding the hopper is exposed to a considerable cloud of asbestos dust and habitually wears a respirator because of the discomfort. The two men alternate day by day between working in the truck and in the roof space.

The man in the truck opens the bag with a knife and with his hands scoops asbestos into the hopper thus exposing himself to a high concentration of dust. The hopper contains two beaters, a wire brush and a rotary feeding mechanism but most of the dust produced arises from the actions of the man in removing the fibre from the bag and distributing it in the hopper. There is some leakage where the fan joins the hopper and around the fan casing. The hopper, which is the central feature of the machinery through which the fibre passes en route to the roof space, has clearly been designed for the purpose but neither of the two men involved on the day of the inspection knew its history - Mr. Jansen knew only that his father had purchased it secondhand and brought it to Canberra. I think it may have been used for rock wool or fibre glass application at one stage.

In the roof space the man holds the end of the application hose and directs it into the correct place until he estimates the depth of asbestos to be sufficient. This is an extremely dusty environment as would be expected, particularly because the velocity of air through the pipe would need to be about 3000 or 4000 feet per minute in order to carry the asbestos fibre. I was told that the workmen always wear respirators whilst doing this work.

Respiratory Protection

On the day of the inspection both men were wearing respirators. The man in the truck was wearing a Minnesota Mining & Machinery Company paper face mask which is of no value for protection against dusts which cause pneumoconiosis. The man in the roof space was wearing a Protector Type R2000

Appendix A

- 2 -

fitted with type R54 filters. This type is suitable for use in some situations where there is a pneumoconiosis risk but on this particular day the filters were placed in the respirator in the wrong way and considerable leakage was clearly evident. The inside of the respirator face piece was covered with asbestos dust as were both inlet and outlet valves but it was not possible to determine whether the valves were faulty because the filters were wrongly inserted.

Both men are clearly exposed to excessive asbestos dust and should take great care to minimise this exposure. Indeed it is unwise for them to be working with this material whilst suitable substitutes, i.e. rock wool and fibre glass, are available. However, if it is necessary for them to persist with the use of asbestos they must pay meticulous attention to respiratory protection. The 3M type face mask must never be used for protection against asbestos dust. It is interesting to note that respirators are worn because the asbestos dust is considered a nuisance, the workmen being ignorant of the harmful aspects of breathing it. The Protector R2000 respirator might be suitable protection for the man in the truck provided he conscientiously maintains it, keeping the valves in good operating condition and the head-harness tight. He could be taught to do this and his motivation could be sufficient but it must be impressed on him strongly that he should check his respirator daily for leaks and other signs of inefficiency.

The man in the roof space is exposed to too high a concentration of dust to rely on an air purification device and he should wear a supplied air respirator, which of course would be preferable for the man in the van. The most suitable respirator would be a half-face piece supplied air device, the air being supplied by an efficient blower. Suitable equipment is supplied by Protector Safety Products, Normalair, IPCO Safety Pty. Ltd., Willson Products and Mine Safety Appliances Ltd.

Some thought should be given to whether D. Jansen & Co. Pty. Ltd., should be dissuaded or even prevented from using asbestos as insulation material in houses. Not only are men unnecessarily exposed to a harmful substance in the course of their work, which is against the best public health practices, but there is some evidence that community exposure to asbestos dust is undesirable. This evidence is not completely convincing but is being taken seriously by experts in the field and, in the light of the present state of knowledge of the health effects of asbestos, it would be prudent to limit asbestos to essential uses only. It is believed that another company, Bowers Asphalt Pty. Ltd., of Rozelle, is considering commencing operations in Canberra, having used asbestos in a similar manner in Sydney for the past 13 years. With the present demand for insulation, Canberra may become a large market for asbestos insulation with many people in the community exposed because some asbestos will be carried out of the roof space by air currents.

G. Major
(G. MAJOR)
Physicist,
Occupational Health Section

July 1968.

Appendix III – Consultation

Emeritus Professor Bruce Armstrong – University of Sydney

Professor Tim Driscoll – University of Sydney

Dr Ian Gardner – Senior Physician in Occupational & Environmental Medicine Department of Defence

Associate Professor Deborah Glass – Monash University

Rosalie Mayo-Ramsay – Consultant at Noel Arnold and Associates (former state coordinator for asbestos and demolition at NSW Workcover).

Peter McGarry – Manager, Asbestos and Occupational Hygiene and Health Unit Work Health and Safety Queensland

Clinical Professor Bill Musk – University of Western Australia

Michael Shepherd – President, Asbestos Industry Association Queensland

Professor Malcolm Sim – Monash University

Brian Sketcher – Asbestos Audits Queensland

Peter Tighe – Chief Executive Officer, Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

Michael van Alphen – University of South Australia

ACT Officials

Mr Mark McCabe – Work Safety Commissioner

Dr Andrew Pengilley – Chief Health Officer

Appendix IV – Memorandum of Understanding

Attachment A

DATED:

9/6/14882

BETWEEN:

(not appropriate
file for this but
this covers it
is)

THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY

("the Territory")

AND:

THE COMMONWEALTH OF
AUSTRALIA

("the Commonwealth")

MEMORANDUM OF
UNDERSTANDING - ASBESTOS
REMOVAL PROGRAM

ACT Government Solicitor
1st Floor GIO House
250 City Walk
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

Ref: DT/90-3-16216

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY ("the Territory") AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA ("the Commonwealth") made the 7th day of June 1991

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 In 1988 the Commonwealth developed and commenced conducting a program for the identification sealing and removal of loose asbestos fluff insulation from certain affected Territory residential properties ("the Program").
- 1.2 Responsibility for the conduct of the Program was transferred to the Territory upon self-government on the basis that the Commonwealth would contribute towards the funding of the Program.
- 1.3 This Memorandum records the funding arrangements for the Program as determined by the Commonwealth and the agreed arrangements between the Territory and the Commonwealth concerning administration of the Program.

2. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 2.1 In this Memorandum the following words shall, unless the context indicates otherwise, have the meanings shown below:

"Funding formula" means the following formula for funding the cost of the Program adopted by the Commonwealth on 10 October 1988 that:

the Territory pay the first \$10 million of costs,

the Territory and the Commonwealth share, dollar for dollar, the next \$20 million of costs; and

thereafter the costs to be apportioned \$2 to \$1 by the Commonwealth and the Territory respectively.

"Self-Government" means the date from which the Territory became a separate body politic namely 10 May 1989.

"Territory" means according to the context in which it appears either the geographical area known as the Australian Capital Territory or the body politic established under section 7 of the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988.

- 2.2 Headings are for assistance only and shall be of no legal effect.

Appendix A

3. EXCLUSION

The parties agree that this Memorandum reflects the funding arrangements determined by the Commonwealth and nothing herein should be interpreted or construed as apportioning any liability between the Territory and the Commonwealth arising out of the installation of asbestos insulation in Territory dwellings.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The parties acknowledge that conduct of the Program prior to the date of this Memorandum has been on the basis of the understandings set out in this Memorandum and that the Funding Formula set out in this Memorandum also applies to that part of the Program conducted before the date of this Memorandum. Commonwealth contributions to the program to the date of signing total \$12.96 million.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The parties agree that the Territory, through the Department of Urban Services will continue to be responsible for the implementation and administration of the Program and that the Commonwealth will contribute in accordance with the funding formula towards the cost of the Program.

6. LEVEL OF SERVICE

6.1 The level of service to be provided by the Territory under the Program is as follows:

- the survey of all residential properties in the Territory built before 1980 to determine which residential properties have asbestos insulation, and

- the sealing up of all affected residences and removal of all visible and accessible loose asbestos fluff insulation from affected residential properties in the Territory.

6.2 In respect of the owners of residential properties affected by the Program who are assessed by the Territory to be suffering financial hardship the Territory may reimburse all or part of the cost of alternative accommodation for those owners during the period in which the owner's residential property was affected by the Program. The Territory will include in reports submitted under clause 8.3 relevant details of all such assessed cases.

6.3 The parties agree that should it become necessary at any time to expand the Program to further residential properties or to subsequently remove additional asbestos from properties previously subject to the Program ("the Additional Program"), all costs associated with the Additional Program will

be calculated in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Memorandum of Understanding.

7. COSTS AND PAYMENTS

7.1 The Territory will provide to the Commonwealth estimates of fortnightly cash requirements under the program prior to the commencement of each financial year and at other times as reasonably requested by the Commonwealth.

7.2 Upon agreement by the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories that the estimates provided under 7.1 are reasonable and in accord with the agreed amount under 7.5, the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories will pay the Territory fortnightly in advance in accordance with the Funding Formula and the estimates of cash requirements provided to it by the Territory. Adjustments necessary as a result of quarterly reports of expenditure under 8.3 will be effected in subsequent payments.

7.3 Adjustments for over and under payments in a financial year shall be made in the ensuing financial year.

7.4 In paying the Territory the Commonwealth's share under the Funding Formula, the Commonwealth contribution will cover costs incurred by the Territory in the nature of:

- costs directly involved in identification, removal and sealing of loose asbestos fluff insulation from residential properties in the Territory;

- accommodation costs for assessed hardship cases; and

- corporate overheads calculated in accordance with Attachment A to the "Guidelines for Costing of Government Activities" reduced by those items identified as direct expenses.

7.5 The parties agree that the amount to be paid by the Commonwealth under this Memorandum for subsequent financial years will be agreed annually and will take into account progress to date with the Program.

8. REPORTING

8.1 The Territory will provide to the Commonwealth a copy of an audited financial statement against the line items appearing at Annex A detailing receipts and expenditure associated with the administration of the Program.

8.2 The statement referred to in clause 8.1 will be provided to the Commonwealth within 6 months after the end of each financial year.

Appendix A

8.3 The Territory will report quarterly on receipts and expenditure against the line items appearing at Annex A, and on progress of works under the Program.

8.4 The Commonwealth and the Territory may agree to amend cash flow estimates referred to in 7.3 as a consequence of information contained in the reports referred to in 8.1 and 8.3.

9. INDEMNITY

The Commonwealth hereby indemnifies and agrees that it will continue to indemnify the Territory, its servants and agents from and against all actions, claims, suits or demands brought, maintained or made against the Territory, its servants and agents arising out of or connected with the performance of the Program or any Additional Program together with any costs associated with defending or settling such actions, claims, suits or demands.

10. TERM OF MEMORANDUM

This Memorandum will commence on 10 May 1989 and will cease upon the completion of the Program or if the Program is extended under clause 6.2 upon the completion of the Additional Program.

11. VARIATIONS TO THE LEVEL AND TYPE OF SERVICES

11.1 The terms of this Memorandum may be varied or amended by written agreement between the Commonwealth and the Territory.

11.2 If any change in the Funding Formula referred to in this Memorandum is required by either party, it will be the subject of separate negotiations and agreement between the appropriate Ministers of the Territory and the Commonwealth.

12. NOTICES

12.1 Any correspondence to be given for the purposes of this Memorandum shall be deemed to have been duly given if delivered personally, or by being left at, or posted by ordinary prepaid mail or sent by facsimile transmission where appropriate to the following address or to the party's last known facsimile number:

(a) The Territory:

General Manager,
City Operations Branch
PO Box 574
KINGSTON ACT 2604
(Facsimile No: 295 6717)

(b) The Commonwealth:

Director
National Functions Section
Department of the Arts, Sport the
Environment, Tourism and Territories
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601
(Facsimile No: 274 1368)

12.2 Payments under this Memorandum should be made to the Territory:

C/- Assistant Under Treasurer
Capital Markets and Accounting
ACT Treasury
PO Box 293
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

12.3 A notice, payment or receipt:

if posted, shall be deemed to be received three days after posting; or

if sent by facsimile transmission, shall be deemed to be received
upon completion of that transmission; or

if collected by hand, shall be deemed to be received at the time of
collection.

Appendix A

D.C.

ality:

alf of THE
ITAL TERRITORY)

) B. Dockrill

)

) Bruce Dockrill

) Director

) City Services Group

) Department of Urban Services

tness [Signature]

Signed for and on behalf of THE
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
in the presence of:)

) Cathy Santamaria

)

) Cathy Santamaria

) First Assistant Secretary

) Corporate Management and
Territories Division

Witness [Signature] Department of the Arts, Sport,
the Environment, Tourism
and Territories

ANNEXURE A

Salaries

- above the line
- below the line

Wages

- above the line
- below the line

Superannuation

- on salaries
- on wages
- 3% productivity benefit

Workers Compensation

Office Accommodation

Payments to Contractors

Reimbursement to Residents

Other Operating Expenses (to be identified)

Corporate Support in accordance with clause 7.4(ii)

Less

- Receipts (to be identified).

Appendix V – 1993 Letter



CITY OPERATIONS BRANCH

ASBESTOS PROGRAM

PO Box 574, Kingston, ACT 2604

Telephone: (06) 239 6276

Facsimile: (06) 295 6717

NOTICE TO ALL ASBESTOS REMOVAL HOUSEHOLDS

Now that the Asbestos Program is drawing to a close, it is opportune to let householders and owners know the administrative arrangements for the future.

In July 1993, the asbestos removal process will be completed on all houses in the ACT, and the operations of the Asbestos Program will be scaled down accordingly. The warranty period for the last house treated will expire in December 1993 and the Program will maintain a facility to service the need until that date.

It is anticipated that the Asbestos Program will move from its office in Carpentaria House in Kingston in September 1993. However, PO Box 574 Kingston and the telephone number will remain operable.

A copy of the Certificate of Completion of asbestos removal from your house will be placed on the appropriate 'Building Control' file.

Prior to undertaking any building alterations to internal or external walls or ceilings, please contact 'Building Control' to ascertain any specific requirements of the building regulations.

'Building Control' offices are located:

Cnr Lysaght &
Hopkins Streets
Mitchell ACT 2911

"Old Woden TAFE"
Callum Street
Phillip ACT 2606

Cnr Scollay &
Oakden Streets
Tuggeranong ACT 2901

Ph: 207 6262

Ph: 207 6277

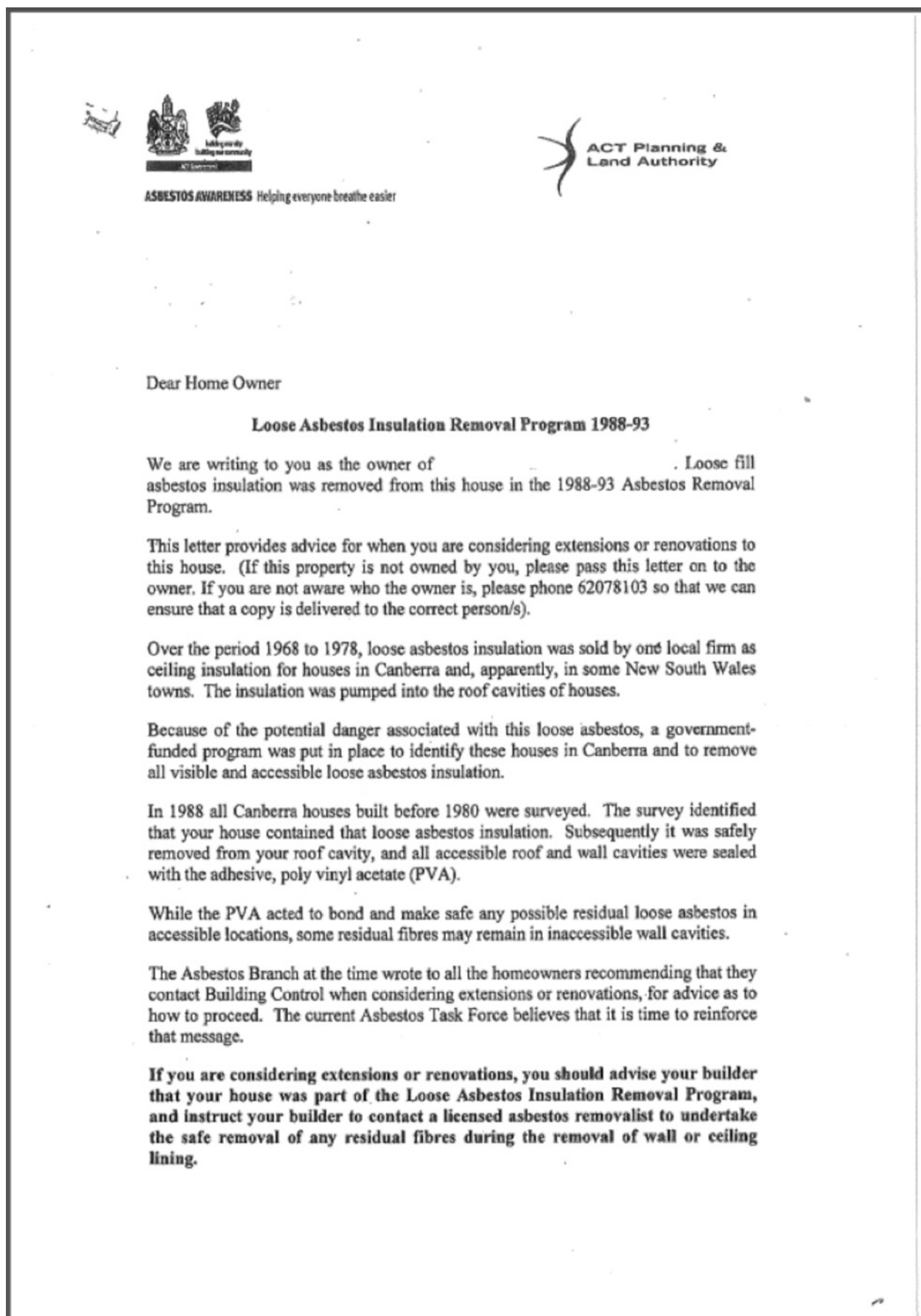
Ph: 207 5969

DEREK HYDE
MANAGER ASBESTOS

6 JULY 1993

ACT Government - Department of Urban Services

Appendix VI – 2005 Taskforce Letter



Appendix A

If you are undertaking this work yourself, contact a licensed removalist direct. Asbestos removalists are listed in the Yellow Pages telephone directory under 'Asbestos'. Asbestos removalists should contact a building certifier regarding building approval for this work.

If you wish to obtain a copy of documents relating to the Asbestos Removal Program from your Building File, an application form is attached to this letter.

If you have queries about your building file, please contact the ACT Planning and Land Authority;


- By phone on (02) 62076262,
- By post to GPO Box 1908 Canberra ACT 2601,
- via e-mail to ACTPLAIS@dpa.act.gov.au
- or in person at the Mitchell Customer Service Centre, Corner Hoskins & Lysaght Streets Mitchell. Please bring a copy of this letter with you.

New laws apply to home owners regarding asbestos. Information about these new laws is provided in the booklet accompanying this letter.

Yours sincerely



Neil Savery
Chief Planning Executive
ACT Planning and Land Authority



Lincoln Hawkins
Chief Executive
Asbestos Task Force

Appendix VII – Work Safety Commissioner's February 2014 Letter



RESIDENT
No. STREET
SUBURB ACT XXXX

Dear Resident

Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation

I am writing to you because our records show that asbestos insulation was removed from your residence in the Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation Removal Program ('the Program') that operated from 1988-93. Friable asbestos products such as this insulation are dangerous if disturbed because the asbestos fibres can become airborne very easily, and may be inhaled by people living or working in the vicinity.

The purpose of this letter is to remind you that your home was part of the Program. This means that certain precautions should be taken when undertaking work on your house.

The Program aimed to remove *visible and accessible* asbestos insulation. It was not designed to remove all of the asbestos insulation. It is likely that some asbestos insulation material remains in these homes, including in places such as internal and external wall cavities, subfloor spaces and underneath cornices.

While loose-fill asbestos insulation in wall cavities is unlikely to present a risk if left undisturbed, precautions should be exercised to avoid the risk of exposure when undertaking even minor renovations, alterations or repairs within the house e.g. replacing power-points, cabling, removing wall heaters and disturbing walls in any way.

Because of the potential dangers of this form of asbestos, I recommend that you engage the services of a licensed Asbestos Assessor to obtain an Asbestos Assessment Report. Licensed Asbestos Assessors can provide you with an assessment and ongoing management plan for any forms of asbestos in your home. This is particularly important if you intend to undertake renovations, maintenance work or accessing sub-floor areas (e.g. for storage). In obtaining a report you should advise the Assessor that your home was part of the Program.

Areas where it is possible that the Assessor may find asbestos fibres from the insulation include:

- the underside and laps of tiles;
- tile battens;
- structural timbers;
- the subfloor;
- wall cavities (internal and external); and
- behind cornices.

Appendix A

Further, if you are considering maintenance, alterations, extensions or renovations, you should advise any persons you may arrange to do the work, such as tradespeople, that your house was part of the Program and that there are likely to be asbestos fibres present. You must also provide them with a copy of any Asbestos Assessment Report. Only a licensed Asbestos Removalist should be engaged to undertake the removal of any asbestos.

A list of licensed Asbestos Assessors and Removalists can be found on the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (ESDD) website at the following web address www.actpla.act.gov.au. (Only the assessors and removalists on this list are licensed in the ACT.)

It is important to note that Building Reports should not be relied on to provide information about whether there is asbestos in properties. Only licensed Asbestos Assessors are permitted to provide advice on the presence of asbestos or asbestos containing materials.

Finally, please note that homes built before 1990 are also likely to have other materials present which contain asbestos in them. The Program was limited to the removal of visible and accessible loose-fill asbestos insulation and did not extend beyond that. I am enclosing three fact sheets on loose-fill asbestos insulation in the ACT which are currently available on the ACT Government asbestos website www.asbestos.act.gov.au. This website provides a broad range of information relating to asbestos, asbestos containing materials and the management of this substance.

If you wish to discuss any of the aspects relating to loose-fill asbestos, you can contact Canberra Connect on 13 22 81. Canberra Connects operating hours are:

Monday to Friday:	7am to 8pm
Saturday:	8am to 5pm
Sunday:	9am to 5pm

Alternatively, there is an online form available at www.act.gov.au/loosefillasbestosinsulation. If you do not have access to the internet, a Canberra Connect operator will assist you to complete the form. A response to your enquiry will be provided as soon as possible.

If this property is rented out, please ensure the owner, through your managing agent is aware of the contents of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Mark McCabe
ACT Work Safety Commissioner
18 February 2014

Appendix VIII – Asbestos Response Taskforce July 2014 Letter

Important information from the ACT Government regarding Loose-fill asbestos insulation (Mr Fluffy Insulation) at:

«Street Address», «Suburb»

This letter confirms the property listed above is on the ACT Government's register as having been part of the Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Removal Program that took place between 1988 and 1993. This was outlined in a letter sent to the affected properties by the ACT Work Safety Commissioner in February 2014, which recommended property owners engage a licensed asbestos assessor to undertake an assessment of the property.

Since then, the ACT Government has established the Asbestos Response Taskforce to address the legacy issues of loose-fill asbestos (commonly known as 'Mr. Fluffy' insulation) in Canberra homes. To property owners receiving this information for the first time, it is important that you register with the Taskforce as soon as possible so that we may begin providing assistance to you. The Taskforce has sent this letter by Registered Post so it is able to be confident that all affected homeowners are aware of their property's status and the Taskforce is able to offer assistance and advice.

The Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Removal Program was designed and commenced by the Commonwealth Government, as the responsible government for the Australian Capital Territory at that time, and was completed by the ACT Government following selfgovernment in 1989. Homes that were part of this program (commonly known as 'Mr. Fluffy' houses) had visible and accessible asbestos insulation removed.

Since February, at the prompting of the Work Safety Commissioner, a number of properties have undergone further assessment. Some of these assessments have recommended further remediation and in some cases, that properties be vacated.

It is important to remember that each property is different and assessments by licensed assessors should inform the course of action for each property owner.

ACT Government Asbestos Response Taskforce

As a resident or owner of a house affected by loose-fill asbestos, it is important you register with the Asbestos Response Taskforce if you haven't already done so. This can be done online at www.act.gov.au/asbestostaskforce or by calling Canberra Connect on 13 22 81. Once you have registered with the Taskforce you will be contacted by one of our team members and we will start the process of working with you to progress actions appropriate for your property. There will also be regular information provided to you through the Taskforce Newsletter.

Emergency Financial Assistance

The Chief Minister announced a package of assistance for families whose homes are affected by loose-fill asbestos on 3 July 2014. Information on these announcements can be found on the Taskforce website at www.act.gov.au/asbestostaskforce. The announced package includes the following components.

1. Grants of up to \$10,000 per household are available to families who are required, on the advice of an asbestos assessor, to leave their home. An additional \$2,000 is payable for each dependent child residing in the home. The purpose of these funds is to cover the costs of emergency accommodation, immediate remediation work and other necessities such as food and clothing.
2. For families having to leave their place of residence on the advice of an asbestos assessor, the ACT Government will defer rates on that property for the period of time the owners are required to vacate.
3. Families who are able to remain in their home, but on the advice of an asbestos assessor, have needed to destroy contaminated items (such as clothes and soft furnishing items) may access up to \$1,000 to assist with those costs.
4. The Taskforce will arrange and pay for asbestos assessments to be conducted on all affected homes (or will reimburse the cost of asbestos assessments undertaken since 18 February 2014).

Appendix A

5. To access these financial packages you need to be registered with the Taskforce and where practical, retain a copy of your receipts.

Support

In addition to the financial assistance being offered there are other support services which are available to both adults and children who would find it useful.

A range of options are available and include:

- The NewAccess Program is provided at no cost through the ACT Medicare Local and offers support from trained coaches for those who are experiencing mild anxiety or depression. People registered with the Asbestos Response Taskforce can self-refer to this service by phoning the central intake number on (02) 6287 8066. The coaches provide evidence based, low intensity psychological strategies and support, either face to face or over the phone, for up to six sessions.
- ACT Medicare Local will ensure priority access to NewAccess coaches and *HealthinMind* psychologists for people registered with the Asbestos Taskforce.
- For anyone experiencing moderate anxiety or depression, your family doctor can complete a mental health treatment plan and provide referral for free sessions with a psychologist under the ACT Medicare Local's *HealthinMind* program. For those living in an affected house any 'gap' fee for the family doctor visit will be reimbursed to ensure that there is no out-of-pocket expenses.
- For any urgent/crisis mental health concerns, particularly in relation to acute stress and/or risks to the immediate safety of individuals, please contact the Mental Health Triage intake line on 1800 629 354.
- Your family doctor and their practice staff will also be able to assist you with information about the risks to your physical health of potential asbestos exposure.

Other supports available include:

- Lifeline (24 hours) 13 11 14.
- School Counsellors.
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Information

A number of families have asked if there is an obligation on them to inform other people about the presence of loose-fill asbestos in their home. The short answer to that question is yes.

Under the *Dangerous Substances Act 2004*, a person who is in control of premises and is aware of the presence of asbestos in a property has an obligation to take all reasonable steps to minimise the risk which arises. This may include informing people who may be affected, such as tenants and tradespeople, of that fact.

Further, if an asbestos assessment report has been completed, the owner or occupier is required to provide a copy to potential buyers, tenants and tradespeople engaged to undertake work at the premises.

If your home is tenanted or currently listed for sale, you should inform your real estate agent (or tenant/buyer if you don't have a real estate agent) of the contents of this letter as soon as possible. The Taskforce has been working with the Work Safety Commissioner and the Office of Regulatory Services to provide guidance and briefings to the Real Estate Institute in this regard.

If you are undertaking any work on your home such as repairs or alterations, you should inform your builder as soon as possible.

If you have further questions about the information provided in this letter or require the assistance of an interpreter, please contact the Taskforce through Canberra Connect on 13 22 81, www.act.gov.au/asbestostaskforce or asbestostaskforce@act.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Kefford
Head - Asbestos Response Taskforce

Appendix IX – Sample Asbestos Reports

Example 1: no fibres detected in living areas, contamination in subfloor

Table 1 - ACM Register

	Asbestos containing material
	Non- asbestos containing material

Sample Number	Photo no.	Location description	Material Assessment			Fibrous Content	Recommend Action
			Material	Type	Condition		
FRIABLE ASBESTOS							
E0535	1	Sub-Floor (Front) – Dust to brick ledge	Dust	Friable	Poor	Amosite Asbestos	Restrict access until remediated
E0536	2	Sub-Floor (Rear) – Dust to brick ledge	Dust	Friable	Poor	Amosite Asbestos	Restrict access until remediated
BONDED ASBESTOS							
E0528	-	Bathroom – Cream vinyl floor tiles	VFT	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	No action required
E0529	-	Roof Space – Dust to hatch panel	Dust	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	No action required
E0530	3	Bathroom Wall	Sheet	Bonded	Good	Chrysotile Asbestos	Maintain
RA- E0530	-	Toilet Wall	Sheet	Bonded	Good	Chrysotile Asbestos	Maintain
E0531	-	Laundry Wall	Sheet	Bonded	Good	Chrysotile Asbestos	Maintain
E0532	4	External Eaves	Sheet	Bonded	Fair	Chrysotile Asbestos	Seal & maintain
RA- E0532	5	External gable end corrugated sheets	Sheet	Bonded	Good	Chrysotile Asbestos	Maintain
RA- E0532	6	External sheet above window and roof verge undercloaking	Sheet	Bonded	Good	Chrysotile Asbestos	Maintain
E0533	-	External Decking Gate	Sheet	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	No action required

Appendix A

Example 2: some fibres detected in living areas

SURVEY FINDINGS

A register of sampled materials is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Material Register

Sample Number	Item no.	Location description	Material	Type	Risk Rating	Fibrous Content	Required Action
X0272	9900168-1	Basement flat - kitchen cornice cracks	Dust	Friable	1B	Amosite Asbestos	Restrict access until Environmental clean conducted
X0273	-	Basement flat – hall cornice cracks	Dust	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	-
X0274	-	Return air vent grille	Dust	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	-
X0275	-	Upstairs floor vents	Dust	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	-
X0276	9900168-2	Upstairs – hall cupboard cracks	Dust	Friable	1B	Amosite Asbestos	Seal cupboard until Environmental clean conducted
X0277	9900168-3	Holly's room – wardrobe cracks	Dust	Friable	1B	Amosite Asbestos	Seal wardrobe until Environmental clean conducted
X0278	9900168-4	Bathroom ceiling vents	Dust	Friable	1B	Amosite Asbestos	Restrict access until Environmental clean conducted
X0279	9900168-5	Garage - gaps in cornice	Dust	Friable	1B	Amosite Asbestos	Restrict access until Environmental clean conducted
Presumed	9900168-6	Sub floor area	Dust	Friable	1B	Contamination has consistently been found in Sub floor areas	Prevent access until removal works can be conducted

Sample Number	Item no.	Location description	Material	Type	Risk Rating	Fibrous Content	Required Action
Presumed	9900168-7	Ceiling space	Presumed Dust	Friable	1B	Contamination has consistently been found where the PVA paint has not been applied thoroughly	Prevent access until removal works can be conducted

Asbestos containing material
Presumed asbestos containing material (VA)
Non- asbestos containing material

Example 3: significant contamination detected (crocidolite asbestos)

SURVEY FINDINGS

Table 2: Material Register

Sample Number	Item no.	Location description	Material	Type	Risk Rating	Fibrous Content	Required Action
S0831	-	To vacuum cleaner	Dust	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	-
S0832	9900171-1	To ceiling in hallway cupboard	Dust	Friable	1B	crocidolite Asbestos	Seal cupboard until Environmental clean conducted
S0833	-	To return air for central heating in hallway	Dust	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	-
S0834	9900171-2	To ceiling in cupboard to Johnny's room	Dust	Friable	1B	crocidolite Asbestos	Seal cupboard until Environmental clean conducted
S0835	9900171-3	To cupboard ceiling in master bedroom	Dust	Friable	1B	crocidolite Asbestos	Seal cupboard until Environmental clean conducted
S0836	9900171-4	To cupboard ceiling in bedroom/study	Dust	Friable	1B	crocidolite Asbestos	Seal cupboard until Environmental clean conducted
S0837	-	To sliding door cavity to laundry	Dust	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	-
S0838	-	Below cracked cornice in the kitchen	Dust	-	-	No Asbestos Detected	-
S0839	9900171-5	Below wall where old heater had been removed to the lounge room	Dust	Friable	1B	crocidolite Asbestos	Restrict access until Environmental Clean conducted
S0840	9900171-6	To heating vent in floor to the lounge room	Dust	Friable	1B	crocidolite Asbestos	Do not use heat system until Environmental clean conducted
S0841	9900171-7	To heating vent in floor to the dining room	Dust	Friable	1B	crocidolite Asbestos	Do not use heat system until Environmental clean conducted

Sample Number	Item no.	Location description	Material	Type	Risk Rating	Fibrous Content	Required Action
Presumed	-	Sub floor area	Dust	Friable	1B	Contamination has consistently been found in Sub floor areas	Prevent access until removal works can be conducted
Presumed	9900171-8	Ceiling space	Dust/Paint flakes	Friable	1B	Contamination has consistently been found where the PVA paint is flaking	Prevent access until removal works can be conducted

Asbestos containing material
Presumed asbestos containing material (VA)
Non- asbestos containing material

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Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency – <http://asbestossafety.gov.au>

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, *National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management 2013–2018*. Australian Government, Canberra, 2013.

Safe Work Australia, *Model Code of Practice - How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace*, Australian Government, Canberra, 2011.

Safe Work Australia – <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au>

The ACT Government's Preferred Way Forward on Loose Fill Asbestos: Supporting Detail



ACT
Government

**Asbestos Response
Taskforce**

28 October 2014

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Executive Summary

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government – with financial assistance from the Australian Government – has decided to conduct a voluntary buyback of all houses in the ACT affected by loose fill asbestos insulation so that they can be demolished.

This will be achieved through the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (the Scheme) that will be implemented by the Asbestos Response Taskforce (the Taskforce). The demolition and block remediation program will be overseen by regulatory authorities including WorkSafe ACT, the Environment and Planning Directorate, and the Environment Protection Authority.

Once affected houses have been demolished and contaminated soil removed and replaced, blocks will be re-sold to defray some of the overall cost of the Scheme. Consideration will be given as part of this process to opportunities for unit-titling, subdivision, or consolidation of blocks to enhance the value of remediated blocks and defray the overall costs of the Scheme.

Opportunities will be provided for Eligible Homeowners under the Scheme to repurchase their block (or part of their block) for owner occupation. Under the Scheme the definition of an Eligible Homeowner means the registered proprietor of the affected block as at 28 October 2014.

This document sets out the detailed policy framework for the Scheme. Further information is available on the Taskforce's website <http://www.act.gov.au/asbestos-response-taskforce>.

In settling its approach to this complex and multifaceted issue, the ACT Government has sought to balance the health, safety and financial security of families currently living in affected homes, the safety of workers and visitors to affected homes, the significant financial impact on all Canberrans who will share the costs of the Scheme, and the practical and emotional impacts of a decision comprehensively and finally deal with the health, social, financial and logistical effects of the continuing presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes.

Above all, the ACT Government has sought to provide a financially sustainable enduring solution to a problem that has affected Canberra since 1968.

Rationale

Following careful consideration of the outcomes of the Taskforce's consultation with asbestos experts, and having regard to the findings of assessments of affected homes conducted since February 2014, the ACT Government has reached the conclusion that the ongoing public health and safety risks posed by the continuing presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes cannot be effectively managed.

The ACT Government has accepted the advice of the Taskforce that there is no effective, practical and affordable method to render homes containing loose fill asbestos insulation safe to occupy in the long term.

Amosite (brown) and crocidolite (blue) asbestos have been banned from import, use and resale in Australia for many years. The continued occupation, maintenance, renovation and sale of homes containing pure loose amosite – and in a small number of cases crocidolite – fibres is inconsistent

with this national ban. National asbestos policy has evolved during the last decade from “management and containment” to eradication of the risks posed by friable asbestos (i.e. loose fibres).

The detailed arguments underpinning the Scheme are set out in the Asbestos Response Taskforce’s Report: *Long Term Management of Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation in Canberra Homes* (the Taskforce Report) which is available on the Taskforce’s website <http://www.act.gov.au/asbestos-response-taskforce>.

This document should be read in conjunction with the *Loose Fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme: Overview* and the Taskforce Report, the key conclusions of which are summarised below.

Asbestos-related disease

Asbestos is a Class 1 carcinogen and poses a risk to health when fibres of a respirable size become airborne and are inhaled. There are a number of medical conditions that are known to be caused by inhalation of asbestos fibres including:

- pleural plaques (thickening of tissue around the lungs) which are usually benign and asymptomatic but are a marker of past exposure
- asbestosis (scarring of lung tissue)
- lung cancer
- mesothelioma (a fatal malignant tumour that can develop around the lining of the lungs).

Ingestion of asbestos fibres has been linked to subsequent disease, although at much lower prevalence rates than when airborne fibres are inhaled.

Exposure risks

The National Public Health Partnership’s enHEALTH guide *Management of asbestos in the non-occupational environment* states there is “no known safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres”¹. This position is generally adopted by work health and safety regulators around Australia including WorkSafe ACT. There are, however, currently no specific studies of the health impacts of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation fibres in homes.

The Health Directorate will commission such a study, details of which are set out at below.

Nevertheless, studies of domestic asbestos exposure in Western Australia (at the asbestos mining town of Wittenoom and of home renovators) indicate that it is relatively rare for an individual to develop asbestos-related disease even after significant exposure². However, if large numbers of people are exposed to even a low risk of disease then this increases the probability that one or more people will be affected.

There is in this context an important difference between analysis of health risks of historical exposure on the one hand, and determination of what steps might be justified to minimise risks to health and wellbeing from the continuation of such exposure in the future on the other. While it is

¹ <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-enhealth-asbestos-cnt.htm>

² Olsen N, Franklin P, Reid A et al: Increasing incidence of malignant mesothelioma after exposure to asbestos during home renovation. *MJA*. 2011; 195(5): 271- 274 pg 273 graph 3; Hansen J, De Klerk N, Musk A et al: Environmental exposure to Crocidolite and mesothelioma – exposure response relationships. *American Journal of Critical Care Medicine* 1998; 157: 69-75

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not possible to determine the actual likelihood of one or more people developing asbestos-related disease if the size of the cohort of people exposed to loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes was allowed to continue to increase, it would be likely to increase over time.

In addition to concerns about asbestos-related diseases, the stress, anxiety and guilt experienced by affected families about their physical health and that of their children in particular, as well as in relation to the value of affected homes, is acknowledged. Deep community concern also exists about historical and ongoing exposure to asbestos fibres of former residents, tradespeople and others working in and on affected homes. The significant personal impact and costs of mental health and psychological concerns connected to this issue should not be underestimated.

An enduring solution

Demolition of all affected homes is the only enduring solution to the ongoing health and safety risks to residents, workers and visitors posed by the continuing presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes and their attendant social, financial and practical consequences. In addition to expert advice about the technical difficulties in decontaminating affected homes, this approach recognises the practicalities of living in homes that cannot easily be worked on or maintained, the already manifest negative market responses from prospective renters and purchasers towards affected homes, the social isolation – self imposed and otherwise – of people fearful about contamination in their homes affecting family and tradespeople, and above all the risks to mental and physical health for residents.

The Taskforce is aware of a number of sale processes for affected homes that have collapsed, of personal carers refusing to enter affected homes to provide care to elderly residents, of banks withdrawing mortgage funding or valuing blocks at the unimproved value less the costs of demolition, and of tenants abandoning leases. The consistent advice of real estate agents reported to the Taskforce is that there is no prospect of renting out an affected home, or selling an affected home except at a significant loss.

The Taskforce considered and rejected the option of conducting a second remediation and cleaning program (recognising a first attempt at remediation was made in the joint ACT/Commonwealth Government program conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s). The works involved in such an attempt would likely entail a full internal demolition and rebuild: i.e. works not that much different to the works required to completely demolish an affected home. Attempting a second remediation would not, however, provide an enduring solution because it would inevitably leave loose fill asbestos fibres behind contaminating the sub-floor and attached to the remaining structure of the homes. These fibres would remain an ongoing risk to the health of residents, workers and visitors alike. This approach would not deal with the stigma already attached to affected homes, nor the attendant anxiety and mental health impacts of concerns for the safety and value of homes into the future. This outcome is already evident in relation to even significantly renovated and extended affected homes.

Most homes can, with significant effort, be rendered safe to occupy in the short to medium term but to do so will require a level of restriction of the normal use of a property, vigilance and ongoing assessment and remediation that is economically and socially unsustainable in the long term.

Design principles

The objectives of the Scheme are to:

- eliminate, by demolishing all affected homes, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation for homeowners, tenants, workers and the wider community
- provide a fair outcome for owners of affected homes
- provide so far as is possible and reasonable, flexibility and options for informed choices to be made by those owners
- minimise overall costs to the Canberra community and the ACT and Commonwealth Governments (thereby minimising the flow-on impact to other government policy and program delivery areas).

The Scheme's design emphasises fairness, safety, and environmental protection. The Taskforce will seek to promote opportunities for local business involvement and workforce development, and the creation of opportunities for training and apprenticeships in relevant industries and trades.

The Scheme has been designed with the following considerations in mind:

- an expectation that some families will elect to vacate affected homes immediately
- a similar expectation that some families will not wish to leave their homes (at least for a time if not at all)
- the expressed views of some affected families that at this stage they want to return to their blocks
- the unsustainable financial and emotional pressure being reported by families currently unable to live in their affected homes who are paying both rent and a mortgage
- the principle that Government should seek every safe opportunity to minimise its demolition and remediation costs and maximise its return on the eventual sale of clean blocks with a view to defraying the overall cost of the Scheme to the Canberra community.

The ACT Government will not contribute to the costs of rebuilding homes except through the offer to buyback affected homes at market value, nor will it provide financial compensation in relation to contaminated contents.

Funding

The Australian Government has provided significant financial assistance to the ACT Government to assist in funding the Scheme. The potential cash requirement of up to \$1 billion to implement the Scheme is equivalent to around one quarter of the ACT's total revenue base and roughly equivalent to the Territory's annual spending on health. It is also 25 per cent larger than the ACT Government's entire capital works program for 2014-15. To put this into further perspective, the potential cash requirement is comparable with a \$90 billion program for the Australian Government. This figure is broadly equivalent to the total amount of annual Commonwealth spending on health and education.

The Queensland floods and cyclones of 2010-11 cost an estimated \$7 billion, to which the Commonwealth contributed \$5.6 billion (including \$1.8 billion budgeted to be raised through a special levy). That total cost was of the order of 17% of Queensland Government revenue. The cost of the Scheme equates to around 22% of ACT Government revenue.

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Moreover, the net cost of the Scheme is still likely to be significant from the Territory's perspective. The currently expected net cost of between \$300 million and \$500 million represents around 10 per cent of the Territory's annual budget. These estimates will be particularly sensitive to movements in house purchase costs, and the complexity of demolition. Meeting this cost will require a reprioritisation of funding with a consequent impact on service delivery. The ACT Government has already identified the Scheme as one of its key infrastructure and capital works priorities along with the Capital Metro, health and education.

Timing

The Scheme is anticipated to take up to five years to complete, and the indicative timeline for implementation of the Scheme is set out in the following table.

<u>Timing</u>	<u>Anticipated Action</u>
2014	
October	agreement to adoption of harmonised work health and safety regulations for asbestos management
28 October 2014	Scheme announcement, Taskforce Report released
November	appropriation bill presented to Legislative Assembly
November	Buyback Program open
2015	
January	trial demolition processes commence
January	demolition program tender design process
30 June	Buyback Program closes
By July (subject to tenders)	demolition program commences

There are three key variables that will affect the time needed to complete all demolitions (which may be up to five years) including:

- the speed with which the Taskforce is able to acquire properties;
- confirmation of procurement and methodological approaches; and
- the capacity of the asbestos assessment and removal, and demolition and civil works industries to undertake the necessary works.

The Taskforce will continue to work closely with relevant industry bodies to provide greater clarity around capacity, staging and sequencing issues. Capacity in the asbestos removal and demolition industries in the ACT will need to be significantly increased to meet the demand created by the Scheme. A ramp-up period is expected to be evident through the first half of 2015. It is unclear at this stage how quickly affected homes can be demolished as that will depend on those industries' responses to the Taskforce's intended tender process.

The Taskforce will report quarterly to the Legislative Assembly and that reporting series, along with ongoing Taskforce communications, will provide updated schedules as appropriate.

Sequencing of Scheme elements

The sequencing for conducting the Scheme is:

- scheme announcement
- regulatory regime finalisation (in parallel with procurement and buyback program)
 - work health and safety regulation
 - demolition code of practice
 - appropriation bill
 - other legislative amendments
- procurement processes (in parallel with regulatory framework and buyback program)
 - asbestos assessors and removalists
 - demolition head contractors
 - property maintenance and security
- buyback program (in parallel with regulatory framework and procurement processes)
 - payment of emergency assistance packages
 - valuation and agreement to surrender the Crown Lease
 - settlement
- property security and maintenance processes
 - pre-demolition asbestos assessment
 - demolition
 - block remediation
- resale process to
 - Eligible Homeowners at market value
 - ACT Government Agencies
 - the market.

Buyback Program

Overview

Under the buyback element of the Scheme (Buyback Program or Buyback), the ACT Government offers to buy all homes in the ACT affected by loose fill asbestos insulation. Details of affected blocks will be published by the ACT Government in early 2015 to provide certainty as to eligibility and Scheme coverage. The buyback offer will be at market value as if the home did not contain loose fill asbestos insulation, and participation in the Buyback Program is voluntary at this stage.

The Scheme seeks to accommodate the individual circumstances of affected families, including in relation to assistance for those who wish to stay in their homes in the medium term, against the backdrop of the need for all affected houses to be demolished in that same time frame. With this in mind, compulsory acquisition processes available under ACT legislation will not be undertaken at this stage. The Taskforce will investigate and provide advice on regulatory options for intervention where Eligible Homeowners have not accessed the Buyback Program.

The approach to the buyback has been informed by experience with similar schemes undertaken in New Zealand, Victoria and Queensland in response to natural disasters.

Purchase process overview

The ACT Government is conscious of the desirability of supporting affected families in making informed choices about their future. It has released the Taskforce Report in full for this reason. It is expected that a significant number of families will choose to vacate their homes quickly and the Scheme's financing arrangements take account of a very significant cash impact in the 2014-15 Financial Year.

Applications to participate in the Buyback Program will close on 30 June 2015 with a view to facilitating the timely and efficient buyback and demolition of all affected homes. Acquiring all affected properties quickly will facilitate demolition tenders being staged to maximise efficiency and minimise costs and disruption to local communities.

The agreement regarding the Buyback will be formalised in a deed between the Territory and the Eligible Homeowner. The deed will set out the process by which the Eligible Homeowner will surrender to the Territory their Crown Lease subject to appropriate conditions. These conditions will include payment of a surrender sum which will in effect be the purchase price. The surrender sum will be determined independently by professional valuers. Valuers will be selected by the Australian Property Institute ACT Division (the Institute) for their experience and knowledge in particular suburbs, and the initial valuation process will be conducted at the ACT Government's cost. The process will be overseen by the Institute.

The deed's conditions will include a waiver by the Eligible Homeowners of rights to pursue legal action against the Territory and Commonwealth in relation to the property, but not personal injury for asbestos related disease that may manifest later.

The surrender sum will also contain an allowance for the Eligible Homeowner to take independent legal advice on the deed, and include adjustments for rates and utilities as would occur in a normal

house sale. Participants will be required to obtain independent legal advice and provide a certificate from their solicitor as evidence of receiving that advice as a precondition to surrender.

Buyback Program – framework

Scope

- The Buyback Program is only applicable to homes affected by loose fill asbestos in the ACT.
- Participation in the Buyback Program is voluntary.
- A condition of accepting the buyback offer will be Eligible Homeowners granting a release to the ACT Government and the Commonwealth from any future legal action in relation to the property but not personal injury claims.
- Applications to participate in the Buyback will close on 30 June 2015 (or a different date publicised by the Chief Minister with not less than three months notice). The Government will not, except in relation to a new missed house, agree to buyback any affected homes after that date. Surrender processes that have been commenced (i.e. the Eligible Homeowner has formally lodged an application to participate in the surrender process on or before 30 June 2015) but have not been completed, will continue to either settlement or expiry.
- Should missed houses come to light in the future, the Buyback Program will be extended to the registered owner at the time such a house is located.
- The Government will not reimburse any asbestos removal or demolition costs relating to affected houses incurred before 18 February 2014.
- The Buyback Program is only open to the registered proprietors of affected homes as at 28 October 2014 (or their successors in title through legal processes including probate, family court orders or in relation to bankruptcy). For the avoidance of doubt, the Buyback Program will not be extended to individuals or corporations that purchase an affected house after the date of announcement of the Scheme.
- All properties will be valued as at 28 October 2014 regardless of when the buyback actually occurs.
- Eligible Homeowners electing not to participate in the Buyback Program will be responsible for all asbestos removal, remediation, demolition and rehabilitation costs.
- In the event Eligible Homeowners elect to remain in their affected home in the medium term, they will in the future be subject to significant mandatory health and safety requirements at the owners' expense.

Staging and sequencing

- All Eligible Homeowners are able to participate in the Buyback from the commencement of the Buyback Program.
- Priority for buyback will be given to applications from families who have been advised to leave their homes before 28 October 2014 and to those families in circumstances where there is a particular urgency for settlement to occur (e.g. in relation to ill health, incomplete conveyancing processes).
- Other applications will be processed as far as practicable in order of receipt by the Taskforce.
- Eligible Homeowners can choose the point at which they apply to participate in the Buyback Program, but must do so before 30 June 2015.

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Valuation process

- Two valuations will be sought from a panel of independent valuers all of whom are members of the Australian Property Institute ACT Division.
- The Taskforce will pay for both valuations.
- The offer to buyback will be made at the average of the two valuations.
- The offer to buyback will remain open for acceptance for three months after the draft surrender deed is received by the Eligible Homeowner.
- Only one valuation process will be undertaken for each affected home in order to establish market value as at 28 October 2014 for all affected homes and limit opportunities for speculation on property price movements.
- The valuation methodology will ignore the presence of loose fill asbestos and minor maintenance or presentation issues.
- Market value is defined as the estimated amount for which an affected home should exchange on the date of valuation between a willing buyer and willing seller in an arm's length transaction after proper marketing with parties having each knowledgeably, prudently and without compulsion.
- The valuation figure will be calculated to include fixtures and fittings that would normally pass with the property and the added value of any unapproved structures or improvements under construction at 28 October 2014.
- Where an affected home is undergoing renovations which are incomplete as at 28 October 2014, the Buyback offer will be determined in an independent valuation including having regard to the amount of money paid for those works.

Disputed valuations

- In the event the Eligible Homeowner is not prepared to accept the average valuation they may, at their cost, elect to pursue a Presidential Determination overseen by the President of the Australian Property Institute ACT Division.
- The Territory reserves the right to request a Presidential Determination where the two initial valuations vary by more than 10 per cent.
- Where the Presidential Determination is activated, both the Taskforce and the homeowner will agree to be bound by the outcome before it is undertaken (even if it is lower than the average amount).

Surrender of lease (excluding unit-titled properties)

- Eligible Homeowners participating in the Buyback Program will be required to surrender the Crown Lease on their block in return for payment of the surrender sum.
- The agreement to surrender will be recorded in a deed between the Territory and the Eligible Homeowner.
- The Taskforce will provide \$1,000 (including GST) in addition to the surrender sum for Eligible Homeowners to engage legal advice and transactional support in relation to the deed and surrender of title process. Eligible Homeowners will be required to obtain independent legal advice and provide a certificate from their solicitor to this effect as a precondition to surrender.
- The surrender sum will be adjusted to take account of the usual rates/land tax and utilities adjustments that form part of a normal conveyancing process.

- Where an Eligible Homeowner has been advised to leave their home prior to 28 October 2014, the deed will record the decision by the Territory to waive rates/land tax from the date of that advice to vacate, and the surrender sum will include necessary adjustments.
- Any costs of special meter readings will be borne by the Territory. The Eligible Homeowner will pay for water consumption charges.
- Eligible Homeowners will be required to deliver vacant possession on the surrender date. Pre-settlement inspections will be conducted.

Stamp Duty and other ACT Government charges

- Eligible Homeowners will be entitled to a once only waiver of stamp duty on a future purchase of a property in the ACT.
- The amount of the waiver will be the amount equal to the amount of the duty that would have been calculated on the surrender sum.
- The stamp duty waiver will be able to be used by an Eligible Homeowner in the repurchase of blocks for owner-occupation only.
- All ACT Government transaction costs (e.g. removal of encumbrances on title etc.) will be waived or borne by the Territory.

Properties sold since 18 February 2014

- Where an affected home has been sold or agreed to be sold and contracts have been exchanged between 18 February 2014 and the 28 October 2014, the buyback offer will be at the agreed sale price as set out in the contract (i.e. there will be no valuation process).
- Where a conveyancing process has commenced but has not been completed between 18 February 2014 and 28 October 2014, the buyback amount may be allocated between the parties (e.g. where a deposit has been paid, the balance of the purchase price would be paid to the vendor, and the deposit amount paid to the purchaser).

Properties privately demolished between 18 February 2014 and 28 October 2014

- The full asbestos removal and demolition costs will be reimbursed where demolition has been completed, or contracts have been entered into for demolition, between 18 February 2014 and 28 October 2014.
- The market valuation of the demolished house (i.e. building only) will be reimbursed.
- The surrender of Crown Lease process will not occur.

Knock down/rebuilds and extended/renovated homes

- No financial assistance is available under the Scheme in relation to asbestos removal or demolition of affected homes completed before 18 February 2014.
- Blocks that had homes on them previously affected by loose fill asbestos insulation but which have been completely demolished or removed prior to 18 February 2014 are not considered to be affected homes.
- Affected homes that have been extended or renovated but retain any element of the original building are considered an affected home.

Appendix B**Solar panels**

- The ACT Government will seek to facilitate the transfer of existing entitlements to feed in tariffs from solar panels from an affected home to a new principal residence in the ACT for Eligible Homeowners. The ACT Government has written to ACTEW Corporation Limited in this regard.
- The ACT Government will not provide any financial assistance in relation to solar panels.

Compulsory acquisition

- The ACT Government already has the ability to compulsorily acquire land and/or order the demolition of buildings that pose a significant risk to health and safety.
- The ACT Government reserves the right to exercise powers to compulsorily acquire and/or condemn affected homes in the future in accordance with the relevant statutory processes.

Unit titled properties

- The Buyback Program extends to unit titled properties, although the number of such affected homes is small.
- The proposed surrender of Crown Lease process cannot be undertaken for unit-titled properties. The Taskforce will deal individually with each affected owner of a unit-titled property, but is likely to have to pursue a normal conveyancing process to give effect to the Buyback Program.
- Eligible Homeowners who own a unit-titled property will have access to a valuation process consistent with stand-alone homes.
- Approaches to demolition and remediation of unit titled properties will be determined on a case by case basis by the Taskforce in consultation with relevant bodies corporate.
- The Territory will assume liability for any future body corporate levies where applicable once it is the owner of the property.

Option to re-purchase

- Eligible Homeowners will have first right of refusal to repurchase their block (or part of their block) for owner-occupation at market value to be determined at the time the block is made available for resale.
- Eligible Homeowners will be able to apply their stamp duty waiver to the repurchase of their block when it comes available for re-sale (provided the stamp duty waiver has not already been used).
- Eligible Homeowners may be permitted to take up a land rent lease on their block in accordance with the eligibility criteria for that scheme.
- The timing of all blocks becoming available for resale will be determined by the Taskforce and Land Development Agency with a view to maximising the efficiency in the scheduling of demolition and in light of the ACT Government's broader land release program.

Other Issues

- The ACT Government will seek to facilitate financial institutions agreeing to waive early repayment fees on fixed mortgages and other bank charges, but will not refund them.
- The ACT Government will seek a private ruling from the Australian Taxation Office in relation to the application of Capital Gains Tax to properties surrendered under the Scheme.
- The ACT Government will seek to facilitate Australian Government Ministers and/or officials exercising discretion in relation to the application of eligibility criteria for Australian Government programs (e.g. for aged pension or application of asset tests) in favour of Eligible Homeowners. The ACT Government will write to the Commonwealth Government bodies in this regard.
- The ACT Government will write to utility providers seeking their assistance in providing assistance and fee waivers for disconnection or reconnection of services for Eligible Homeowners.

Appendix B**Continuation of emergency assistance package**

The Government will extend to owner-occupiers or tenant/s named on the relevant lease residing in an affected home as at 28 October 2014, emergency financial assistance of \$10,000 plus \$2,000 per dependent child living in the home at the point they choose to vacate an affected home. Only one package per household will be paid. It will be paid after the home is vacated.

Where some financial assistance has already been provided prior to 28 October 2014, the balance of the assistance package will be made available as a lump sum. This assistance remains available while the Buyback Program remains open.

Financial assistance will not be provided to people who take up residence in an affected home after 28 October 2014.

The Taskforce will not reimburse costs for any hazard reduction works conducted on an affected home after 28 October 2014, except where quotations already been approved by the Taskforce.

Home contents

This section is intended to assist residents in making informed choices about their possessions in homes affected by loose fill asbestos. It has been developed in consultation with the Chief Health Officer, the ACT Work Safety Commissioner and reviewed by a Dr Ian Gardner Senior Physician in Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Department of Defence. Residents of affected homes should read this section carefully and if they have any questions about what they should do with goods in an affected home, they should seek the advice of a licensed asbestos assessor.

There is no practical way to certify that household contents are not contaminated. Nevertheless, it is likely most household contents can be removed from most affected homes provided goods are not taken from known contaminated areas. The Taskforce and WorkSafe ACT encourage a measured and sensible response to the management of contents and household goods from loose fill asbestos homes by homeowners, businesses and the wider community.

Even where asbestos fibres have been detected in settled dust within living or storage areas of a home, expert advice to the Taskforce is that the health risk from possible exposure associated with moving goods from other areas of a home is low, but cannot be discounted.

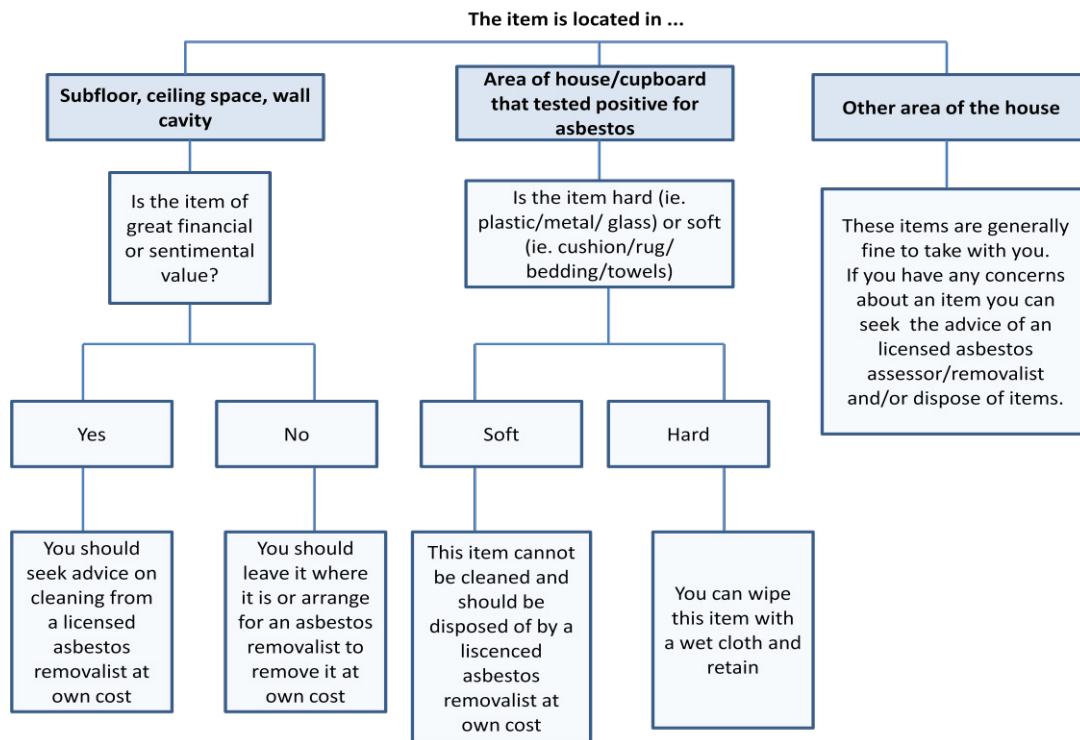
Expert advice provided to the Taskforce is that the risk to the community associated with potential contamination of contents in affected homes is similarly low.

Goods stored in sub-floor and ceiling areas, and in cupboards where fibres have been detected should not be moved or recovered unless they have been decontaminated by a licensed asbestos removalist.

A similar position should be adopted in relation to all contents of homes where residents have been advised to vacate, especially where fibres have been detected in air conditioning and heating ducts.

A suggested decision making approach is set out in the following figure:

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Goods stored in known contaminated areas?

Known contaminated areas include:

- wall, ceiling and sub-floor cavities
- areas where a licensed asbestos assessor has found fibres (e.g. cupboards)

Items that have been stored in a known contaminated area should be disposed of by a licensed asbestos removalist, or left in affected homes when they are vacated for proper disposal by the Taskforce. Soft items and fabrics that have been stored in a known contaminated area (such as soft furnishings, fabric items, soft toys, bedding, linen and clothing) cannot be effectively decontaminated.

Where highly valuable items have been stored in known contaminated areas, and disposal is not desired, specific advice should be sought (at the owner's cost) about the possibility of decontamination.

What can I clean and take?

Household contents in living areas of affected homes that are not known contaminated areas can be wiped down with wet cloths (e.g. baby wipes) before removal as a precaution. Goods of this nature also include:

- items replaced following remediation or hazard reduction works
- garden and outdoor furnishings and contents of exterior sheds

The Taskforce will not reimburse affected owners and residents for the removal of household goods or the costs of decontamination by licensed asbestos removalists of goods stored in known contaminated areas.

Minimising dislocation – education

With a view to minimising social dislocation the Education and Training Directorate will permit children to remain in their current schools where their family relocates under the Scheme if that is their wish.

Demolition and block remediation

Overview – timeframe and approach

The asbestos removal and demolition of over one thousand affected homes could take up to five years, but the actual timeline will be settled in light of the tender process and the actual response of affected homeowners in surrendering their homes. There is a clear need to increase the capacity of the asbestos removal and demolition industries to undertake a demolition program of this magnitude in a safe but timely fashion.

That said, it is desirable from an elimination of risk, as well as cost containment perspective, that affected homes are demolished as expeditiously as is safely possible. The actual timeline will be settled in light of the tender process and the actual response of affected homeowners in relinquishing their homes.

The Taskforce is working with industry on a range of considerations in relation to a demolition program. It has developed a draft code of practice for the asbestos removal and demolition of affected homes. This Code will apply the requirements of the National Code of Practice for the Removal of Asbestos to the specific situation of these affected homes. This Code is expected to be adopted as a regulatory instrument under *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and *Dangerous Substances Act 2004*. The Code is expected to be published by the Work Safety Commissioner as a guidance note in the interim.

Given the current industry capacity, and the need to conduct appropriate tender processes, it is unlikely any affected houses will be demolished before the end of 2014, beyond a small number to be done on a proof of concept basis to assess the efficacy of different approaches, the validity of the new code of practice, and estimates in relation to time and degrees of contamination.

Demolition and site remediation for all affected homes will be procured by the Taskforce to ensure:

- appropriate supervision and process control including in relation to prequalification standards, safety management systems, and active assurance and audit processes
- minimisation of costs to the Government including through efficient staging and sequencing
- consistent approaches to safety for workers, nearby residents, the community and the environment
- a standardised and cost-effective approach
- economies of scale.

Maintenance pending demolition

It is likely that some homes will be vacant for a period before they are demolished. The Taskforce will, in the interim, ensure arrangements are in place in relation to:

- removal and disposal of all remaining contents
- security
- maintenance – including gardens and lawns, fire risk, and vandalism or accidental damage.

Keeping neighbours informed

The Taskforce is conscious of the impact of the Scheme in the community, and on those living in close proximity to affected homes in particular. It will ensure robust mechanisms are in place utilising a range of methodologies to support neighbours and the community including through:

- provision of clear channels of communication and avenues for concerns to be raised with the Taskforce
- effective consultation and information provision in the lead-up to local demolition activity
- ensuring neighbours have somebody to contact if they are concerned about an unoccupied home

Staging and sequencing

The Taskforce will procure the demolition of all affected homes on a schedule designed to minimise costs to the ACT Government and disruption to the community, and in accordance with prescribed safety regulations. It is anticipated this will be done in tranches across districts to avoid the need to unnecessarily relocate equipment, and to minimise disruption to local neighbourhoods.

The safety of workers conducting the asbestos removal and demolition, and residents of neighbouring blocks, will be paramount considerations in the demolition program.

The Taskforce will engage head contractors to oversee the asbestos removal, demolition and block remediation process for groups of affected homes. The current proposal is to group affected houses to be demolished into tranches of around 30-50 (e.g. by suburb or district).

The final approach will be determined through the tender process the Taskforce will conduct.

Regulatory framework

The ACT Government has agreed to adopt the nationally harmonised work health and safety regulations for asbestos. In so doing, it will maintain the elements of the ACT's current asbestos management regime that exceed the requirements of the national laws. The benefits of this approach include:

- ensuring WorkSafe ACT is notified of asbestos removal or demolition work before it is commenced
- retaining licensing requirements for asbestos removal in domestic premises
- facilitation of mutual recognition of interstate licences
- amalgamating all high risk occupational licensing under WorkSafe ACT
- clarifying regulatory responsibility and reducing duplication in ACT legislation and regulation
- consistency with safety requirements of other jurisdictions
- provision for safety-based licence suspension provisions
- improving safety outcomes through requiring Class A asbestos removalists to have a certified safety management system and accessing a more experienced workforce
- adopting the two new national model asbestos codes of practice, including an updated Removal Code, adapted for the ACT

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- the ability to approve a specific ACT code on asbestos matters – including a demolition code for loose fill homes
- improved competency and training for licensed asbestos workers and assessors.

ACT-specific code of practice for demolition of affected homes

The Taskforce has already developed a draft code of practice for the safe demolition of affected homes that builds upon the National Code of Practice for Removal of Asbestos with ACT-specific requirements and suggested procedures to control the safety and cost of asbestos removal and demolition of affected homes.

The Code does not prescribe a rigid methodology for demolition as each home is different and requires a level of assessment and expert decision making on how best to demolish it in a safe manner. It is expected that this Code will be issued as a guideline before the Code has effect with the commencement of harmonised work health and safety regulatory regime in January 2015.

The Code is drafted to ensure that all asbestos (including loose fill asbestos insulation) is, so far as is reasonably practicable, removed, wetted or totally bonded before the demolition commences. This minimises any risks of fibre release during the actual demolition of the home. The Code also requires active dust suppression and air monitoring arrangements are in place.

Head contractors will be required to develop an asbestos removal control plan for each house and submit this to WorkSafe ACT prior to each demolition.

Minimum standards and methodologies will be reinforced through procurement processes that will ensure contractors engaged in the demolition and remediation works will be subject to active assurance processes applied to other ACT Government capital works projects.

Demolition methodology

Homes of different construction types will be demolished using substantially similar techniques. While actual decisions on appropriate demolition methodologies will be determined on a case by case basis as part of settling the site specific Asbestos Management Control Plan, most affected homes are unlikely to need to be demolished in a 'bubble'. The structure of the home will be used to form the containment enclosure for the asbestos removal process prior to the actual demolition process. All visible asbestos will be removed or bonded with glue prior to the structural demolition. The methodology will be subject to review once the trial demolition of properties is completed. A culture of continuous improvement will be promoted to enable contractors and regulators to learn and apply these learnings to the Scheme.

The need for removal of free standing structures such as sheds, and retaining walls and pools will be determined on a case by case basis (but will be included in the valuation).

Brick veneer

Brick veneer is the most common construction type, and thought to comprise 70-80% of affected homes. In general terms, for houses of this construction type:

- the skin of the home can provide its own containment barrier (i.e. the external brick wall, sealing and negative air flow, act as the enclosure)
- internal walls and ceilings will be removed prior to demolition to enable the bulk of the remaining asbestos insulation to be collected by vacuuming
- fibres that cannot be removed will be prevented from becoming airborne during demolition by adhering them to building materials
- dust suppression techniques (e.g. foam or water will be used during the demolition to suppress dust, residue and debris).

Double brick

Double brick homes comprise 15-20% of affected homes, and:

- these homes may be slightly more costly to demolish
- methodologies for adhering fibres within the cavity walls are being explored, but it may be the case that some homes of this type may need to be encapsulated to ensure that the external walls can be removed to enable remaining fibres to be vacuumed and disposed of
- once visible asbestos has been removed and remaining fibres bonded as described above, the remaining structure will be demolished with appropriate foam/water dust suppression

Other construction types

Consideration will also be given on a case by case basis to safe demolition approaches to other residence types (e.g. bonded asbestos, monocrete (usually asbestos containing material) or concrete tilt up construction).

Control mechanisms

The asbestos removal and demolition plan for individual residences will comply with the Asbestos Removal Code, the Code for the Safe Removal and Demolition of loose Fill Asbestos Homes, and Demolition Code and address the following issues as required:

- securing the site and erecting warning signs
- provision of fencing to prevent unauthorised site access
- controls used to capture any water runoff
- methods to decontaminate plant and equipment
- air monitoring
- allowance for weather conditions on site and monitor any changes like wind direction
- details of protective measures, including overhead protection and scaffolding required
- management of traffic
- informing neighbours of the activities prior to the commencement of the demolition
- details of waste storage and disposal.

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The plan will also include provisions for the transport and disposal of materials from the site including:

- ensuring materials are covered to prevent exposure during transport
- unloading of trucks at the waste facility being overseen by a licensed asbestos removalist
- monitoring of transportation of rubble to the disposal site.

Soil Remediation methodology

Following demolition of an affected home, soil will be removed from the footprint of the house and an area surrounding it in accordance with the methods and standard prescribed under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*. The code of practice for demolition includes a section on block remediation that requires:

- soil to be removed to a depth determined by testing undertaken by an asbestos assessors (but to a minimum of 100mm);
- clean soil to be brought to the site and stabilised by qualified civil contractors; and
- the site to be topsoiled and grassed to minimise erosion.

After remediation is complete, a new 99 year Crown Lease will be issued for the block.

This process cannot be applied to unit-titled properties. The Taskforce will liaise directly with Eligible Homeowners and relevant bodies corporate in pursuit of an equivalent outcome for owners and an acceptable resolution for the body corporate.

Waste Disposal

As is currently the case, friable asbestos and contaminated waste will be properly disposed of by licensed asbestos removalists, and demolition waste will be disposed of in appropriately equipped and licensed facilities such as the West Belconnen Resource Management Facility.

Rubble will be tipped under supervision of a licensed asbestos removalist, and subject to dust suppression. Waste will be covered with clean soil at the end of each day, and will ultimately be capped and grassed to prevent erosion and subsequent fibre release in accordance with EPA requirements.

Palmerston Dump Site

The waste from the original Commonwealth/ACT Government removal program is buried near Palmerston. That site was also used as a builders' rubble dump, to dispose of rubble from the former Royal Canberra Hospital, and on one occasion before self-government to dispose of household waste during a garbage strike.

The ACT Government is currently conducting a detailed survey to determine what additional works might be necessary to ensure asbestos and other waste is properly buried and the site maintained in a safe state in the future.

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Resale

The ACT Government will defray overall program costs through efficiency and cost containment in the demolition and remediation phase, and maximising returns on sale of remediated blocks. This principle underpins the Government's decision to provide for the unit-titling of dual occupancy development in RZ1 zones, and consider options for subdivision or consolidation of blocks where appropriate prior to resale.

Remediated blocks will be sold by the Land Development Agency as part of the ACT Government's land release program.

The staging of the demolition and remediation process, and the process for determining an appropriate schedule of land release will mean it may be a number of years before a particular block becomes available for resale.

Increasing the value of remediated blocks

The ACT Government will permit unit titling of dual occupancy developments in RZ1 Zoned areas on affected blocks only. While it is already possible to build such developments in that zone, it is not currently possible to unit title them.

The Environment and Planning Directorate has indicated most blocks larger than 700m² are conducive to such development. Around 88% of affected blocks are larger than 700m². This approach will not be adopted in heritage precincts, or where the characteristics of a particular block do not accommodate it.

This approach will not be pursued in heritage precinct, or where the particular characteristics of a block do not support it.

In some cases, consideration will be given to subdivision or consolidation of remediated blocks. There is a small number of locations where there is a cluster of affected blocks, sometimes contiguous to a number of ACT Housing blocks. The ACT Government is giving consideration to whether formal rezoning through a Territory Plan Variation would provide better opportunities for redevelopment and increasing the value of land sales.

Purchase of remediated blocks

Remediated blocks will be offered for sale at a time determined by the Taskforce and Land Development Agency:

- to the original owner for owner occupation at market value (off market)
- to territory entities including the Land Development Agency (LDA) and Housing ACT for the purposes of those agencies
- by the LDA on the market as part of the Government's land release program.

Eligible Homeowners will be permitted to take up a land rent lease on their block or part of a unit titled or subdivided block, if it is their wish to rebuild in the same location. They will also be permitted to use their stamp duty waiver on the repurchase of their block.

Management of homes where families choose to stay

There will be some homeowners who are willing to accept a level of risk in order to stay in their homes in the medium term. This may be due to the age of the homeowners (and the fact as expressed by some that they have lived in the affected home for many years already), an unwillingness to leave established links to their community, an unwillingness to move twice (i.e. into short term accommodation followed by a new home), or the perceived benefits in staying within close proximity to work, school or support networks.

Where a family wishes to make this choice, they will be required to undertake significant works to ensure their home is as safe as it can be for medium term accommodation. The ACT Government will mandate a program of sealing, remediation and cleaning under the *Dangerous Substances Act 2004* in 2015.

This approach is not, however, a practical long term solution. This issue is discussed in more detail in the Taskforce Report.

Necessary medium term responses

While it is technically possible to render affected homes safe to live in in the medium term, it is undesirable for continued occupancy to extend beyond a timeframe where the integrity of the home could be affected by the remedial action. For example, sealing all ceiling penetrations will result in limited air-flow which could result in condensation, damp, mould and increased risk of termite activity. Homes would also need to be subject to ongoing monitoring for risks to health and safety as well as deterioration of remediation measures.

This policy framework has been shaped by the technical advice of the Work Safety Commissioner.

Policy Framework

Under the sealing program:

- clear advice will be given to affected homeowners that an affected home poses ongoing risks to health and safety that homeowners accept by continuing to stay in the home – even once works are completed
- a detailed assessment will be undertaken of the particular house to develop a specific remediation work plan (noting the Taskforce Report – while reflecting a consensus of expert opinion – provides only generic advice)
- public funds will not be expended on remediation of homes that the ACT Government considers should be demolished (i.e. owners who refuse to leave will bear all the costs of staying)
- owners of affected homes will be required to inform every person who enters their home of its status and condition
- regular asbestos assessments at the owners' cost will be required to ensure ongoing efficacy of remediation work
- regulators will regularly inspect properties to ensure compliance.

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The medium term remediation works required will encompass measures to:

- restrict and seal access to the ceiling cavity
- restrict and seal access to subfloor including
 - basements and garages
 - storage areas and cellars
 - internal and external vents
- seal all fibre entry pathways from the ceiling to living areas including
 - all cornices and ceiling or wall cracks
 - internal cupboards and wardrobes
 - light fittings, down lights and exhaust fans
 - ducted heating and air conditioning vents
 - ventilation (e.g. bathroom vents, vents or gaps over fridges, microwaves etc.)
- seal all fibre entry pathways from wall cavities to living areas including
 - door frames
 - light switches
 - window frames
 - skirtings
 - cavity sliding doors (which would need to be sealed open)
- seal all fibre entry pathways from subfloor including
 - gaps or holes in floor boards
 - external or internal vents and grills
 - steps or decks that are exposed to the subfloor.

Interventions of this sort would significantly impact the amenity, functionality and liveability of affected homes including by:

- rendering down lights inoperable
- rendering many underfloor garages or storage areas unusable
- rendering exhaust fans, and air conditioning and heating systems inoperable
- affecting privacy
- impacting the long term integrity of the structure of homes.

It may also be necessary to ensure reasonable amenity and ongoing integrity of the physical building structure to undertake further works including:

- plumbing ventilation through the roof space or walls to outside to ensure adequate ventilation (such as in bathrooms and laundries)
- development of a comprehensive management plan (overseen by regulators) to ensure appropriate maintenance work can be undertaken (including access to the ceiling space and subfloor if necessary and under strict regulation)
- movement of essential services to a lower risk location (e.g. any services in the ceiling space and subfloor such as pilot lights, hot water system, electrical and data cables)
- purchasing alternate sources of lighting that do not require ceiling penetration
- purchasing alternate sources of heating and cooling
- additional longer term remediation – including intensive environmental clean, replacement of soft furnishings (including carpets and curtains).

These works will themselves carry significant risk of exposure to loose asbestos fibres and require significant safety controls to be in place.

Appendix B

Complaints

The ACT Government will, in keeping with arrangements that applied after the 2003 bushfires and during the 2008-09 stimulus package, seek to streamline approval processes for demolition and rebuilding work on affected blocks.

A package of necessary legislative changes will be presented to the Legislative Assembly shortly.

The ACT Ombudsman's Office has agreed to provide an independent complaints mechanism in relation to the Taskforce's work consistent with its general responsibilities in that regard.

Identification of affected blocks

Given the need to identify blocks that are subject to special planning and development control arrangements, as well as the owners of blocks to whom eligibility for Scheme components attaches, it will be necessary to publicly declare a list of affected blocks.

The ACT Government notes a number of historical and inaccurate versions of the list of affected houses are already in circulation.

The Taskforce has declined requests to publish the list of affected houses in light of homeowner requests for privacy and concerns about the value of affected homes. In light of the Scheme's establishment, the balance of arguments now sits with release, rather than withholding the list.

The Government will publish the list in early 2015.

Asbestos Response Taskforce

Scheme Delivery Closure

Final Report

26 May 2022



McGrathNicol

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DISCLAIMER

This report has been prepared for the Asbestos Response Taskforce in accordance with our agreed contract and approved work plan. This report should not be used for any other purpose or provided to any party, except as required by law, without our prior written consent.

We have not carried out a statutory audit and accordingly an audit opinion has not been provided. The scope of our work is different from that of a statutory audit and it cannot be relied upon to provide the same level of assurance as a statutory audit. Our conclusions are based solely on the information provided to us. We reserve the right to amend any conclusions, if necessary, should any further information become available.

Neither the firm nor any member or employee of the firm undertakes responsibility in any way whatsoever to any person or organisation other than the Asbestos Response Taskforce in respect of the information set out in this report, including any errors, omissions or negligence however caused.



1 Executive Summary

From the late 1960's to the end of the 1970's, a number of Australian Capital Territory ("ACT") residences were insulated with loose fill asbestos (known as Mr Fluffy). Inhaling loose fill asbestos is a significant health risk that can lead to a number of severe diseases including mesothelioma, asbestosis and pleural plaques.¹

The Commonwealth Government initiated a clean-up program between 1988-1993, which involved the removal of loose asbestos from the affected residences. However, in 2014 the ACT Government identified that loose fill asbestos fibres remained inside some Mr Fluffy homes.

In response, the ACT Government established the Asbestos Response Taskforce ("ART" or "the Taskforce") on 25 June 2014. The primary objective of the Taskforce is to provide a single contact point for people to access practical assistance, information and advice regarding properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation in the Canberra residential community.

As part of its initial role, the Taskforce, in conjunction with the ACT Government, was responsible for designing a Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme ("the Scheme") to address the identified loose fill asbestos risk. On 28 October 2014, the ACT Government announced that the Scheme: was to be administered by the Taskforce; and was underpinned by a \$1 billion loan from the Australian Government. The strategic objectives of the Scheme are to:

- eliminate, by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation for homeowners, tenants, trades people and the wider community;
- provide a fair outcome for owners of affected homes;
- provide, so far as possible and reasonable, flexibility and options for informed choices to be made by owners of affected homes; and
- minimise overall net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government (thereby minimising the flow-on impact to other government policy and program delivery areas).

The objective of this audit was to evaluate the achievement of strategic objectives of the Scheme, including:

- decision making, reporting and evaluation;
- community engagement and issues awareness; and
- the overall ability of the Taskforce to manage affected properties and land.

Overall, there are strong indicators that the Taskforce has been a successful steward in managing the achievement of the Scheme's strategic objectives, noting that the Scheme has not been closed and will continue to be administered by an as yet unspecified ACT Directorate following the cessation of the Taskforce. Specifically, the Taskforce:

- adopted a systematic approach to evaluating and reporting on the Scheme's performance. This provided a sound foundation for informed and effective decision making;
- established an effective approach to communicate with the homeowners, tenants, and former residents of affected and impacted properties. The Taskforce also facilitated the formation of community reference and support groups to support affected owners, residents, and tenants; and
- established and implemented an appropriate issues and change management approach.

Based on these findings, and the outcomes of previous Scheme phase audit reports and ACT Auditor-General report (see Appendix C for these report findings), the Audit Team considers the overall ability of the Taskforce to manage affected properties is appropriate and placed the ACT Government in a position to achieve the Scheme's strategic objectives. In particular, the Audit Team noted:

- 96 per cent of known affected properties have been demolished. This is a strong indicator that the Taskforce has almost eliminated, by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos; and

¹ Pleural plaques - thickening of tissue around the lungs; asbestosis - scarring of lung tissue; mesothelioma - malignant tumours that can develop around the lungs or intestine.

- the total net Scheme cost is only 27 per cent of the total \$1 billion loan from the Australian Government. This indicates that the Taskforce minimised the net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government.

The Audit Team identified a number of areas where the Taskforce managed the Scheme in accordance with better practice program management principles.² These areas of better practice include:

- when initiating the Taskforce in June 2014, the then Taskforce Head examined lessons learned from other disaster events when developing a strategic approach to administering the Scheme;
- during Scheme initiation, the Taskforce established objectives, outcomes, outputs, and performance measures that remained in place throughout the life of the Scheme;
- the Taskforce established a comprehensive and multi-levelled assurance framework from the outset of the Scheme. Establishing a robust and comprehensive assurance approach from the outset provided comfort to the ACT Auditor-General and the ACT Government, thereby reducing the amount of scrutiny required throughout the Scheme;
- during Scheme initiation, the Taskforce established a dynamic, and effective organisational structure that provided the then Taskforce Head with timely and accurate information to make informed decisions;
- the Taskforce had an effective risk management approach from the commencement of the Scheme; and
- the Taskforce developed and implemented an approach to Scheme quality planning, control, and assurance for each Scheme phase.

Although the Taskforce's approach to administering the Scheme was sound, the Audit Team identified areas where the Taskforce's approach could have been strengthened further. These are:

- the Taskforce did not report against the Scheme's documented strategic objectives, phase outcomes, phase outputs and phase performance measures systematically. That said, the Taskforce did collect performance statistics that provided an indication that Scheme strategic objectives were met;
- although the Taskforce records for each phase are kept, these records were not always easy to locate and retrieve. To address this issue, future Taskforces should define and adhere to a robust metadata taxonomy during Scheme initiation;
- although the Taskforce identified a transition approach (to wind-up the Taskforce) in its 2020 Governance Strategy, this transition approach did not include all closure activities consistent with better practice; and
- the preferred location for storing key Taskforce artefacts had not been determined at the time of audit fieldwork.

Based on the findings above, the Audit Team identified lessons learned from the Taskforce in Appendix F. This lessons learned document is a starting point and must be supplemented by specific lessons learned that have been identified by Taskforce staff. Once complete, Taskforce lessons learned can be accessed by ACT Government staff tasked with establishing future disaster response programs.

To address the findings above, the Audit Team made two "high" recommendations for consideration by future disaster response programs. The Audit Team also made one "high" and two "medium" recommendations for the Taskforce for transitioning the scheme to a yet unspecified ACT Government directorate after the closure of the Taskforce on 30 June 2022.

² The Audit Team referred to a number of better practice frameworks and methods throughout the audit. These included Axelos' Managing Successful Programs (MSP®) and PRINCE2®.

Appendix C

2 Recommendations

Future Program Recommendation 1

To provide appropriate assurance that future disaster response programs' strategic objectives and benefits are being delivered as intended, the Audit Team recommends that future ACT Government programs ensure that:

- program objectives (benefits), outcomes, outputs and performance measures are linked appropriately;
- performance measures are linked to the objectives of the program;
- performance measures meet the SMART performance measure criteria;
- performance measures that cannot be assessed, or are no longer relevant, are changed by obtaining approval from the governing body or steering committee; and
- specified performance measures are reported on systematically throughout the life of the scheme/program.

Rating

High

Future Program Recommendation 2

To minimise the effort required to establish and manage a new disaster response program or Taskforce, the Audit Team recommends that future programs consult the lessons learned:

- checklist included at Appendix F; and
- report developed by the Taskforce as part of its closure process (see Taskforce Recommendation 2).

Rating

High

Taskforce Recommendation 1

To align with program management better practice, and to provide transparency regarding the effectiveness of the Taskforce in achieving the Scheme's objectives, the Audit Team recommends the Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan includes an appropriate approach regarding:

- the notification of internal and external stakeholders regarding the cessation of the Taskforce;
- an assessment of the performance of the Scheme against its original objectives;
- the assessment of whether original Scheme benefits were realised, and the capture additional benefits realised by the Taskforce; and
- an approach for developing ongoing arrangements with service delivery partners.

Rating

Medium

Taskforce Recommendation 2

To ensure future Taskforce's and programs are provided with assistance to establish robust frameworks, systems, and controls to manage disaster responses efficiently and effectively, the Audit Team recommends the Taskforce:

- develop a lessons learned report as part of the Taskforce closure process which includes identified better practice and areas for improvement. This report can include the lessons learned checklist included at Appendix F; and
- ensure the lessons learned report is stored in a location that is easily identifiable and accessible. See Taskforce Recommendation 3.

Rating

High

Taskforce Recommendation 3

To increase the likelihood that key Taskforce information artefacts, including lessons learned, policies, frameworks and reports can be easily located by future disaster response programs Audit Team recommends the Taskforce:

- identify a suitable location within the ACT Government's information management framework to store key Taskforce information artefacts; and
- develop and apply a systematic and effective metadata taxonomy to each information artefacts so they are appropriately searchable and located easily.

Rating

Medium

Risk Rating	Category Description
High	Those matters which pose significant risks for the Taskforce and need to be addressed by appropriate level of management immediately from the date of notification of the matter/s.
Medium	Those matters which pose moderate risks for the Taskforce or matters that have been referred to management in the past and have not been addressed satisfactorily.
Low	Those matters, including lack of management control, project management and communication skills of a non-systemic nature, and which pose minor risk for the Taskforce.
BIR	<p>Better Practice Improvement Recommendation (BIR)</p> <p>The Internal Auditor considers that the recommendation, if implemented would result in a benefit to the organisation (for example, through a more efficient and/or cost effective processes, a reduction of expenditure or an increase in revenue), and is to be considered by management in a timely manner.</p>

Appendix C

3 Background and context

3.1 Origination of the Scheme

During the period 1968 to 1979, D Jansen & Co Pty Ltd (known as Mr Fluffy) insulated a number of Australian Capital Territory ("ACT") residences with loose fill asbestos.³ Responding to the dangers of Mr Fluffy homes, the Commonwealth Government initiated a clean-up program during 1988-1993. This involved the removal of visible and accessible loose asbestos fluff from the affected residences and sealing of all accessible roof and ceiling spaces with Polyvinyl Acetate ("PVA"). The program was thought to resolve the problem, and homes were declared safe to live in. However, 25 years on, in early 2014, the ACT Government discovered that traces of asbestos fibres remained inside Mr Fluffy homes.⁴

The task of completely removing asbestos from a large number of residential homes had not been successfully completed in either the ACT or in other parts of Australia. However, the ACT Government had developed extensive disaster response experience obtained from its management of the 2003 Canberra bushfires. Key lessons learnt from the 2003 bushfires that are relevant to the removal of asbestos from Mr Fluffy homes were:

- establishing effective communications with the community and other stakeholders;
- establishing a recovery Taskforce;
- providing immediate financial and accommodation relief to those residents that were significantly impacted;
- managing the demolition, remediation and where relevant the sale of blocks;
- implemented monitoring and management plans of affected and impacted houses that had not been demolished; and
- providing support for consultation for GP mental health plans and access to mental health services for "at risk" or affected persons.

In response to the identified emergency, the ACT Government established the Taskforce on 25 June 2014. The primary objective of the Taskforce was, and remains, to provide a single contact point for people to access practical assistance, information and advice regarding properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation in the Canberra residential community.

As part of its initial role, the Taskforce, in conjunction with the ACT Government, was responsible for designing the Scheme. During this Scheme design process, a decision was made by the ACT Government to remove the affected and impacted properties from the Canberra residential community. On 28 October 2014, the ACT Government announced the Scheme was to be administered by the Taskforce and funded via a \$1 billion loan from the Australian Government.

The Taskforce recognised that if it failed to deliver the Scheme as envisaged, there would be significant adverse consequences for the Canberra community. The key risks applicable to the delivery of the Scheme are:

- Safety – Unsafe or improper delivery of the Scheme could result in major injury or death;
- Financial – Significant funds have been loaned by the Commonwealth and invested by the ACT Government for the implementation of the Scheme following its establishment in 2014; and
- Reputational – Failure to achieve the objectives of the Scheme would have a detrimental impact on the reputation of ACT Government. There is added pressure given the Scheme is the second attempt to remediate the Mr Fluffy homes.

3.2 Overview of the Scheme

One of the first tasks of the Taskforce was to provide advice to the ACT Government and the public on approaches to securing an enduring solution to the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in affected homes. This advice was presented by the Taskforce in the August 2014 *Long Term Management of Loose fill asbestos Insulation in Canberra Homes* report. Once this report was provided to, and considered by, the ACT Government, the Taskforce developed

³ ACT Government, *Mr Fluffy and formation of the Taskforce*, online at: <http://www.asbestostaskforce.act.gov.au/about/history>

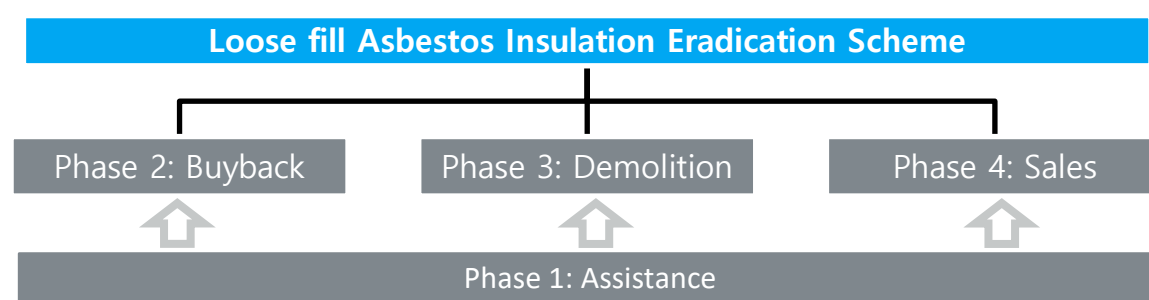
⁴ ACT Auditor General, *ACT Auditor-General's Report The management of the financial arrangements for the delivery of the Loose fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme Report No. 4/2016*, pp 75-76.

a high-level strategy and policy framework for the Scheme in *The ACT Government's Preferred Way Forward on Loose fill Asbestos* published in October 2014. This document specified the strategic objectives for the Scheme were to:

- eliminate, by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation for homeowners, tenants, tradespeople, and the wider community;
- provide a fair outcome for owners of affected homes;
- provide, so far as is possible and reasonable, flexibility and options for informed choices to be made by owners of affected homes; and
- minimise overall net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government (thereby minimising the flow-on impact to other government policy and program delivery areas).

To achieve these policy principles, the Taskforce divided the Scheme into following four phases.

Figure 1: The four phases of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme



Source: McGrathNicol analysis of Taskforce information.

A brief description of each of the four phases and the relevant results to 28 February 2022 is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Description of the four phases of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme

Phase	Description	Results to Date
Assistance	The primary objective of the Assistance phase was to provide information and support linkages to homeowners, residents of affected properties, and other ACT residents impacted by loose fill asbestos contamination. Although the Scheme commenced with Phase 1, activities under this phase continued throughout the duration of the Scheme. This work was primarily undertaken by the Taskforce's Personal Support Team ("PST").	To date, PST continues to work on closing contact for households who no longer require ongoing contact from the Taskforce and ensures all aspects of the Scheme are finalised. As at 28 February 2022, 1,264 cases had been concluded. The Pathways to Eradication Package ("Pathways Package") was implemented to support community safety and manage any affected properties remaining beyond 30 June 2020.
Buyback	Under the Buyback phase of the Scheme, the ACT Government purchased loose fill asbestos insulation affected properties in a timely manner and for an appropriate price. It is noted that the ACT Government purchased the majority of the affected and impacted properties. The property surrender deadline for the Scheme and voluntary Buyback Program was set at 17 August 2021. And on 3 June 2021, the ACT Government announced an Ongoing Scheme, and associated voluntary Buyback Program and associated initiatives, to commence on 18 August 2021.	With the Buyback Program now well-advanced, reporting on this phase of the Scheme has shifted to focus on the remaining affected and impacted properties. As at 28 February 2022, 1,011 affected and impacted properties were removed from Canberra streets and suburbs, and 37 properties remain (31 affected and six impacted).

Appendix C

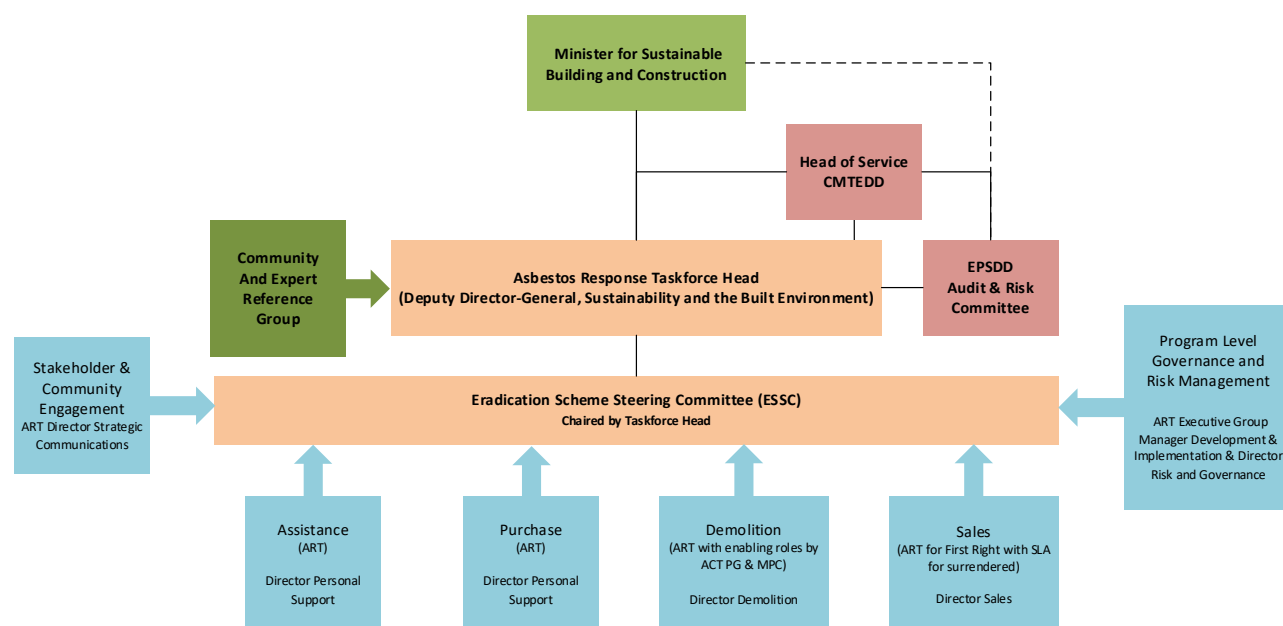
Phase	Description	Results to Date
Demolition	Under the Demolition phase, the Taskforce procured the demolition of all affected houses on a schedule designed to minimise costs to the ACT Government and disruption to the community, and in accordance with prescribed safety regulations. Activities included in this phase include securing properties, planning demolition activities, asbestos removal and demolition, and property deregistration under the Dangerous Substance Act 2004. Where possible, these properties were grouped together to gain demolition efficiencies and better engage with the industry.	The Taskforce continues to undertake the demolition of standard single dwellings as they become available, as well as progressing complex property demolitions. As at 28 February 2022, 1,011 properties have been demolished (998 affected and 13 impacted).
Sales	The Sales phase involved the sale of remediated properties either back to the original owners (First Right of Refusal), to the ACT Government, or to the open property market. This phase also included activities and property maintenance following a property's deregistration required to facilitate sale. The sale of these blocks assists the ACT Government to partially offset the overall cost of the Scheme.	The Taskforce continues to deliver the Sales Program that triggers the rebuild of affected communities and assists in minimising the overall cost of the Scheme with the aim of achieving cost neutrality. As at 28 February 2022, 967 contracts for sale had been exchanged (including 50 through First Right of Refusal sales, 26 direct sales to Housing ACT via asset transfer and 891 to the open market for public sales), and 965 of those contracts for sale had been settled.

Source: Eradication Scheme Steering Committee (ESSC) Report 28 February 2022 pp. 14-24

3.3 Scheme organisational structure

The Taskforce developed a high-level 2014 *Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure*. Although this structure was updated as part of the *Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme Revised Governance Structure in 2020*, it has remained substantially unchanged since the Taskforce's inception, and is shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Asbestos Response Taskforce Organisational Structure



Source: Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme Revised Governance Structure – August 2020⁵

The roles and responsibilities of the individuals, directorates and groups specified in Figure 2 are:

- **Responsible Minister:** has oversight of the outcomes of then Taskforce. Originally, the ACT Chief Minister was accountable for the delivery of desired Taskforce outcomes. In 2016, the Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction assumed accountability for the Taskforce's outcomes;
- **CMTEDD Head of Service:** In 2017, following a change in administrative arrangements, including the Taskforce reporting to the Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction, the Head of CMTEDD is advised on Taskforce activities and performance in addition to the Minister;
- **Head of Asbestos Response Taskforce:** has overall accountability and control for the Scheme;
- **Eradication Scheme Steering Committee ("ESSC"):** is primarily responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of risks controls, key milestone progress, value for money, community and stakeholder satisfaction, and overall performance. The ESSC includes appropriate representatives from the: Taskforce; Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate ("CMTEDD"); and Land Development Agency (now the ACT Suburban Land Agency ("ACTSLA")); along with ACT Government service delivery partners⁶
- **Community and Expert Reference Group ("CERG"):** is an information and reference group to the Taskforce and not a decision-making body. The CERG has provided the Taskforce with an alternative, independent source of expertise, information, feedback and advice on community and stakeholder sentiment and need, policy, delivery and emerging issues (see Section 3.5 for further information);
- **The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate ("EPSDD") Audit and Risk Committee:** is tasked with providing independent oversight and review of Taskforce risk management and fraud controls. In 2014, this role was performed by the CMTEDD Audit and Risk Committee; and
- **Taskforce Directors:** are responsible for the management of individual Taskforce Phases.

3.4 Scheme key stakeholders

The Scheme involved a variety of stakeholders across government, industry, impacted individuals and wider members of the community. These stakeholders can be broadly categorised into the following groups:

Table 2: Key Scheme stakeholders

Scheme stakeholder type	Stakeholder
ACT Government: Responsible for decisions on Taskforce and ACT Government Partner recommendations and receives advisement of relevant information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ACT Chief Minister (originally responsible for overseeing the Scheme). ▪ Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction (currently responsible for overseeing the Scheme). ▪ Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. ▪ Minister for Planning.
Taskforce: Responsible for the coordination of the Scheme and to provide a single contact point for people to access practical assistance, information and advice regarding properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation in the Canberra residential community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy Team. ▪ Finance Team. ▪ Communications Team. ▪ Personal Support Team. ▪ Phase-specific Teams.

⁵ CMTEDD stands for Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. EPSDD stands for Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

⁶ ACT Government service delivery partners include agencies such as WorkSafe ACT, ACT Property Group, and Major Projects Canberra.

Appendix C

Scheme stakeholder type	Stakeholder
ACT Government Partners: Provide existing resources and networks to deliver key aspects of the Scheme. A key focus of the ACT Government Partners was used to minimise duplication of function across the ACT Public Service, and to draw on the expertise and ACT Government systems already established.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CMTEDD. ▪ Community Services Directorate. ▪ Housing ACT. ▪ ESPDD. ▪ ACT Planning and Land Authority ("ACTPLA"). ▪ Procurement ACT ("Procurement"). ▪ Transport Canberra and City Services ("TCCS"). ▪ ACTSLA. ▪ Procurement Capital works ("PCW"). ▪ Major Projects Canberra ("MPC").
Industry partners: Many industry partners were consulted prior to the establishment of the Scheme's approach in order to determine the most appropriate strategy. Some of the industry partners were responsible for aspects of the delivery of the Scheme as coordinated by the Taskforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demolition Industry bodies. ▪ Demolition contractors. ▪ Asbestos assessors. ▪ Australian Property Institute. ▪ External sales agents.
Oversight and advisory partners / stakeholders: Consultation with relevant bodies assisted in determining the appropriate approach for the Scheme and partners, such as Worksafe ACT, had an ongoing and active role in the delivery of the Scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asbestos Regulators Forum. ▪ ACT Insurance Authority ("ACTIA") ▪ Justice & Community Safety Directorate. ▪ Act Government Solicitor. ▪ Worksafe ACT. ▪ ACT Auditor-General. ▪ CERG.
Affected community members: An affected property is a house that contains, or has contained, loose fill asbestos insulation. These parties are directly affected by the Scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Homeowners. ▪ Tenants. ▪ Former residents. ▪ Other members of the community (including those members of the community living close to an impacted property).

Source: Asbestos Response Taskforce Assurance Plan (July 2020) and additional Taskforce records. Appendix D lists key Scheme stakeholders as categorised above, illustrating their involvement in each Scheme phase.

3.5 Adverse impact of loose fill asbestos insulation

In October 2014, the then Chief Minister announced that affected properties would be demolished⁷ in order to provide an enduring solution to the removal of loose fill asbestos insulation from ACT homes. With many people having deep history and emotional ties with their home, some residents impacted were vocal about the distress of being asked to leave their home and the potential ongoing health impacts associated with loose fill asbestos exposure.

"I know how upset my husband was 23 years ago when we had to get out [for testing and decontamination], and for the first time ever, I'm glad he's not alive. I don't think I could do this - I don't know how I'd manage the problem we've got, plus his distress. I don't even let myself cry about it, because it just takes you down a path you don't need to be on"⁸

"The nagging bad dreams and horrible thoughts, the what ifs, what could we be doing, what's going to happen. Every cough that's a bit different – my husband has a nagging cough as well, and it's like where's that come from?"⁹

Once the Scheme was announced and the Taskforce commenced the remediation process, the mental health of some affected residents was impacted adversely.

⁷ <https://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2014/s4116544.htm>

⁸ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-30/mr-fluffy-homeowners-speak-out-against-buyback-scheme/6581860>

⁹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-14/mr-fluffy-asbestos-buyback-canberra/10355300?nw=0&r=HtmlFragment>

"I have been having a lot of mental health issues in terms of having anxiety attacks"¹⁰

"Our homes are like murder scenes. We can't sell our homes, we can hardly rent our homes. We are paying mortgages on homes that ultimately are worthless. People are beyond frustrated. They're angry, they're full of grief, their homes have been lost. They tell me it's like they are grieving the death of a family member"¹⁰

The emotional impact of remediation, demolition, and sale of homes on affected residents was profound. The Taskforce recognised this at the commencement of the Scheme, and engaged a clinical psychologist, Dr Gordon (with over 30 years' experience working with people affected by emergencies and disasters), to:

- develop strategies and host information sessions to help homeowners, tenants, and the community through the impact of Mr Fluffy on their lives; and
- assist Taskforce staff to understand the psychological complexities and to improve practices with working with affected communities and individuals.

Both the Australian and ACT Governments recognised however, that the consequences of not addressing this issue were unacceptable to the health and wellbeing of Canberrans. In some instances, the actions of both governments were too late for some residents, and inaction was not a viable option.

"Mr McConnell having lived for 45 years in an asbestos-contaminated house.... received his diagnosis of mesothelioma on the day the government announced it would buy and demolish all 1022 Fluffy homes in October 2014."

*His wife, Marion McConnell, remained angry with the federal government for not taking responsibility, despite early warnings about the dangers of the asbestos."*¹¹

3.5.1 Impact on Taskforce staff

Within this environment, initially, Taskforce interactions with the public were challenging. The emotions of community members often flared in public forums, and social media. This manifested itself in initial public campaigns against the Scheme, and against the Australian and ACT Governments.

Figure 3: Examples of protest materials



Source: Asbestos Response Taskforce, ABC News¹²

The heightened emotive nature of residents during the commencement of the Scheme was a risk to the Taskforce's workplace and the personal security of its staff. That is, due to the significant emotional turmoil faced by impacted persons, Taskforce staff were faced with individuals who were threatening self-harm. Taskforce staff also had to manage threats and intimidation from concerned and emotive members of the public, and heated conversations with impacted residents and homeowners.

¹⁰ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-28/mr-fluffy-billion-bailout-to-demolish-homes-with-asbestos/5845944?nw=0&r=HtmlFragment>

¹¹ <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6048302/act-drug-law-reformer-brian-mcconnell-dies-of-mesothelioma-after-years-in-a-fluffy-house>

¹² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-09/mr-fluffy-protest-sign/5877860?nw=0>

Appendix C

"I didn't think I'd need to have that level of protection doing my job"

"We had people who would be dealing with families who were, you know, threatening self-harm. We've had threats. I mean, we had to lock the building [...] down a couple of times for threats and put security on the doors. You know, there's a lot of stress and concerns that come with those types of things"

"It was pretty stressful. It took a personal health toll on most of the executives, just the level of anxiety and the hours"

"Some of our staff had death threats. We had to put security arrangements in place at the time at the front door. Some of our staff's houses were egged, letterboxes blown up, children picked on in school grounds by teachers who knew somebody who had a Mr Fluffy"

The Audit Team was advised that although the majority of these interactions were verbal, there were instances of physical assault on Taskforce members. To manage the safety of Taskforce staff, the Taskforce Executive arranged with the Australian Federal Police for appropriate security, and actively engaged with the community to establish a common understanding of the Taskforce's role and responsibilities regarding the Scheme.

3.5.2 Community groups established to assist impacted persons

To ensure open and collaborative interactions with the community, the Taskforce facilitated the formation of the CERG. The CERG provides a forum to explore community concerns and technical considerations in a positive, constructive environment. The role of the CERG is to:

- identify and communicate community issues in relation to the impacts of loose fill asbestos and to act as a conduit for this information to the Taskforce;
- act as a 'sounding-board' for the work of the Taskforce, particularly with respect to community communications and education programs;
- foster community involvement in the work of the Taskforce, such as supporting activities by industry and community organisations, and consideration of donations and offers of assistance from the general public; and
- provide information and advocacy, rather than be a decision-making body, for the Taskforce.

The membership of the CERG includes representatives of affected homeowners, Master Builders Association ACT, and community groups.

In addition to the CERG, a number of other community groups and individuals were supported by the Taskforce to maintain good working relationships with the community, even though some of those community groups were against Scheme policies. These groups and individuals included:

- a regular Walking Group;
- a volunteer group and seniors' social group who created a digital story telling project, Surrender, supported by Woden Community Services;
- a children's book resource, created by an affected homeowner; and
- two homeowner advocacy groups:
 - Fluffy Owners and Residents' Action Group ("FORAG")
 - Mr Fluffy Homes Full Disclosure Group ("Facebook group").

3.6 Previous audit coverage

Throughout the life of the Scheme, the Taskforce has recognised the importance of review and assurance activity. To date, there have been seven audits applicable to the Scheme, which have covered Scheme management, Buyback phase, Assistance phase, Demolition phase and the Sales phase. These audits are listed below:

- ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce Review, Price Waterhouse Coopers, September 2015;
- The management of the financial arrangements for the delivery of the Loose fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme, Auditor-General Report No. 4/2016, May 2016;
- Assurance Framework Review (Asbestos Response Taskforce), Synergy, July 2016;
- Close Out Evaluation of Buyback Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme, Synergy, May 2019;

- Assistance Phase Review Summary Report, Elton Consulting, April 2020;
- Close Out Evaluation of Demolition Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme, McGrathNicol, December 2020; and
- Close Out Evaluation of Sales Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme, McGrathNicol, February 2021.

A summary of the findings of these reviews relevant to this audit are detailed in Appendix C.

4 Audit objective, scope and approach

4.1 Objective and scope

The objective of this audit was to evaluate the achievement of strategic objectives of the Scheme, including:

- decision making, reporting and evaluation. This included:
 - adherence to standard operating procedures/or appropriate flexibility where warranted;
 - consistency of implementation against contracts, policy, mandates, and regulations;
 - risk identification and management;
 - reliability and integrity of financial and operational information; and
 - records management practices;
- community engagement and issues awareness. This included:
 - establishment of contact with, and provision of assistance to, affected owners and residents; and
 - offers to purchase affected properties from homeowners; and
- the overall ability of the Taskforce to manage affected properties and land. This included:
 - demolition and remediation of affected and impacted properties; and
 - release of land for sale.

The scope of work involved the review of the delivery of the Scheme in its entirety with a focus on aspects of the Scheme that could not be fully evaluated through a phase level audit, including governance; communications; overall strategic management of the Scheme; and appropriate scheme closure.

Please see Appendix A for a diagram of the objectives, criteria and themes that formed the basis for the development the audit plan and test program. These objectives, criteria and themes have their foundation in program and project management better practice including *Axelos' Managing Successful Programs (MSP®)* and *PRINCE2®*.

4.2 Approach

The approach to the audit included the following key activities:

- conducting audit interviews with relevant staff and stakeholders (see Appendix B for a list of interviewees for the audit);
- reviewing past performance audits of each Scheme phase, as well as whether recommendations for each performance audit were addressed adequately;
- reviewing and analysing public and internal Scheme guidelines, policies, and procedures relevant to each phase of the Scheme for comprehensiveness, completeness and consistency with ACT Government policy and legislation. This analysis also included flowcharting the processes and procedures to identify:
 - bottlenecks or impediments to the efficient operation of processes; and
 - gaps or differences between the way processes are performed in practice and processes by design;
- reviewing key Scheme management artefacts including: end of phase closure reports; end of Scheme closure reports; risk registers; issues registers; decision registers; lessons learned reports; follow on action recommendation reports; and deliverable / function transfer reports etc;
- assessing whether original Scheme benefits were realised, and deliverables / products were delivered;
- assessing whether appropriate change management processes were established to ensure any changes to the Scheme's benefits or deliverables were approved appropriately;
- examining the decision-making processes and documentation procedure for each Scheme phase;
- examining and assessing the method used by the Taskforce to promote, and educate the public about, the Scheme (and in particular, the Sales phase). This included the method used by the Taskforce to identify public education requirements;

- examining and assessing the communication strategy of the Scheme;
- conducting additional substantive testing activities to assess how operations are actually performed in practice against guidelines, policies, and procedures. This substantive testing included:
 - assessing whether Scheme closure processes were followed appropriately, including the development of appropriate closure artefacts; and
 - reviewing documentation or re-performing system-based processes.
- examining risk assessments applicable to the close-out of the Scheme against other documents gathered as part of audit fieldwork. This included assessing whether risk assessments were completed in accordance with ACT Government policy, and in accordance with the *International Risk Management Standards* (ISO 31000 and 31010). In addition, this aspect of fieldwork involved assessing whether identified risks were mitigated appropriately; and
- where measurable, quantifying the impact on operations of any gaps in the way processes are performed in practice, compared to processes by design.

5 Initiation of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme

5.1 Background

After the establishment of the Taskforce in June 2014, the Taskforce's recommendations for the management of loose fill asbestos were first documented in the *Long Term Management of Loose fill Asbestos Insulation in Canberra Homes* (August 2014). The desired outcome of the Scheme was to provide an enduring solution to the health risks posed by the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in homes.

As described in Section 3.5, the Scheme was initiated in an understandably emotive environment, with homeowners and residents sceptical about the ACT Government's approach to buying-back, demolishing and selling affected properties. It was therefore not only essential that the Taskforce established a systematic approach to initiating the Scheme, but it also listened to homeowners' concerns and took meaningful action to address those concerns.

In this section, the Audit Team examined whether the Taskforce successfully completed appropriate Scheme initiation activities to establish solid foundations for the Scheme to enable the Taskforce to understand the work that needs to be done to deliver the Scheme's strategic objectives (see Section 3.2), before committing to a significant spend. Specifically, the Audit Team assessed the Taskforce against recognised program and project management better practice¹³ including its:

- use of lessons learned from past disaster events;
- Scheme management method, including risk management, change control, and quality management;
- approach to establishing Scheme objectives, outcomes, outputs, and performance measures;
- internal and external stakeholder communication and engagement approach;
- Scheme funding approach; and
- organisational framework.

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 When initiating the Taskforce in June 2014, the Taskforce Head examined other disaster events when developing a strategic approach to administering the Scheme

As discussed in Section 3.1, removing asbestos from a large number of residential homes had not been successfully completed in either the ACT or in other parts of Australia. During the initiation of the Scheme, the then Taskforce Head recognised that examining what happens to communities after significant disaster events is one way of understanding the actions that can assist and hinder community recovery processes. In particular, reflecting on these disaster events provides valuable insight into what governments can do to actively facilitate the recovery process.

Between June and September 2014, the then Taskforce Head examined the ACT Government's approach to managing the 2003 Canberra Bushfires by consulting with experts that completed "lessons learned" reviews from that disaster event. Key administrative lessons learned from that disaster event included:

- establishing a taskforce with a pre-eminent Taskforce Head;
- initiating a community and expert reference group comprising members of: the affected community; business; unions; conservation experts; planners / architects; and politicians;
- developing a taskforce action plan which articulates the following key themes: support for the people; community participation; safe, timely clean up; facilitating rebuilding; up to date information; and learning lessons;
- identifying and analysing risk factors;
- clearly articulating recovery worker roles and accountabilities; and
- building effective working relationships between community groups and recovery workers by organising joint community events (see Section 3.5 for further information).

¹³ As discussed in Section 4.1, the better practice methodology used by the Audit Team includes *Axelos' Managing Successful Programs* (MSP®) and *PRINCE2®*.

Further, the then Taskforce Head also examined a large remediation program to inform the Taskforce's approach to managing the Scheme (namely the Commonwealth Government's Home Insulation Program ("HIP")). Based on the reviews of these disaster and remediation events, the Taskforce Head wrote to the then Chief Minister in September 2014 to articulate the rationale for, and strategic direction of, the newly formed Taskforce. Specifically, the Taskforce Head identified five main areas that needed to be addressed during the initiation of the Scheme:

- a) selection of staff and taskforce capability;
- b) provision of frank advice;
- c) governance arrangements and accountabilities;
- d) risk management and fraud control; and
- e) communications.

Noting that managing the acquisition, demolition, and sale of a large number of remediated blocks had not been attempted in Australia up to that point, the Audit Team considers that the Taskforce seeking out lessons learned and better practice from other remediation and disaster programs and using those lessons to inform risk identification and its strategic management approach, represents better practice.

5.2.2 **Although a recognised better practice program management methodology was not used to initiate the Scheme, many features of better practice program management methods and techniques were used throughout the Scheme's initiation**

Better practice program management specifies that a sound program initiation process is crucial to provide adequate assurance that work effort is not aimless and unstructured.

In December 2014, the Taskforce further articulated which (individuals and organisation areas) would be responsible for managing key Scheme governance functions in its high-level 2014 *Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure*. In particular, the 2014 governance structure document highlights the Taskforce's intention to establish better practice program management areas covering:

- risk management (see Section 6.2.3 for further detail);
- change control (see Section 6.2.7 for further detail);
- quality management (see Section 6.2.6 for further detail); and
- communication management (see Section 5.2.5 to 5.2.6 for further detail).

The documented approaches for each of the governance functions above was not developed until sometime after Scheme initiation. However, based on interviews with past and current Taskforce staff, and on a review of Taskforce documentation, all of these better practice program management elements were considered, and incorporated into the Scheme's administrative approach.

5.2.3 **During Scheme initiation, the Taskforce established objectives, outcomes, outputs, and performance measures that remained in place throughout the life of the Scheme**

As discussed in Section 3.2, shortly after the establishment of the Taskforce in October 2014, the Taskforce produced *The ACT Government's Preferred Way Forward on Loose fill Asbestos* to assist the public to understand the role of the Taskforce, Scheme phases, and initial timeframes. This document was designed to provide an easy-to-understand overview of a complex scheme that was described in significantly more detail than in the Taskforce's *Long-Term Management of Loose fill Asbestos Insulation in Canberra Homes* report.

Importantly, *The ACT Government's Preferred Way Forward on Loose fill Asbestos* identified the Scheme's four objectives (see Section 3.2) that remained unchanged throughout the life of the Scheme. In December 2014 (six months after the Taskforce was established), the Taskforce developed a documented governance structure¹⁴, that:

- described the roles and responsibilities of key people and governance bodies (including the ESSC¹⁵);

¹⁴ This governance structure was described in the Taskforce's *Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure*.

¹⁵ The high-level role of the ESSC is described in Section 3.3. A more detailed assessment of the ESSC is in Section 6.2.1.

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- specified the organisational structure applicable to the Scheme, and how the Taskforce fitted into that structure; and
- briefly described the roles and functions of some ACT Government and industry partners – see Section 3.4) within each phase.

In addition, the documented governance structure also specified clearly:

- the outcome for each phase;
- performance measures to assess whether outcomes for each phase had been achieved; and
- outputs relating to each phase outcome.¹⁶

Although the Taskforce did not document how each Scheme phase related to the Scheme's strategic objectives, the Audit Team considers that the achievement of the specified phase outcomes will likely result in realisation of the Scheme's objectives (and the overall success of Scheme). Therefore, monitoring and reporting on phase outcome performance should provide a meaningful measure of overall Scheme performance.

The Taskforce's approach to measuring the achievement of the Scheme's strategic objectives is discussed further in Sections 6.2.2 and 7.2.4 below. The Taskforce's approach to monitoring and reporting on the phase outcomes is discussed in Section 6.2.4.

5.2.4 The Taskforce established a comprehensive and multi-levelled assurance framework from the outset of the Scheme. Establishing a robust and comprehensive assurance approach from the outset provided comfort to the ACT Auditor-General and the ACT Government, thereby reducing the amount of scrutiny required throughout the Scheme

An effective assurance framework promotes transparency and accountability to build confidence that the objectives of the Scheme are being achieved and whether there are significant risks. Importantly, establishing a robust assurance framework during Scheme initiation provides comfort to both the ACT Government, and independent audit organisations (such as the ACT Audit Office), that the Scheme will be managed appropriately throughout its life.

The 2014 *Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure* specified the utilisation of the well-established CMTEDD Audit and Risk Committee and the ESSC to provide independent oversight and scrutiny of the Taskforce's assurance activities (see Figure 4 below). The then Taskforce Head noted that, given the high profile and emotive nature of the Scheme, it was essential that, in addition to existing assurance structures, additional controls needed to be established as part of a transparent and robust Taskforce specific assurance framework. This assurance framework (established during Scheme initiation) addressed the "three lines of defence"¹⁷ and included:

- consulting with work health and safety experts from the outset when developing 1st line controls;
- consulting with commercial litigators when developing 1st line controls;
- establishing frameworks to hold taskforce staff accountable, and for ensuring accountability of key industry, ACT Government, and oversight partners¹⁸ (1st line controls);
- establishing the assurance structure based on the organisation that was responsible for work health and safety laws (2nd line controls);
- establishing governance to record key decisions, including documenting discretionary decisions so there is confidence in decision making processes (2nd line controls); and
- establishing a robust Scheme audit program (3rd line controls).

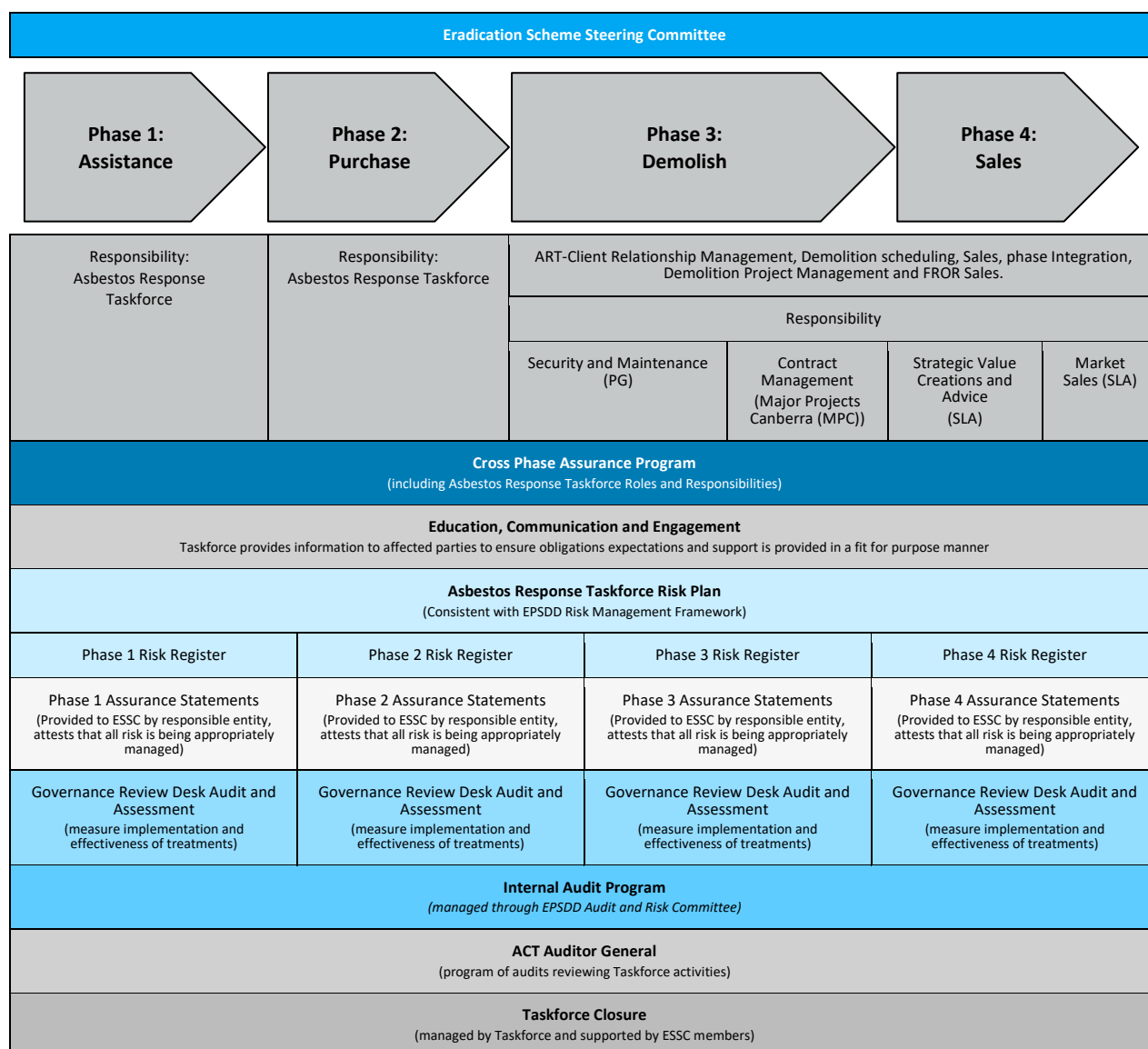
¹⁶ See Appendix E for the outcomes, performance measures and outputs for each phase.

¹⁷ The "Three Lines of Defence" model has been endorsed by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) and explains the assurance relationship between: Management Controls (1st line); governance, risk, and compliance functions (2nd line); and internal audit (3rd line).

¹⁸ See Table 2 above regarding the various partners applicable to the Taskforce and Scheme.

Although this assurance approach was initially undocumented, following recommendation by ACT Government Audit Committee in September 2015¹⁹, the Taskforce introduced an Asbestos Response Taskforce Assurance Plan in November 2015. This assurance plan documented the Taskforce's approach to the responsible administration and delivery of the Scheme, and which is summarised in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: The key elements of the Scheme assurance program



Source: Asbestos Response Taskforce Assurance Plan – July 2020

Key features of the Scheme's assurance framework are:

- assurance statements by Responsible Directors. These assurance statements are provided monthly to the ESSC, and provide a written declaration that 1st line controls are operating appropriately;
- internal governance reviews, desktop audits and assessments by Taskforce staff; and
- independent audits conducted by EPSDD Internal Audit and the ACT Auditor General. This included internal audits for each Scheme phase (see Appendix D).

¹⁹ PricewaterhouseCoopers, September 2015, *ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce Review*. A summary of the findings of this audit are contained in Appendix D.

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In May 2016, the ACT Auditor General conducted an audit of *The Management of the Financial Arrangements for the Delivery of the Loose-Fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme*.²⁰ This audit found that the:

- planning for and management of the financial arrangements for the implementation of the Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (the Scheme) has been effective;
- Taskforce's approach to governance and risk management reflects better practice; and
- Taskforce has developed processes and procedures which provide a structure for managing and re-assessing the implementation of the Scheme, including expenditure and commitments.²¹

Providing the ACT Auditor-General with comfort early in the life of the Taskforce, combined with an ongoing Scheme phase audit program, resulted in the ACT Auditor-General not revisiting the Scheme over the following six years. That is, establishing a transparent and robust assurance approach during Scheme initiation reduced the work effort usually associated with ACT Auditor-General audits.

Further to the above, the Audit Team considers that the Taskforce assurance approach incorporates elements of the *ISO9001:2015 Quality management systems — Requirements* standards and is consistent with ACT Government Risk Management Policies.

5.2.5 The Taskforce established an effective approach to communicate with the homeowners, tenants, and former residents of affected and impacted properties

The process of identifying and communicating effectively with people or groups who have an interest in a program / scheme forms part of an effective engagement strategy.²² A better practice approach to communicating with these people or groups facilitates engagement through the establishment of a controlled and bidirectional flow of information and contains a description of the means and frequency of communication.²³

As discussed in Section 3.5, the establishment of the Scheme in 2014 resulted in significant discomfort amongst homeowners, tenants, and former residents regarding how the Scheme would be administered, and whether their interests and concerns regarding the Scheme would be heard (and acted upon) by the Taskforce.

During the Scheme's initiation in August 2014, the Taskforce developed an *Asbestos Response Taskforce Communication Strategy* (Phase 1) aimed specifically at homeowners, tenants, and former residents. This document also addressed communications with other groups including tradespeople, real estate agents, insurance companies, financial institutions, general community, and the media. This document included a description of Taskforce's:

- overarching communication approach. This approach was broken down further into the Taskforce's: response to inquiries; information dissemination; and education of stakeholders regarding the dangers of asbestos;
- target audience (which included anticipated concerns or interests);
- communication approach and method;
- issues and risk management; and
- monitoring and evaluation of the communications.

Notably, the communication strategy identified a range of communication channels to be used by the Taskforce including:

- a web and social media presence;
- a central email address for communicating with the public;
- regular e-newsletters;
- call centre management through Canberra Connect;

²⁰ ACT Auditor-General's Report No. 4/2016, *The Management of the Financial Arrangements for the Delivery of the Loose Fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme*. A summary of the findings of this audit are contained in Appendix D.

²¹ *Loc. cit.* p.1

²² AA100 Stakeholder Engagement Standard 2015 p 5.

²³ Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 2017 Edition p 299.

- a registration process and Customer Relationship Management System for tracking progress of individual cases; and
- community forums and written communications.

Although the strategy provided a framework for the Taskforce's communications with the people and groups specified above, it did not describe in detail who (that is, which members of the Taskforce) would be responsible for managing the specified communication channels. Further detail was provided in September 2014, when the Taskforce Head advised the then Chief Minister that the Taskforce's PST was the frontline for communications with the public regarding requests for information from affected families and the wider community.²⁴ Although at that time the PST's role was still evolving, it was broadly responsible for:

- frontline engagement with affected homeowners regarding all aspects of the scheme;
- connection available information, practical and financial assistance;
- connection to community support for affected households;
- focus on social recovery;
- community engagement and education with the public & community partners; and
- running engagement with complex properties engagement.

Based on feedback from both community representatives (in particular the CERG), the creation of the PST was essential to communicating with homeowners, tenants, and former residents effectively. Representative examples of the feedback regarding the PST from CERG representatives included:

- *"...the establishment of the PST was a hallmark of the Scheme in so far as that the case management approach involved working one-on-one with each and every family or individual whose property was affected."* the community representative thought the PST was a standout of the scheme and it provided real support to the community.
- *"...PST staff came from a wide range of backgrounds and experience to cater for the wide range of calls received by the Taskforce. All staff were very dedicated to their task and provided tailored and individual advice and support to the public. The thing that's very impressive is how each PST staff member would follow issues from beginning to end and not leave individual homeowners with unresolved issues."*

Noting the above, the Taskforce: established an appropriate client communication strategy in the early stages of the Scheme; opened up a range of communication channels to ensure members of the public and other stakeholders had access to relevant information; and established and allocated time and resources to a PST that was focused on the individual needs of affected homeowners, tenants, and former residents. The Audit Team considers the Taskforce's communication approach was appropriate and had elements of established better practice.

5.2.6 The Taskforce identified, and engaged with, key ACT Government stakeholders early in the Scheme's life

As shown in Section 3.4, the Scheme has over sixteen ACT Government and industry partners (internal stakeholders) that are essential to the delivery of individual Scheme phases and/or the management of the Scheme overall. Although it was recognised by the then Taskforce Head in 2014 that managing these key stakeholders was essential to managing the Scheme well, the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, and how they would interact with the Taskforce were not documented.²⁵

This issue was identified in the September 2015 Internal Audit Report into the Taskforce (see Appendix D) that recommended the Taskforce *"develop an internal stakeholder strategy, including identifying all stakeholders and their significance"*. In its response to the 2015 Internal Audit recommendations, the Taskforce stated that it had completed the internal stakeholder strategy in October 2016. However, this document could not be found by the Taskforce when requested by the Audit Team. Several Taskforce staff (including one who was present in 2015) were confident that the strategy had been produced but could not be retrieved due to limitations with the Taskforce's document management system at the time.

²⁴ See Section 3.2 Table 1 for further information regarding the PST.

²⁵ As shown in Figure 6 below (see Section 5.2.9)

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That said, there was evidence that the Taskforce, across a number of documents, did specify the roles and responsibilities for the Scheme's internal stakeholders. These documents (in total) identified the key roles and responsibilities of individual stakeholders and the dependencies between these stakeholders. The Audit Team has summarised these roles, responsibilities, and dependencies at Appendix D.

Documenting the roles, responsibilities, and dependencies of key internal stakeholders early in the Taskforce's life assisted the Taskforce to:

- plan for Buyback, Demolition and Sales phases of the Scheme well in advance of each phase occurring. In particular, articulating the roles, responsibilities and dependencies of key internal stakeholders assisted the Taskforce to develop its planning centre map and schedule which mapped every identified Mr Fluffy property, its status, and what activities (by stakeholder) were required at any given point in time during the Scheme;
- develop service level agreements and other arrangements between the Taskforce and key internal stakeholders where required. For example, the service level agreements between the Taskforce and Worksafe ACT for the oversight and ongoing safety of the public and those people involved in demolition activities; and
- plan for hiring and coordinating contractors (for example, demolition contractors) whose activities needed to be coordinated with other ACT Government partners.

Figure 5: The Taskforce's "Bomber Command" planning centre



Source: Asbestos Response Taskforce file photographs

The Audit Team considers that although the Taskforce did not document the roles, responsibilities, and dependencies of the key internal stakeholders during Scheme initiation, addressing the recommendations of the 2015 internal audit (see above) assisted the Taskforce to develop an internal stakeholder strategy, which assisted their planning and execution of each phase of the Scheme.

While this approach is consistent with better practice, ensuring important artefacts (such as the Internal Stakeholder Strategy) are agreed by stakeholders and stored appropriately provides additional assurance that internal stakeholders were managed appropriately. Records management is discussed further in Section 6.2.9.

5.2.7 The Taskforce facilitated the formation of community reference and support groups to support affected owners, residents, and tenants

Based on the experience of the 2003 bushfire taskforce (see Section 5.2.1), the Taskforce recognised the importance of consulting with, and seeking direction from, affected members of the community. In addition to the range of communication activities discussed in Section 5.2.5, the Taskforce and the ACT Government recognised the integral role a community reference group could play in realising the success of the Scheme.

On 17 July 2014 (close to the commencement of the Taskforce), the Taskforce Head wrote to the ACT Chief Minister requesting that a CERG be established to explore community concerns and technical considerations in a positive, constructive environment. The role of the CERG was to:

- identify and communicate community issues in relation to the impacts of loose fill asbestos, and to act as a conduit for this information to the Taskforce;
- act as a 'sounding-board' for the work of the Taskforce, particularly with respect to community communications and education programs;
- foster community involvement in the work of the Taskforce, such as supportive activities by industry and community organisations, and consideration of donations and offers of assistance from the general public; and
- provide information and advocacy, rather than be a decision-making body, for the Taskforce.

The composition of the CERG was to include a prominent Canberran to chair the group, and include a diverse range of members covering homeowners, unions, industry group representatives, and relevant senior ACT Government staff (including the Work Safety Commissioner and Chief Health Officer). The CERG's membership at its establishment comprised the following.

Table 3: Membership of the CERG

Member	Representing
Dr Sue Packer	CERG Chair. Paediatrician and former Canberran of the Year and Senior Australian of the Year.
Mr Chris Redmond	Woden Community Service and homeowner.
Mr Ron Bell	Real Estate Institute of Australia ACT.
Mr Paul Kelly	Chief Health Officer of the ACT.
Ms Chris Healy	Former Director of the ACT Bushfire Recovery Centre and homeowner.
Mr Jason Jennings	ACT Branch President CFMEU.
Mr Jerry Howard	Master Builders Association of the ACT.

Source: CERG Charter of Action, 20 February 2015 p.11.

Upon commencement, the CERG met monthly, and examined a wide range of issues. At the time of this audit, and leading up to the dissolution of the Taskforce, the CERG had a range of issues it was examining that are recommended to be followed up by the new body responsible for the Taskforce's activities. Examples of issues to be followed up include:

1. conducting a follow-up of a 2015 Asbestos Health Study;

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2. completing an Asbestos Disease Assistance Plan;
3. providing ongoing support for families and access to mental health services and GP services; and
4. monitoring of, and assistance to, the ANU PhD scholars who are beneficiaries of the government scholarship and grants to study Mr Fluffy.

As discussed in Section 3.5, in addition to the formal work undertaken by the CERG, CERG members were also involved in a range of initiatives to assist members of the community manage the impacts of the Scheme on their day-to-day lives. These activities included: a regular walking group to discuss issues; interactions with homeowner advocacy groups; a volunteer group; and seniors social group.

Previous Taskforce Heads recognised the important role the CERG has served throughout the Taskforce's lifecycle, examples of which include:

"The Community Expert Reference Group had a nice blend of people who had lived the experience, not just professionals giving theoretical advice. It was actually lived experience that we were able to use to inform some of our work. So having the expertise of the Taskforce and the combined lived experience of the CERG was terrific."

"Sue Packer and her group were really valuable to us because they provided a strong connection to the broader community and the affected people. They were deliberately chosen because they had that connection to the community, with some of them having houses that were affected. So, the importance of actually getting community groups involved in the in the process [Scheme] was critical."

The CERG members themselves also consider that the CERG is an essential connection point for the community and an important part of the Scheme. An example of this recognition is provided below:

"The plan was for the taskforce people to tell us what they were planning next and for us to use our combined experience and knowledge. To ask pertinent questions, and for them to think about, and to give advice, on ways to [manage the Scheme]. This was extremely helpful."

Based on the type of work undertaken by the CERG and their interactions with the community, interviews with former and current senior Taskforce staff, and members of the CERG, establishing a community reference group at the initiation phase of the Scheme was an essential element of engaging with the community. This represents better practice. Given the emotive nature of the public's response to the Scheme, not engaging with the community effectively from the outset would have impacted adversely on the Taskforce's ability to administer the Scheme throughout its life.

5.2.8 Funding commitments were obtained early from the Commonwealth Government by providing detailed and logical models justifying the funding request

Based on interviews with senior staff responsible for the Taskforce's initiation, an essential element of establishing the Taskforce was securing funding early. Obtaining enough funding early in the Taskforce's life enabled Taskforce staff to establish the frameworks, systems and controls and secure contractors to undertake affected property demolition and remediation as and when required.

In September 2014 (approximately two months after the Taskforce's inception), the then Taskforce Head wrote to then Commonwealth Department of Employment regarding a funding request for buyback and demolition works applicable to all Canberra Homes affected by loose fill insulation. Accompanying this letter was a detailed costing document that included:

- a comprehensive explanation of the loose fill asbestos challenges in the ACT;
- the *raison d'être* for the Scheme and Taskforce;
- an explanation of the request of a \$1 billion loan from the Commonwealth Government for the buyback, demolition, and remediation of affected properties. This was supported by a description of the program design, staging and sequencing of Scheme phases, and description of disposal methods; and
- Scheme financial modelling including a list of assumptions underpinning the modelling.

The objectives and approach specified in the Taskforce's loan proposal was consistent with the Scheme's objectives, outcomes, and outputs (see Section 5.2.3). This provided a clear link between the Schemes funding and the approach the Taskforce used to realise the Scheme's objectives.

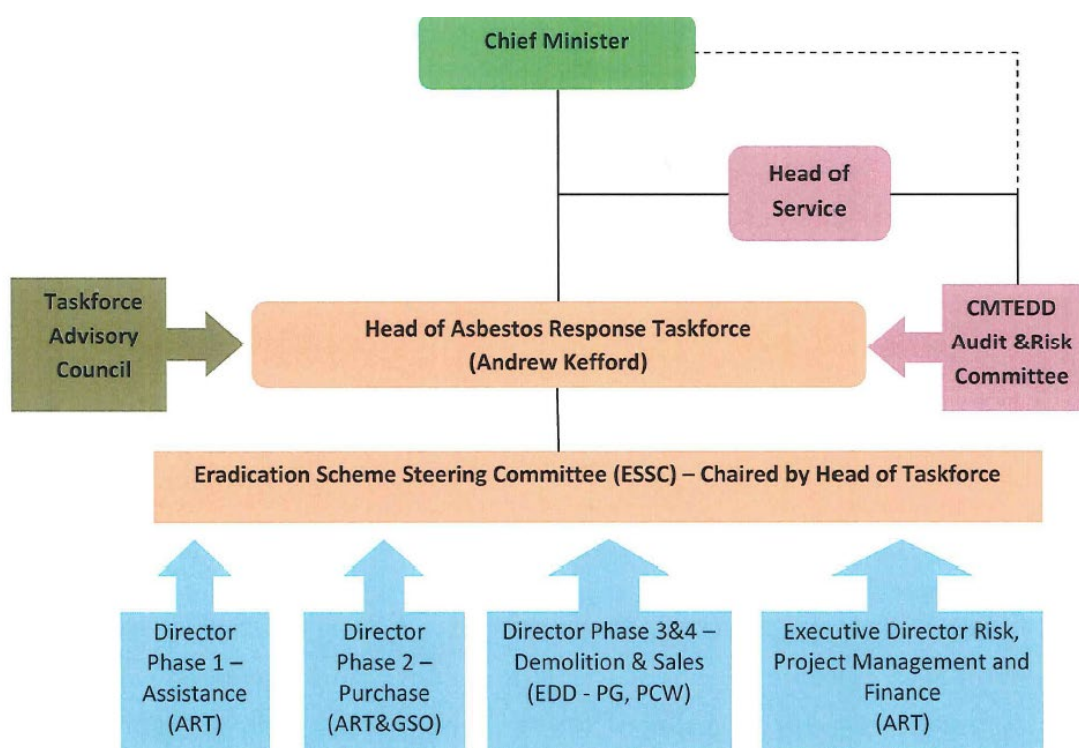
Based on the sound loan proposal produced by the Taskforce, the Australian Government signed the \$1 billion proposal in January 2015 (approximately five months after the Taskforce's proposal was lodged). Former senior Taskforce staff noted that obtaining the loan this early into the Scheme's life was essential to ensuring; high-quality Taskforce staff were engaged quickly (from the outset of the Scheme); Scheme frameworks and controls were established; and stakeholders (including demolition and remediation contractors) were consulted and engaged early.

The Audit Team considers the Taskforce's approach to securing loan funding early by producing a compelling funding proposal, underpinned by financial modelling, is consistent with better practice program initiation.

5.2.9 During Scheme initiation, the Taskforce established a dynamic, and effective organisational structure that provided the then Taskforce Head with timely and accurate information to make informed decisions

During Scheme initiation, the Taskforce Head established and documented an organisational structure based around the four Scheme phases and supported by a range of experts from within and without the ACT Government. This original organisational structure is shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Original 2014 Taskforce organisational structure



Source: Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme Governance Structure – December 2014

Based on interviews with a range of former Taskforce staff (at all levels), the above organisational structure was effective in establishing the Taskforce quickly and supported timely and accurate decision making by senior Taskforce staff. In particular the:

- then Taskforce Head had direct access to the Chief Minister, and was able to obtain approvals for decisions in a timely manner;
- Taskforce had an organisational structure that allowed staff at all levels to interact with the Taskforce Head. This allowed risks and issues to be escalated and managed quickly;
- then Taskforce Head was physically located in the same area as Taskforce staff. This allowed the Taskforce to create the planning centre (see Figure 5 above), which provided all staff (including the Taskforce Head) with an up-to-date picture on the progress of the Scheme at any given point in time; and
- then Taskforce Head had access to a range of internal and external subject matter experts through the ESSC (see Section 6.2.1) and through the temporary embedding of government partners within the Taskforce. This

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assisted decision making and provided a conduit for the Taskforce Head to manage issues affecting other ACT Directorates.

The organisational structure shown in Figure 6 has remained similar to the Taskforce's structure at the time of the audit (see Section 3.3 Figure 2). This is a testament to the effectiveness of the original Taskforce's organisational structure, and the structure's ability to adapt to changes in the work being completed during any given phase.

Given the enduring nature of the original Taskforce organisation structure, coupled with the structure's facilitation of timely and accurate decision making, the Audit Team considers that the Taskforce's organisational structure was appropriate for the initial and ongoing management of the Scheme, and is consistent with better practice.

6 Managing and controlling loose fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme phases (Assistance, Buyback, Demolition, and Sales)

6.1 Background

As described in Section 5, the Taskforce completed appropriate Scheme initiation activities to establish solid foundations for the Scheme to deliver its strategic objectives (see Section 3.2), before committing to a significant spend.

In this section, the Audit Team examined whether the Taskforce had appropriate arrangements to manage and control the four phases of the Scheme. In particular, the Audit Team assessed the Taskforce management of the Scheme against the following eight areas:

- oversight and governance approach;
- reporting and monitoring approach;
- use of stage gates approach;
- risk management approach;
- quality management approach;
- team management approach;
- assurance framework; and
- records management approach.

6.2 Findings

6.2.1 The Taskforce established an effective steering committee to advise the Taskforce Head and oversee the delivery of the Scheme

An effective assurance framework promotes transparency and accountability, and provides a mechanism for effective management and decision making. An effective program board or steering committee has a responsibility to assure itself that the program is being conducted correctly and specified benefits are being realised.

As the overall accountability for the Scheme sits with the Taskforce Head, as discussed in Section 3.3, the Taskforce Head established a governance structure that was centred around the ESSC. Consistent with better practice, the Taskforce Head (who has ultimate accountability for the Scheme) was the Chair of the ESSC, which had the following functions:

- monitor key milestone progress and performance for the four phases of the Scheme;
- monitor and control the Scheme's budget through approvals and funding releases across the four phases;
- monitor the effectiveness of identified scheme risks and controls;
- monitor community and stakeholder satisfaction and engagement with the Scheme; and
- request and receive recommendations from responsible phase Directors on the Scheme's delivery.

The ESSC comprised members with an appropriate range of skills and expertise to oversee the management of the Scheme. In particular, the ESSC includes representatives from key stakeholder groups (see Section 3.4) including:

- General Planning and Sustainable Development;
- ACTSLA;
- CMTEDD; and
- MPC.

ESSC meetings are held monthly and are well structured and managed. Standard agenda items discussed at ESSC meetings include:

- Scheme progress (for each phase);

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- risk monitoring;
- work health and safety issues;
- key performance measures;
- policy and regulation monitoring; and
- Scheme finances.

Based on an examination of the ESSC papers, the Audit Team considers that from the establishment of the Scheme in 2014, the ESSC has been presented with relevant and timely performance reporting information upon which it can make informed decisions regarding the management of the Scheme and Taskforce overall. Further information on ESSC reporting is found Section 6.2.2 below.

In addition, the Audit Team considers that the composition of the ESSC was appropriate to assist the Taskforce Head to make appropriate management decisions regarding the Scheme. Based on the Audit Team's analysis, the ESSC was managed in accordance with program board better practice.

6.2.2 **Although the Taskforce did not report against the established performance measures within its monthly ESSC reports, these reports contained information that supported the assessment of the Scheme against its four strategic objectives**

Effective reporting is critical to ensure that key stakeholders, including project management and oversight partners (that is, the ESSC), have clear visibility of the program status and the ability to track program performance against its milestones.

As discussed in Section 5.2.1, the Taskforce developed a documented governance structure which specified: the outcome for each phase; performance measures to assess whether outcomes for each phase had been achieved; and outputs relating to each phase outcome (see Appendix E for the phase outcomes). However, the Taskforce does not report against these outcomes, outputs, and performance measures for each of the four phases in monthly ESSC reports or other management reports.²⁶

Although the Taskforce does not report against every established outcome, output, and performance measure for each of the four phases, monthly ESSC reports do include statistical information that could be used to assess whether the Taskforce is achieving the four Scheme strategic objectives. Based on the information contained in the monthly ESSC reports, information that could be used to assess whether Scheme strategic objectives were achieved is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Scheme Strategic Objectives and Performance Measures

Strategic objectives	Statistical information contained in ESSC reports
Eliminate, by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation for homeowners, tenants, tradespeople, and the wider community.	Number of properties purchased by the Taskforce.
	Number of properties that have been demolished.
	Number of properties that have been deregistered.
Provide a fair outcome for owners of affected homes.	Number of properties purchased by the Taskforce.
	Volume and values of Assistance packages provided.
	Total number and value of stamp duty concessions.
	Interactions between the Taskforce's PST and clients.

²⁶ Based on the examination of a number of monthly ESSC reports, the Audit Team notes that the outcomes for the Demolition phase are included in these reports. However, the outcomes for other three phases are not included in the monthly ESSC reports.

Strategic objectives	Statistical information contained in ESSC reports
Provide, so far as is possible and reasonable, flexibility and options for informed choices to be made by owners of affected homes.	Number of properties purchased by the Taskforce.
	Total number and value of stamp duty concessions.
	Interactions between the Taskforce's PST and clients.
Minimise overall net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government (thereby minimising the flow-on impact to other government policy and program delivery areas).	Total Scheme net cost.
	Total sales value of the remediated properties.
	Number of properties with exchanged sales contract.
	Number of properties that have settled.
	Average cost per property.

Source: Eradication Scheme Steering Committee meeting papers, March 2022.

While the statistical information above are not performance measures, based on interviews with key ESSC members, the Audit Team was advised that monthly ESSC reports (which includes reporting against the statistics above), provided members with the information they required to monitor, and make key decisions regarding, the Scheme.

That said, the Audit Team considers that based on the outcomes, outputs and performance measures specified in Appendix E, ideally the Taskforce should have:

- updated its original phase outcomes and outputs to link to the Scheme's strategic objectives;
- changed its original outcomes and outputs where they were not able to be measured meaningfully (based on the statistical information collected by the taskforce); and
- amended its original performance measures so they meet the SMART²⁷ performance measure criteria. This includes removing performance measures that are not based on the statistical information contained within ESSC reports.

Noting there is no specific reporting against the Scheme's strategic objectives, outcomes and outputs, the Audit Team conducted analysis of the statistical information contained in ESSC monthly reports against the Scheme's strategic objectives to provide a high-level assessment of whether the Taskforce realised the strategic scheme objectives. This analysis is contained in Section 7.2.4.

Future Programs Recommendation 1

To provide appropriate assurance that future disaster response programs' strategic objectives and benefits are being delivered as intended, the Audit Team recommends that future ACT Government programs ensure that:

- program objectives (benefits), outcomes, outputs and performance measures are linked appropriately;
- performance measures are linked to the objectives of the program;
- performance measures meet the SMART performance measure criteria;
- performance measures that cannot be assessed, or are no longer relevant, are changed by obtaining approval from the governing body or steering committee; and
- specified performance measures are reported on systematically throughout the life of the scheme/program.

Rating

High

²⁷ Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound.

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Future Programs Recommendation 1

Management response and due date for implementation

6.2.3 The Taskforce had an effective risk management approach from the commencement of the Scheme

Risk management refers to the coordinated activities to direct and control an entity with regard to risk. An effective risk management framework refers to a set of components that provide the foundations and entity arrangements for designing, implementing, monitoring, reviewing and continually improving risk management throughout the organisation.²⁸

As discussed above, the Taskforce developed a high-level December 2014 *Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure*. This structure specified the utilisation of the existing CMTEDD Audit and Risk Committee to provide independent oversight and review of the Taskforce's risk management and fraud controls, and the use of the ESSC to monitor effectiveness of risks controls. During the initial emergency response, the Taskforce relied on existing CMTEDD structures, policies, and guidelines.

Taskforce staff advised that lessons learned from the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program were considered when developing the Taskforce's risk framework. Specifically, considerable attention in ensuring the Royal Commission's findings on risk, governance, communication, safety, and the requirements of industry to assist the Taskforce were incorporated into risk controls and operational management frameworks.

In August 2015, the Taskforce developed and implemented an *Asbestos Response Taskforce Risk Management Plan* (the Taskforce Risk Management Plan). This plan documented the framework used by the Taskforce to identify, assess, monitor, and report on Taskforce risks at the strategic, phase and program/operational levels.

The Taskforce Risk Management Plan is consistent with the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Risk Tolerance Statement* which specifies that '*risk is inherent in all Taskforce functions and elimination of all risk is not practical or appropriate and risk management principles are to be integrated in all aspects of Taskforce work*'. The Risk Management Plan, along with three other stand-alone plans, were updated to reflect recommendations in response to the May 2016 ACT Auditor-General's Report (see Appendix D). This report recommended that the Taskforce ensure sound governance arrangements remain in place as the Scheme continues to mature and a quality plan is developed to strengthen controls for ensuring the desired levels of compliance and behaviours.⁴

The Taskforce Risk Management Plan also included comprehensive instructions to develop risk registers. In accordance with the Taskforce Risk Management Plan, the strategic risk register and individual Scheme phase risks registers were developed and maintained throughout the life of the Scheme.

Risk registers were developed in conjunction with relevant Taskforce and key ACT Government stakeholders and industry partners (see Section 3.4) that have responsibilities for delivering outcomes in the various phases of Scheme activities. These stakeholders and partners were also engaged by the Taskforce to identify and assess relevant risks to provide assurance that:

- the context for each phase is defined appropriately;
- accountable staff are involved throughout the risk management process and therefore understand the basis for decisions and actions required; and
- stakeholder perceptions of risk are considered and addressed.

Based on stakeholder consultations and documentation reviewed, the Taskforce monitored risks throughout the life of the Scheme and updated its risk management framework to reflect any changes to the risk profile of the Scheme. Specifically, in line with the CMTEDD Risk Policy, the Taskforce conducted a significant review of the Phase Risk

²⁸ International Organization for Standardization, ISO/FDIS 31000:2018 *Risk management - Principles and Guidelines*, p.2.

Registers, which involved conducting risk workshops and formally reviewing the entire program and ensuring that identified issues were being appropriately managed.²⁹

The workshops resulted in the amendment of Taskforce Risk Registers that were consistent with the CMTEDD Risk Management Framework and the *International Standard for Risk Management* (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018). The phase specific risk registers are owned by the Taskforce's Executive Group Manager and managed by the Director responsible for each phase. Other characteristics of the phase level risk registers include:

- the Audit Team notes that this framework is based on, and is consistent with *ISO/FDIS 31000:2018 Risk management – Principles and Guidelines*;
- the majority of phase specific risks as at the June 2021 review are linked to higher-level strategic risks specified in the Asbestos Response Taskforce Strategic Risk Register;
- all phase risks have a clearly identified owner;
- the phase level risk registers are provided to the ESSC for review, and any changes to the risk registers are provided to the ESSC for consideration;
- at each ESSC, all key Taskforce Executives sign-off that all risks identified in Taskforce risk registers are being managed and reported in accordance with the Taskforce Risk Management Plan.

Based on the documented evidence as described above, the Audit Team considers the Taskforce's risk management approach appears to be sound and is consistent with the *AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines* standard and the CMTEDD Risk Management Framework.

6.2.4 The Taskforce used audits that were equivalent to stage (phase) reviews, and associated EPSDD Audit and Risk Committee and ESSC monitoring, to manage and control the progress of the Scheme

Better practice specifies that stage gates are useful to control and manage the progress of a program or project. That is, the delivery of a project can be divided into different phases that are interdependent and sequential. As discussed in Section 3.2, shortly after the establishment of the Taskforce in October 2014, the Taskforce divided the Scheme into following phases:

- **Phase 1 - Assistance.** Under the Assistance phase, the Taskforce's PST provided information and support linkages to homeowners, residents of affected properties, and other ACT residents impacted by loose fill asbestos contamination. Although the Scheme commenced with Phase 1, activities under this phase continued throughout the duration of the Scheme.
- **Phase 2 – Buyback.** Under the Buyback phase of the Scheme, the ACT Government purchased loose fill asbestos insulation affected properties in a timely manner and for an appropriate price.
- **Phase 3 – Demolition.** Under the Demolition phase, the Taskforce procured the demolition of all affected houses on a schedule designed to minimise costs to the ACT Government and disruption to the community, and in accordance with prescribed safety regulations.
- **Phase 4 – Sales.** The Sales phase involved the sale of remediated properties either back to the original owners (First Right of Refusal), to the ACT Government, or to the open property market.

To ensure the Scheme achieved its four strategic objectives (as detailed in Section 3.2), the Taskforce developed appropriate governance structures for each of the four phases and effectively maintained these phases throughout the life of the Scheme. This conclusion is supported by the:

- end of phase internal audits (see Appendix C). As discussed in Section 5.2.4, each phase included an internal audit to review phase effectiveness and determine whether desired outcomes and outputs were delivered. The results of these audits, which were generally positive, are found at Appendix C;
- the review of phase internal audits and other Taskforce activities by the EPSDD Audit and Risk Committee; and
- monthly ESSC reports that are prepared highlighting key activities and statistics for each of the four phases (as noted above).

²⁹ The Audit Team notes that the Taskforce completed a similar comprehensive review of its strategic and phase level risk registers in June 2021, which included four workshops with all Taskforce staff.

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The Audit Team considers that the Taskforce's phased approach was appropriate and consistent with better practice.

6.2.5 Although not documented clearly by the Taskforce, the Scheme's benefits can be derived from the Scheme's objectives, and achievement of these benefits can be derived from the Scheme's performance reporting

Under better practice, a benefit is the measurable improvement resulting from an outcome perceived as being an advantage. A benefits management approach defines the actions and reviews put in place to provide assurance that the program's (Scheme's) outcomes are achieved, and confirm that the program's benefits are realised.

Although the Taskforce did not document Scheme "benefits" as part of its governance documentation (see Sections 5.2.2 to 5.2.4), some of the Scheme's objectives (see Section 6.2.2) could be reworded to articulate the Scheme's benefits. For example:

- by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation for homeowners, tenants, tradespeople, and the wider community was eliminated;
- owners of affected homes were provided with a fair outcome;
- owners of affected homes were provided with flexibility and options for informed choices following the demolition of affected houses; and
- the net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government [of the Scheme] were minimised.

As discussed in Section 5.2.4, the Taskforce established a "benefits management approach" by defining up-front, a comprehensive assurance framework. This framework specifies the actions and reviews the Taskforce put in place to obtain assurance that the Scheme's objectives will be achieved, and its benefits will be realised. As discussed in Appendix C, the end-of-phase internal audits identified the following regarding Scheme benefits management:

*"Whilst it is acknowledged that not all benefits for this project are binary and easily quantified, there does [sic] remain some scope for further documentation for those benefits that are quantifiable for the Territory that are derived from the sale prices of the impacted houses."*³⁰

*"Outcomes and performance measures have been identified for each of the four phases which are considered fit-for-purpose. Whilst these aren't measures that can be quantified and baselined, the objective of the taskforce is removal of Mr Fluffy houses. The benefit that will be measurable is about maximising the return/lowering the cost of the outcome."*³¹

*"For the performance measures developed in 2014, and those developed in 2020, there is no documented evidence that the Taskforce systematically reported on these indicators, or specifically reported on the achievement of many phase specific outcomes [and overall Scheme objectives]. That said, there is documentary evidence that the Taskforce reported information to the ESSC that is aligned to these measures and outcomes. In addition, the Taskforce collects significant amounts of data that indicates that each phase has been managed efficiently and effectively."*³²

The Audit Team's findings above are consistent with the end-of-phase audit findings above. That is, although the Taskforce's benefits can be derived from its objectives, and the Taskforce does not specifically assess whether these objectives have been achieved (see Section 6.2.2), the Taskforce does report statistical information to ESSC that could be used to determine the Taskforce's performance in realising its objectives.

Ideally, the Taskforce should conduct a final assessment of whether it has realised the benefits specified above when the Taskforce is disbanded, and include this assessment in a final closure report. This issue, and the Audit Team's assessment of whether it has been achieved, is discussed further in Section 7.2.4.

6.2.6 The Taskforce developed and implemented an approach to Scheme quality planning, control and assurance

Quality management refers to the means by which the Scheme will verify that outputs are fit-for-purpose. Quality management comprises:

³⁰ Price Waterhouse Coopers, September 2015, *ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce Review*, p. 14.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² McGrathNicol, November 2020, *Close Out Evaluation of Demolition Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme*, p. 21.

- Quality planning. This refers to the approach taken by the Taskforce to obtain agreement by the ESSC on the overall quality expectations.
- Quality control and assurance. This is used to verify that products meet their quality criteria. This provides a check that the project's (Scheme's) direction and management are adequate for the nature of the project and that it complies with relevant corporate, programme management or customer standards and policies. Quality assurance is therefore independent of the project.³³

To ensure consistent quality is maintained and adequate quality controls and assurances are in place, the Taskforce developed and maintains an *Asbestos Response Taskforce – Quality Plan* ("Quality Plan") which defines:

- *"what quality controls and assurances will be incorporated into the management and delivery of the Scheme;*
- *who will be responsible for carrying out these activities;*
- *what criteria will be used to assess quality;*
- *how the Scheme will meet required audit and organisational standards; and*
- *how the Scheme supports quality improvements incrementally and overtime."*

The Quality Plan specifies that the Taskforce Head is accountable for all aspects of Scheme quality and is responsible for the day-to-day monitoring and assurance of quality to the Executive Group Manager (Development and Implementation). Further, it is noted that the Quality Plan requires Senior Executives of the Taskforce and partner directorates to monitor quality measures and report against identified quality controls to the ESSC.

In addition, the Quality Plan requires the ACT Government and industry partners (see Section 3.4) to ensure processes specified within the Quality Plan are consistent with their own processes and procedures regarding Scheme activities. The Audit Team notes that having all delivery partners follow consistent quality standards reinforces the commitment to quality throughout the life of a program.

As noted in Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2, the ESSC receives monthly reports which include reporting that can be used to monitor and assess the quality of Scheme outputs. Sections of these monthly reports (that include reporting on quality) are not only compiled by the Taskforce, but also Scheme partners including:

- ACT Property Group;
- WorkSafe ACT; and
- MPC.

End-of-phase internal audits (see Appendix C), in addition to performance monitoring by the ESSC, provides assurance to the Taskforce Head, as well as the ACT Government, that the quality of Scheme outputs is appropriate.

The Audit Team considers that the Taskforce has implemented a systematic quality management approach that includes appropriate quality planning, control and assurance.

6.2.7 The Taskforce established an appropriate issue and change management approach

For the purposes of this report, issues management (as opposed to risk management) refers to events that have happened, were not planned and requires management action. If an issue is not addressed, it could materially impact successful completion of the program. As discussed above, it is essential that Taskforce issues are managed systematically, as these issues may affect the safety of Taskforce and stakeholder staff, or the public. Consistent with better practice, a robust issues management approach should:

- specify how issues are identified and managed;
- assess whether identified issues might have a material impact on the business justification of the Scheme;
- the roles and responsibilities for change control; and
- include a defined change authority.³⁴

³³ Axelos Limited, May 2017, *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 2017 Edition*, pp.78-80.

³⁴ *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 2017 Edition* p.140.

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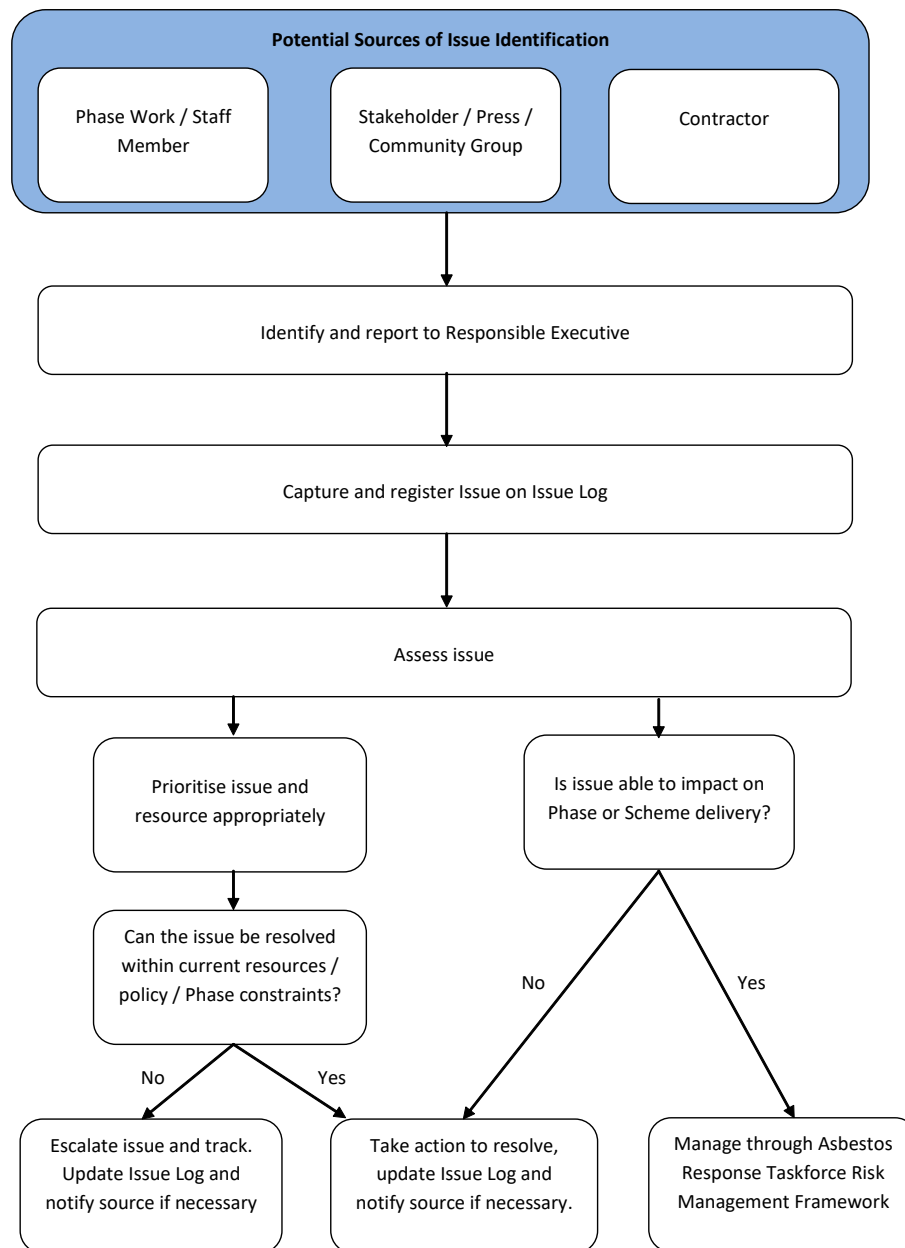
As noted in Section 6.2.7 in November 2015, the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Issue Management Strategy* described the issue management approach for the Taskforce. This included the management and resolution of any significant issues affecting the Taskforce's success or which required changes to the framework for more complex matters. This strategy specifies the Taskforce's approach to:

- prioritise issues. This includes a methodology for classifying the priority of issues from 'High' to 'Low';
- escalate issues. This includes a clear line of escalation from individual staff members through to the ESSC; and
- resolve issues. This includes a decision tree methodology to illustrate the range of possible resolution options depending on the level to which the issue was escalated (see Figure 7).

In 2016, the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Issue Management Strategy* evolved into the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Issues Management Plan* to address recommendations in the May 2016 ACT Auditor-General's Report³⁵. As shown in Figure 7 below, the Taskforce's Incident Management and Response document outlines the Standard Operating Procedure ("SOP"), for the notification and management of incidents on sites associated the Scheme.

³⁵ ACT Auditor-General Report No. 4/2016, May 2016, *The management of the financial arrangements for the delivery of the Loose fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme*.

Figure 7: Issue Resolution Process



Source: Asbestos Response Taskforce Issue Management Strategy - June 2020

The *Asbestos Response Taskforce Issues Management Plan* also provides a method to record and prioritise issues in an issues log. Information contained in the issues log includes:

- issue description;
- associated phase risk number (if applicable);
- issue priority;
- resolution method and what is to be developed;
- issue owner/who the issue is assigned to;
- issue resolution target date; and
- status / date closed.

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The Taskforce utilises a systematic process to record all issues in a comprehensive issues log. This log includes issues both at a strategic level and those specific to each phase, and related to areas including compliance reviews, safety and incidents, privacy, neighbour concerns, and communications with the public.

The Audit Team considers that the approach taken by the Taskforce to construct its Issues Management Process is consistent with better practice.

6.2.8 **The Taskforce's organisational structure has remained substantially unchanged since its inception. Further, the Taskforce staff had a clear understanding of the Scheme's strategic objectives and effectively managed its teams**

A better practice approach for managing a project is to ensure that appropriate governance structure arrangements are in place and the project team has a clear understanding of the project's objectives and what is the expected effort required from the team.³⁶

As discussed in Section 3.2, the Taskforce developed a high-level strategy and policy framework for the Scheme in *The ACT Government's Preferred Way Forward on Loose fill Asbestos* published in October 2014, which identified the four strategic objectives of the Scheme. To achieve these objectives, the Taskforce developed a high-level 2014 *Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure* (see Section 3.3 above). This document identified the roles and responsibilities of the individuals, directorates and groups responsible for assisting the Scheme to achieve its four strategic objectives.

The Audit Team notes that although the governance structure of the Taskforce was updated as part of the *Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme Revised Governance Structure in 2020*, it has remained substantially unchanged since the Taskforce's inception.

During fieldwork, the Audit Team was advised that:

- staff were aware of their respective roles and responsibilities;
- project teams were led by experienced professionals who had adequate skills and experience in managing teams;
- responsible team leaders held regular meetings with their staff to ensure that any significant risks or issues are managed in a timely manner or escalated (if required); and
- reporting lines were followed in accordance with the Taskforce's organisation structure (see Section 3.3 for further details).

In addition, the Audit Team found that the Taskforce maintained robust communication within and across its teams, which played a crucial role in delivery of the Scheme. For example, regular meetings were held between project team leaders and the various teams worked closely to achieve the strategic objectives of the Scheme.

Noting the above, the Audit Team considers that the Taskforce effectively managed its project team throughout the life of the Scheme.

6.2.9 **Although the Taskforce records for each phase are kept, these records were not always easy to locate and retrieve**

Appropriate recording of the business of government is a key element of public administration and accountability. The development of appropriate record management frameworks and systems, and compliance with these arrangements, ensures that ACT Government entities comply with their record keeping obligations.

Taskforce record keeping is particularly important as the Taskforce has been operating for almost eight years, has undergone significant staff and leadership changes during that time, and is approaching closure (with the remaining work to be completed within a yet unspecified ACT Directorate).

To comply with Section 16 of the *Territory Records Act 2002*³⁷, the EPSDD developed the Records Management Program and Policy ("RMP") in June 2021. This policy specifies the roles and responsibilities for: the Directorate;

³⁶ Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 2017 Edition p 236.

³⁷ Section 16 of the *Territory Records Act 2002* (the Act) includes the requirements for an agency to establish and maintain a Records Management Program to ensure that records of government are created, maintained, and disposed of, in accordance with legislative requirements.

staff; people leaders; and positions of trust, including Information Governance Team. To ensure the records are managed appropriately and preserved in accessible formats, the RMP identifies seven principles (see Appendix G). Of these seven principles, one principle (that is, Describe) promotes the use of clear and consistent naming conventions for records, information, and data.

The Audit Team found that although the Taskforce retained comprehensive records applicable to the Scheme, in some instances, records were not easy to locate as a taxonomy for metadata³⁸ was not developed during Scheme initiation. Although the Taskforce was able to locate the majority of documents requested by the Audit Team, it was unable to locate a small number of documents that had been allocated Objective³⁹ references numbers. For example (as discussed in Section 5.2.6) although Taskforce staff advised that they created and implemented an Internal Stakeholder Strategy, this document could not be located.

This finding is consistent with the findings of the last two audits (that is, Close Out Evaluation of Demolition Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme and Close Out Evaluation of Sales Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (a summary of the findings of these audits are detailed in Appendix C)). Following these findings, Taskforce staff advised they undertook steps to strengthen its records management practices from 2020 onwards which included:

- reviewing all documents relating to the Demolition and Sales phases;
- renaming key documents based on a naming convention; and
- maintaining a spreadsheet that records all reconciled key documents.

Further, Taskforce staff advised they are currently undertaking an additional project to ensure all key Scheme documents are stored in a suitable location and a clear and concise naming convention is applied. This will form part of the Scheme's closure process, and is designed to allow new staff responsible for administering the Scheme to locate key Scheme documents.

The Audit Team has addressed this issue in Recommendation 4 below.

³⁸ Metadata is data that provides information about other data. Examples of basic metadata include the author, date created, date modified, file size, and title.

³⁹ The Objective Enterprise Content Management ("ECM") system is the records management system used by the Taskforce to store Scheme records.

7 Closing the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme

7.1 Background

Since the establishment of the Asbestos Response Taskforce in June 2014, the Taskforce transitioned from an emergency response footing to a more traditional public sector program management approach. The Taskforce advised that this has been achieved through the consolidation of its approach and continual use of tailored governance structures that are appropriate to meet its needs and address emerging issues. These same governance structures (see Section 3.3) were structured to additionally plan and support the Taskforce's closure.

In this section, the Audit Team examined whether the Taskforce is successfully planning appropriate closure activities to support the conclusion of the Taskforce and the continued delivery of the Scheme by a directorate as required. Although the Taskforce is still in operation at the time of this audit, the Audit Team assessed the planned closure activities of the Taskforce against recognised program and project management better practice including:

- notifying stakeholders that the Scheme is about to close;
- assessing the performance of the Scheme against the original objectives;
- assessing any benefits that have already been realised and updating the benefits management approach to include any post-program benefit reviews;
- ensuring any existing responsibilities are transferred to relevant business owners;
- identifying lessons that may benefit other programs;
- updating the Business Case and confirming that it has been satisfied;
- ensuring ongoing ownership of any outstanding risks and issues;
- confirming that ongoing operational support arrangements are in place;
- finalising the programme documentation and archive it in accordance with ACT Government policy; and
- disbanding the Taskforce and handing back resources and support functions.

7.2 Findings

7.2.1 Although the Taskforce identified a transition approach in its 2020 Governance Strategy, this transition approach did not include all better practice closure activities

The purpose of closing a program or project is generally to recognise that the objectives have been achieved.⁴⁰ In this instance, the Scheme is ongoing, with the Taskforce to be wound-up prior to program completion. Noting that original expectations were that the Scheme would take approximately six years to complete⁴¹, the Taskforce is expected to hand over the Scheme eight years after its inception.

Although the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan* had not been finalised at the time of this audit, references to this plan within the July 2020 *Asbestos Response Taskforce Governance Strategy* indicate that the Taskforce will produce a plan that includes strategies to:

- retain practice and program knowledge;
- transition of critical ongoing activities and functions;
- manage ongoing residual scheme risk;
- building on the expertise and lessons learnt during the implementation of the Scheme; and
- scheduled and support staff transition.

The *Asbestos Response Taskforce Governance Strategy* also specifies that the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan* will address key aspects of transitioning Taskforce staff and associated processes and procedures to an established ACT Government directorate. This transition will include:

⁴⁰ Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 2017 Edition p260

⁴¹ ACT Auditor General, *ACT Auditor-General's Report The management of the financial arrangements for the delivery of the Loose fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme Report No. 4/2016*, p 10.

- maintaining clearly defined roles and responsibilities – so that these can be replicated within different administrative environments with due consideration to risk and business requirements;
- appropriate documentation of Taskforce practices and record keeping – to allow for the maintenance of consistent practice and retention of organisational knowledge through a systematised approach;
- education and information sharing – to allow for maintenance of strong working relationships across government with a shared appreciation for the objectives of the Scheme;
- a residual risk assessment – to identify remaining Scheme risks and appropriate ongoing ownership and management approaches for these risks;
- workforce retention, transition and contingency planning – to provide for the ongoing alignment of ACT Government business capabilities and government priorities; and
- Scheme level evaluation – to support ongoing learning and professional practice improvements.

Although the Audit Team was not able to review the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan*⁴², this approach appears consistent with many better practice closure principles specified in Section 7.1. That said, to be fully consistent with program closure better practice, the Taskforce should also address the following in its *Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan*.

- **The notification of stakeholders:** Impacted members of the community, particularly homeowners and tenants of affected properties, have often had long term communications with Taskforce staff. It is important that the method of notification of the wind down of the Taskforce be communicated appropriately to ensure the public is aware of the new operating arrangements for the Scheme and any residual ongoing support mechanisms.
- **Assessment of the performance of the Scheme against the original objectives:** As specified in Section 3.2, the Scheme had specified objectives, and outcomes and outputs for each phase. Also, as noted in Section 6.2.2, the Taskforce did not systematically report on its specified objectives, and outcomes and outputs for each phase as part of its monthly ESSC reporting process. As part of the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan*, the Taskforce should clearly report on whether Scheme objectives, and outcomes and outputs for each Phase were achieved.⁴³
- **Benefits review:** In addition to the above assessment, a Benefits review provides an opportunity to not only assess and report on what Scheme benefits (see Section 6.2.5) were realised, but also capture any additional benefits realised (not originally considered) during the life of the Scheme.
- **Ongoing arrangements with service delivery partners:** The Scheme involved significant partnership and coordination between a number of Government partners, industry partners, and oversight and advisory partners (see Section 3.4 and Appendix D). It was through this collaborative approach that many of the Scheme's functions, such as the Demolition and Sales phases, were conducted. Ideally these arrangements should be documented adequately.

Noting the importance of the Scheme and the impact it had on the lives of many ACT residents (as described in Section 3.5), it is important that Taskforce closure activities are transparent and are communicated clearly to the public. The Audit Team notes, in particular, the report⁴⁴ by Dr Gordon, a Clinical Psychologist with over 30 years' experience working with people affected by emergencies and disasters, highlighted the following challenge in winding down the Taskforce:

*"The transition from the formal Taskforce as it winds down to community agencies will be important, since they are often stretched and have other priorities. The sense of support and recognition are important symbolic processes that enhance people's capacity to cope with adversity. The transition to community services will need to be designed so that Mr Fluffy community members feel their continuing needs are still recognised by agencies."*⁴⁵

⁴² At the time of audit fieldwork, the Taskforce had developed an *Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan* that was being considered by the ACT Government's Cabinet. For this reason, the proposed closure plan was not reviewed as part of the audit.

⁴³ In Section 7.2.4 the Audit Team provides a high-level assessment of whether the Taskforce achieved the Scheme's specified objectives.

⁴⁴ Gordon, R., June 2017, *ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce Service Evaluation and Recommendations*.

⁴⁵ *Loc. cit.* p. 4

Appendix C

Taskforce Recommendation 1

To align with program management better practice, and to provide transparency regarding the effectiveness of the Taskforce in achieving the Scheme's objectives, the Audit Team recommends the *Asbestos Response Taskforce Closure Plan* includes an appropriate approach regarding:

- the notification of internal and external stakeholders regarding the cessation of the Taskforce;
- an assessment of the performance of the Scheme against its original objectives;
- the assessment of whether original Scheme benefits were realised, and the capture additional benefits realised by the Taskforce; and
- an approach for developing ongoing arrangements with service delivery partners.

Rating

Medium

Management response and due date for implementation

7.2.2 The Taskforce has documented a range of lessons learned throughout the life of the Scheme, however these need to be collated and documented for reference by future disaster response programs

A Lessons Learned Report (or Lessons Report) is a better practice methodology used to document learnings that might be of value to future program and is generally created at the end of a program as a product of the closure process. Creating an appropriate Lessons Learned Report will support the embedding of the positive lessons learned in the organisation's way of working and assist to avoid any negative lessons from recurring in future programs.

As discussed in Section 5.2.1, the Taskforce actively sought lessons learned from other large scale disaster recovery programs when developing Scheme frameworks, including the September 2014 HIP Report⁴⁶, and the 2003 Canberra Bushfires. Previous senior Taskforce staff noted the importance of these lessons learned when establishing the Taskforce but noted these lessons learned had to be derived from discussions and documentation rather than specific lessons reports.

As part of the ACT Government's response to the recommendations of the 2020 *Mr Fluffy Legacy Project: Consultation Outcomes Report and Recommendations*, the Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety responded to Recommendation 1 (lessons learned):

'The Taskforce has maintained a program of independent reviews to evaluate the delivery of the Scheme and support continuous improvement in implementation. This practice is providing lessons that will be a valuable resource for Government in future responses to emerging public safety issues or community recovery programs'.⁴⁷

As discussed in Section 5.2.4, during its inception, the Taskforce established a robust assurance framework which included the independent reviews (internal audits – see Appendix C) included in the Minister's response above. The findings of these reports include a range of lessons learned and have been summarised by the Audit Team in Appendix C. Based on the findings of the previous audits, and the findings of the report, the Audit Team has developed a preliminary lessons learned list at Appendix F. This list is by no means exhaustive, and should be supplemented with lessons learned by Taskforce staff for completeness.

Although the Taskforce is relying on previous audit reports, as well as this report to document lessons learned, the Audit Team considers that relevant Taskforce staff should consider the lessons learned contained in this report

⁴⁶ Report of the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program p. 315 (Section 14.13.4)

⁴⁷ ACT Government Response Mr Fluffy Legacy Project: Consultation Outcomes Report and Recommendations May 2020 p. 3

within the context of their own experiences. The Taskforce staff's lessons learned should be combined with those specified at Appendix F, for consideration by future programs and Taskforces.

Taskforce Recommendation 2

To ensure future Taskforce's and programs are provided with assistance to establish robust frameworks, systems, and controls to manage disaster responses efficiently and effectively, the Audit Team recommends the Taskforce:

- develop a lessons learned report as part of the Taskforce closure process which includes identified better practice and areas for improvement. This report can include the lessons learned checklist included at Appendix F; and
- ensure the lessons learned report is stored in a location that is easily identifiable and accessible. See Taskforce Recommendation 3.

Rating

High

Management response and due date for implementation

Future Program Recommendation 2

To minimise the effort required to establish and manage a new disaster response program or Taskforce, the Audit Team recommends that future programs consult the lessons learned:

- checklist included at Appendix F; and
- report developed by the Taskforce as part of its closure process (see Taskforce Recommendation 2).

Rating

High

Management response and due date for implementation

7.2.3 The preferred location for storing key Taskforce artefacts (for future disaster response programs) had not been determined at the time of audit fieldwork

As noted in Section 5.2.1, at the commencement of the Taskforce in June 2014, the then Taskforce Head spent significant time consulting with key persons responsible for administering other disaster responses, to elicit lessons learned when establishing the Taskforce. The then Taskforce Head advised that, given the tight timeframes required to address a significant community health issue, establishing the taskforce was like *"...building the aeroplane while flying it at the same time."*

To maximise the benefits of the Taskforce's experience and lessons learned over the last eight years, and minimise the time future taskforce / program heads need to spend researching previous disaster responses, it is essential that all relevant Taskforce information that may be useful is stored in a location that is easily accessible and searchable.

Appendix C

At the time of audit fieldwork, the potential location of where Taskforce lessons learned and other useful artefacts⁴⁸ should be stored had not been agreed by the Taskforce and other relevant stakeholders. Based on audit interviews with relevant stakeholders, a potential storage option could be within the CMTEDD. The Audit Team notes that storing essential Taskforce information artefacts in CMTEDD may increase the likelihood that future disaster recovery programs would find these artefacts.

Taskforce Recommendation 3

To increase the likelihood that key Taskforce information artefacts, including lessons learned, policies, frameworks and reports can be easily located by future disaster response programs Audit Team recommends the Taskforce:

- identify a suitable location within the ACT Government's information management framework to store key Taskforce information artefacts; and
- develop and apply a systematic and effective metadata taxonomy to each information artefacts so they are appropriately searchable and located easily.

Rating

Medium

Management response and due date for implementation

7.2.4 Based on a high-level assessment, there are indicators the Scheme has achieved its strategic objectives

As discussed in Sections 5.2.3, although the Taskforce established clear strategic objectives during the Scheme's initiation, it did not systematically analyse and report on whether these objectives were achieved. While the Taskforce did not report systematically on its strategic objectives, as discussed in Section 6.2.2, the Taskforce reported a range of performance statistics to the ESSC as part of its monthly reporting process.

As part of the audit, the Audit Team attempted to match the Taskforce's performance statistics, and identify potential performance measures and targets applicable to each performance statistic, to determine whether the Scheme's strategic objectives have been achieved. This analysis is contained in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Scheme Strategic Objectives and Performance Measures

Strategic objectives	Relevant performance statistics	Result	Performance measure derived by the Audit Team
Eliminate, by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos	Number of properties purchased by the Taskforce.	989	Of the identified 1,048 affected and impacted properties. 94 per cent of identified properties were purchased under the Scheme.

⁴⁸ These artefacts could include: models; frameworks; organisational structures; performance information and methods; and reports. Examples of these artefacts are contained in Appendix F under "Information Artefacts".

Strategic objectives	Relevant performance statistics	Result	Performance measure derived by the Audit Team
insulation for homeowners, tenants, tradespeople, and the wider community.	Number of properties that have been demolished.	1,011	Of the identified 1,048 affected and impacted properties. 96 per cent of known affected properties have been demolished).
	Number of properties that have been deregistered.	996	Of the 1,029 demolished properties, 97 per cent were also deregistered.
Provide a fair outcome for owners of affected homes.	Volume and values of assistance packages provided.	1,123 Relocation Assistance Grants	Of the 1,264 client cases that have been closed, 89 per cent of the cases received relocation assistance grants.
	Total number and value of stamp duty concessions.	704 stamp duty concessions with a value of \$17.5 million	Of the 989 properties initially purchased under the Scheme, stamp duty concessions were provided to 71 per cent.
	Interactions between Taskforce's PST and clients.	1,264 client cases have been closed since March 2017.	Interactions between the Taskforce's PST and clients have decreased gradually since 2017. In October 2014, there were approximately 3,500 client interactions compared to 236 client interactions in February 2022.
Provide, so far as is possible and reasonable, flexibility and options for informed choices to be made by owners of affected homes.	Number of properties purchased by the Taskforce.	989	Of the identified 1,048 affected and impacted properties. 94 per cent of identified properties were purchased under the Scheme.
	Total number and value of stamp duty concessions.	704	Of the 989 properties purchased under the Scheme, stamp duty concessions were provided to 71 per cent.

Appendix C

Strategic objectives	Relevant performance statistics	Result	Performance measure derived by the Audit Team
	Interactions between Taskforce's PST and clients.	1,264 client case closure have occurred since March 2017.	Interactions between the Taskforce's PST and clients have decreased consistently since 2014. In October 2014, there were approximately 3,500 client interactions compared to 236 client interactions in February 2022.
Minimise overall net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government (thereby minimising the flow-on impact to other government policy and program delivery areas).	Total Scheme net cost.	\$273.7 million	Total net Scheme cost is 27 per cent of the \$1 billion loan from the Australian Government.
	Total sales value of the remediated properties.	\$650.6 million	Total sales value is 65 per cent of the \$1 billion loan obtained from the Australian Government.
	Number of properties with exchanged sales contract.	967	Of the 989 properties purchased under the Scheme, 98 per cent of the properties have exchanged.
	Number of properties that have settled.	965	Of the 989 properties purchased under the Scheme, 98 per cent of the properties have settled.
	Average cost per property.	\$719 005	The budgeted average purchase price of the property was \$16,103 less expensive (that is, \$702,902) than the actual purchase price.

Source: Eradication Scheme Steering Committee meeting papers, March 2022.

As shown above, there are strong indicators that the Taskforce has been successful in achieving the Scheme's strategic objectives. Specifically:

- 96 per cent of known affected properties have been demolished. This is a strong indicator that the Taskforce has almost eliminated, by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos;
- 89 per cent of all identified client cases received relocation assistance grants, 73 per cent of all owners properties purchased under the Scheme received stamp duty concessions, and the number of interactions between the Taskforce and clients has fallen from 3,500 to 236 monthly client interactions between 2014 and 2022. This may be indicative of clients being provided with a fair outcome;
- 94 per cent of identified properties were purchased under the Scheme, and the number of interactions between the Taskforce and clients has fallen from 3500 to 236 monthly client interactions between 2014 and

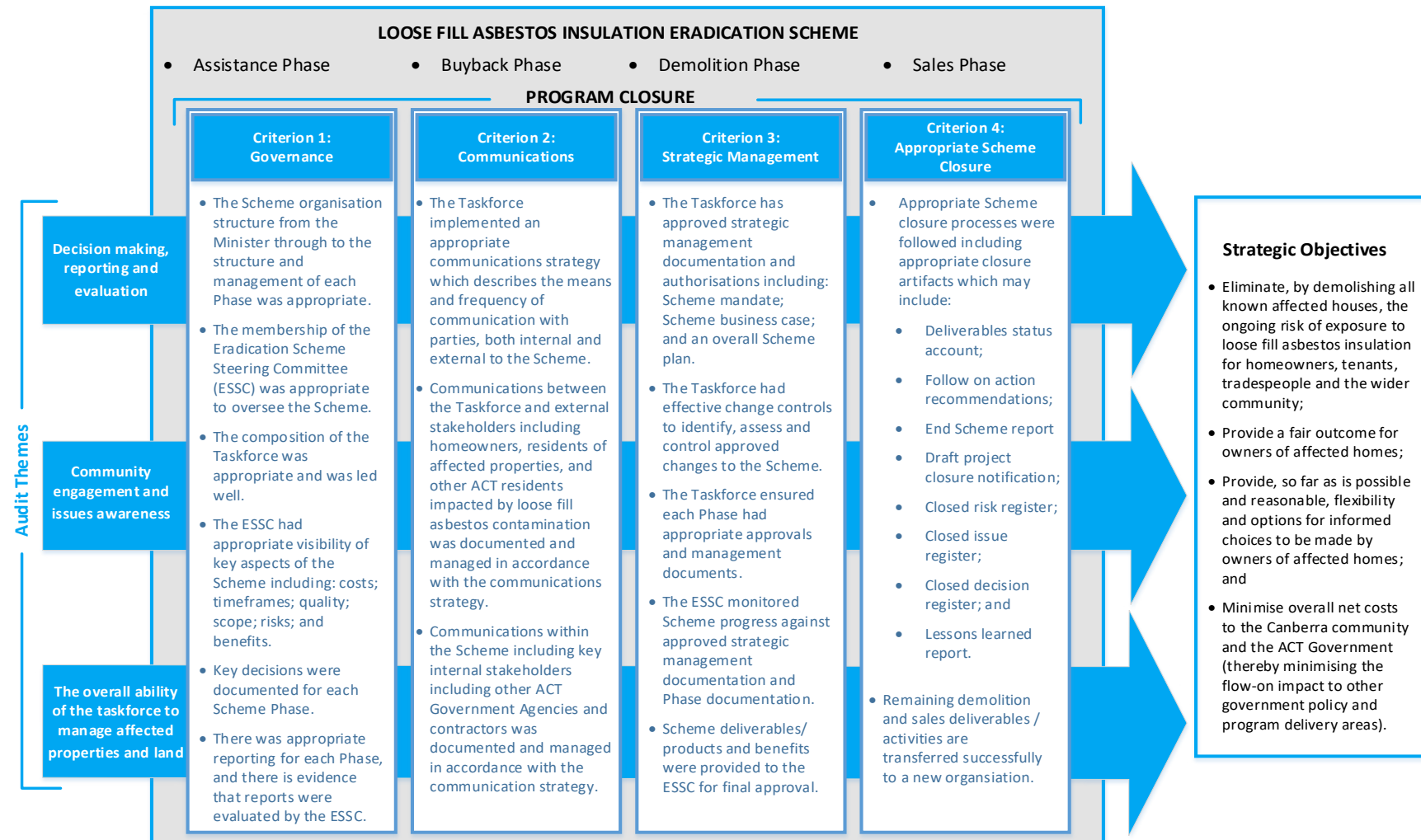
2022. This may be indicative that clients were comfortable with the Scheme, and made informed choices regarding selling their property to the ACT Government; and

- the total net Scheme cost is only 27 per cent of the total \$1 billion loan from the Australian Government. This indicates that the Taskforce minimised the net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government.

Overall, this analysis indicates that the Taskforce is likely to have met the strategic objectives of the Scheme. However, significant additional analysis of the conclusions drawn above, combined with analysis of other Taskforce qualitative information, will need to be completed to draw definitive conclusions regarding the success of the Taskforce. This issue is addressed in Recommendation 2 above.

Appendix C

Appendix A. Basis for the audit into the Asbestos Response Taskforce Close-out audit



Appendix B. Consultations

Name	Organisation, Role / Area
Amanda Grey Jackii Shepherd Jacqueline Agius Robert Alford	WorkSafe ACT, Acting Commissioner. WorkSafe ACT, Director Occupational hygiene. WorkSafe ACT, Work Health and Safety Commissioner. WorkSafe ACT, Director Compliance and Enforcement.
Don Shashika Lalanka Amarasiri Richard Kingham	Taskforce, Director of Finance. Taskforce, former Senior Finance Manager. Taskforce, former Senior Finance Manager.
Clint Peters Michelle O'Donnell Rebecca Butchart	Taskforce, former Director Demolition & Sales. Taskforce, Director Government Business Reporting & Sales. Taskforce, Director Governance and Risk.
Gareth Williams Lynette Marsh	Taskforce, Director Strategic Communications. Taskforce, former Senior Manager Communications.
Joyce Chow Sarah Radford	Taskforce, Director of demolition and complex properties. Taskforce, Phase 3.
Lea Durie	Development and Implementation Executive Branch Manager Development and Implementation.
Andrew Sinfield Tania Shaw Belinda Hedley Grant Cussack Kassandra Keppell	ACT Property Group, Asbestos Project Officer. ACT Property Group, Senior Director Estate and Procurement Management. ACT Property Group, Executive Branch Manager. ACT Property Group, Acting Senior Director Integrated Facilities Management. ACT Property Group, Director Integrated Facilities Management.
Fiona Barbaro Yu-lan Chan	Taskforce, former Director Technical and Regulation. Taskforce, former Director Regulation, Policy and Risk.
Rebecca Butchart Kieran Ives Anthony Bailey	Taskforce, Director Governance and Risk. Taskforce, former Director Governance and Risk. Taskforce, former Senior Manager Governance and Risk.
Geoffrey Rutledge Bruce Fitzgerald	Taskforce, former Head. Urban Renewal, former Executive Group Manager Development and Implementation.
Dr Suzanne Packer OM Chris Redmond Rosemary Crowther Christine Healy	CERG, Chair, paediatrician and former Canberran of the Year. CERG, Director of Woden Community Service and homeowner. CERG, Member. CERG, former Director of the ACT Bushfire Recovery Centre and homeowner.
Mark Whybrow	CMTEDD, Executive General Manager Finance and Budget. ESSC Member.
Adrian Piani Rebecca Power Annie de la Rue	Major Projects Canberra, Group Manager Infrastructure Delivery Partners/Chief Engineer. ESSC Member. Major Projects Canberra, Executive Branch Manager. Major Projects Canberra, Project Director.
Andrew Kefford PSM	Taskforce, former Head, former ESSC Chair.
Kathryn Looke Alana McInerney	Taskforce, Senior Director, former Director Personal Support. Taskforce, Director Personal Support.
John Dietz Nicholas Holt	Suburban Land Agency, Chief Executive Officer. Suburban Land Agency, Executive Director Built Form and Divestment.
Andrew Parkinson	Executive Branch Manager Infrastructure and Capital works.
Chris Reynolds	Taskforce, COO, former Head, Senior Manager Demolition Deregistration and Sales.

Appendix C

Appendix C. Previous Audit Findings

Internal Audit	Better Practice Exhibited	Areas for Improvement
<p>ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce Review</p> <p>Price Waterhouse Coopers</p> <p><i>September 2015</i></p>	<p>The Taskforce has an understanding for the need to balance an urgent and responsive approach with one that is underpinned by effective governance and project management frameworks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant consultation and good stakeholder management. The scope for the project is defined and understood. Detailed plans have been developed and have guided the activities of the Taskforce in its early stages. The key elements for effective risk management have been developed. The clear public benefit of this project is focussed on public safety, and this is well documented in all project artefacts. The broader ACT government will now have an ability to leverage the skills and knowledge developed through the deployment of the Taskforce. Key staff with highly relevant skill sets and experience were recruited. A suite of financial reports have been developed to inform management and is supported by sound governance processes. It is clear that the Taskforce have been cognisant of applying lessons learned from similar large scale remediation projects into the activities undertaken. The nature of this project has resulted in a level of fluidity and flexibility in the activities being undertaken which is consistent with the nature of other Taskforces and major remediation projects. There are a number of governance structures that are clearly defined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The communication framework could be strengthened through documenting an internal stakeholder strategy and a formal monitoring framework. The scope could be refined by the articulation of the explicit boundaries of what the project does and does not include. Risk documents could be streamlined to ensure closer alignment with better practice. Development of 'global' document(s) to provide decision makers with a complete view of the financial health of the Scheme and overall view of the status of all key activities and interdependencies could assist the planning of the remaining phases. Clearer documentation in relation to the quantifiable benefits for the Territory around sale prices of impacted properties. There remain opportunities to strengthen the control framework in place for the management of suppliers. An overarching and fit-for-purpose quality plan would strengthen the controls for ensuring that the desired levels of compliance and behaviours are being adhered to by the Taskforce and the Directorates that have a role in the success of the Taskforce. The Taskforce should ensure the overall governance framework and governance arrangements, including record keeping practices, are in place as the project continues to evolve and mature.
<p>The management of the financial arrangements for the delivery of the Loose fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme - Auditor-General Report No. 4/2016</p> <p><i>May 2016</i></p>	<p>The planning for and management of the financial arrangements for the implementation of the Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (the Scheme) has been effective. The Taskforce's approach to governance and risk management reflects better practice. This has enabled the Taskforce to develop processes and procedures which provide a structure for managing and re-assessing the implementation of the Scheme, including expenditure and commitments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Taskforce established appropriate governance and risk management frameworks which promotes transparency and accountability and is embedded in day-to-day operations. Risk documentation is clear, and responsibilities and mitigation strategies have been documented. There is a high level of risk awareness and effective risk management mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The record keeping in the initial stages of the Scheme was inadequate, and the Taskforce should complete the migration of records to Objective expeditiously. The total cost of the Scheme should be publicly reported, and ongoing financial impacts of the Scheme should be included in future financial statements.

Internal Audit	Better Practice Exhibited	Areas for Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appropriate reporting arrangements in place to provide regular information on a range of Taskforce activity to stakeholders and governance bodies. ▪ There is a high level of transparency in Taskforce processes and oversight of activities. ▪ Effective financial management arrangements were established for the delivery of the Scheme. ▪ Overall, the financial modelling for the Scheme was found to be adequate, in that it provided a prudent range of expected financial outcomes. 	
Assurance Framework Review (Asbestos Response Taskforce) Synergy <i>July 2016</i>	<p>The risk and assurance framework, including the provision of assurance statements established by the Taskforce, supports strong governance arrangements. However, opportunities for improvement were identified. Practices and behaviours of the Taskforce and partner agencies were found to support good governance arrangements, however, the findings relating to a partner agency's out-dated risk management planning and lack of evidence have the potential to undermine Scheme outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular reporting occurs to an oversight body. ▪ The Taskforce has established a robust approach to maintain evidence and records associated with the Scheme. ▪ The Taskforce, as part of their Risk and Assurance framework, undertake ongoing internal reviews. Internal reviews (desk reviews) are undertaken to test compliance with key processes and to ensure controls are operating as intended. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revision to monthly assurance statements (which forms part of the Risk and Assurance framework) is required to strengthen the preparation process. ▪ Risk Plans of a partner agency require review and update to more comprehensively reflect the risks associated with contract management for the Demolition Phase of the Scheme. ▪ Formal, independent reviews of the activities and compliance with key controls for partner agencies were not occurring. ▪ There is no clearly articulated approach across the Scheme for ensuring that key stakeholders are advised of incidents in a timely manner.
Close Out Evaluation of Buyback Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme Synergy <i>May 2019</i>	<p>The Taskforce effectively and efficiently managed the Buyback phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme. The Taskforce's governance framework supported its management of the Buyback phase, it included expected outcomes and performance measures for the phase, and the requirement for progress to be reported to the Eradication Scheme Steering Committee (ESSC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Taskforce documented and implemented a governance framework that supported its management of the Buyback phase. ▪ The Taskforce efficiently processed Buyback applications. ▪ The Taskforce mitigated Phase risks effectively and had effective oversight of these risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The expected outcomes value for money purchase and client satisfaction lacked clarity as to what the Taskforce intended to achieve making it difficult for the Taskforce to report its progress towards achieving them to the ESSC. ▪ The Taskforce needs to implement effective and compliant information management systems. ▪ The Taskforce's key controls for mitigating the risk of the Buyback phase do not address the residual risk of the 17 properties that are not part of the Buyback program. ▪ Taskforce identified the proxy measure number of client complaints and response times but had not reported on this measure to the ESSC.

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Internal Audit	Better Practice Exhibited	Areas for Improvement
<p>Assistance Phase Review Summary Report</p> <p>Elton Consulting</p> <p><i>April 2020</i></p>	<p>The Taskforce has been highly successful in providing an effective and appropriate emergency response to the problem of loose fill asbestos insulation across the ACT. Furthermore, the Assistance Phase demonstrates how successfully tailored support and case management can be accomplished by government within uniform policy parameters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was continuous improvement of internal systems and a strong internal feedback loop. There was clear communication and key messages which utilised communication intermediaries. There was capacity to influence external service outcomes. Leadership was front and centre. The monetary amount of financial assistance packages was fair and applying for financial assistance was straightforward. There was proactive and personalised case management. There was a collaborative culture that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> was committed to the cause; had authentic and ethical leadership; created and maintained team culture; and used existing connections and networks. Engaged a workplace coach to mitigate the risk of staff experiencing vicarious trauma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved information management and data collection. Earlier co-location of individual teams and a well-resourced dedicated call centre from the outset. Improved recognition of the frontline role of call centre staff. Stronger communication focus during the early delivery of the Assistance Phase. Ensuring shared values and cultural alignment of team members within the Taskforce. Clearly defined exit strategy for homeowners and tenants of affected properties who articulated that they did not require or desire any personalised case management. Should the recruitment have been less successful than it was, the Taskforce could have benefited from a more fluid application of individual roles. Improved communication with external partners. Continuity with messaging and advice.
<p>Close Out Evaluation of Demolition Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme</p> <p>McGrathNicol</p> <p><i>December 2020</i></p>	<p>There was a range of anecdotal and documented evidence to support that the Taskforce has delivered the Demolition Phase safely, efficiently and effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A robust risk management framework has been developed and implemented which has been used to successfully identify, manage, and report on key demolition risks. Extensive demolition risk, issues and performance information was collected. This information is reported systematically and comprehensively to the ESSC. Comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures ("SOPs") were developed and implemented to safely maintain and secure affected and impacted properties and to remediate and deregister affected and impacted properties. In collaboration with Major Projects Canberra and demolition stakeholders, undertook robust planning and assessment activities to support the safe, efficient and cost-effective demolition of impacted and affected properties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements are required to performance measures to ensure they provide meaningful measures of the desired outcomes. These must also be reported systematically. Improve its governance structure documentation by including key stakeholders, their accountabilities, and their dependencies between one another to deliver scheme activities. Improve its records management approach to ensure key documents can be retrieved easily for future taskforces and programs, and for accountability. Document the resolution of a number of demolition safety issues, including notifiable incidents.
<p>Close Out Evaluation of Sales Phase of the Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme</p> <p>McGrathNicol</p>	<p>Overall, the Audit Team found sufficient documentary evidence to support that the Taskforce had (to date) managed the Sales Phase efficiently and effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> net revenues from the Sales Phase have reduced the overall costs of the Scheme by 73.7 per cent to date. This includes net sales revenues from individual properties recovering approximately 87 per cent of the Scheme's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the Taskforce documented performance measures aimed at assessing the Sales Phase performance, it did not establish performance targets for

Internal Audit	Better Practice Exhibited	Areas for Improvement
February 2021	<p>property acquisition costs, and approximately 18 per cent of the Scheme's demolition costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sales Phase data indicates the Taskforce maximised the sales prices achieved. Approximately 60 per cent of properties with a FROR under the Deed of Surrender, that sold through public sales channels, achieved individual sales prices exceeding property valuations obtained. ▪ the Taskforce balanced the timeliness of key sales processed under the Taskforce's control against the effectiveness of processes to achieve sales across the three sales channels appropriately. ▪ the Taskforce developed and implemented comprehensive SOPs" to manage the sale of remediated properties across each of the three sales channels. 	<p>individual measures, and did not systematically report on performance against these measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Available Sales Phase data has limitations which, if not understood, could undermine the ability for the Taskforce to conduct meaningful analysis and make fully-informed decisions regarding the sale of affected and impacted properties. ▪ Improve its records management approach to ensure key documents can be retrieved easily for future Taskforces and programs, and for accountability. ▪ Review and update key SOPs that will be relevant to the remaining duration of the Sales Phase to reflect current practices. ▪ Provide additional publicly reported information regarding the approach to managing the ACT Government Sales Phase.

Appendix C

Appendix D. Major stakeholder involvement listing

Stage	Scheme Initiation	Assistance	Buyback	Demolition	Sales	
Stakeholder	ACT Chief Minister					
	Asbestos Regulators Forum					
	Remediation processes development					
	ACT Insurance Authority					
	Justice and Community Safety / ACT Government Solicitor / Legislation					
	Worksafe ACT					
	CMTEDD /Treasury					
	Housing ACT				Housing ACT	
	ESPDD		EPSDD			
	CMTEDD					
		Taskforce				
		CMTEDD / Procurement				
	TCCS / ACT NOWaste			ACT NOWaste		
	Demolition Industry bodies			Demolition Contractors		
	ACTSLA/ ACTLDA				ACTSLA	
	ACT Health Directorate	Homeowners and tenants of affected properties	Homeowners of affected properties		Former Homeowners (FROR)	
		General public			General public	
		Asbestos Assessors				
			Australian Property Institute			
	PCW / MPC		MPC			
			ACT Property Group			
					ACT Government Agencies	
				External Sales Agents		
Ongoing consultation	CERG					
		Clinical Psychologist				
		Workplace Coach				
Ministers	Taskforce	ACT Government Partners	Industry Partners	Oversight and advisory partners	Homeowners and residents	Affected community members

Appendix E. Phase Outcomes, Outputs and Performance Measures as at December 2014⁴⁹

Phase 1: Assistance			
Outcome	1. Establish contact with and provide help to affected owners and residents. 2. Client satisfaction.		
Performance Measures	Responsibility - ART		
	Volume of Registrations Received.	ART Director	
	Volume of Asbestos Assessment reports received.	ART Director	
	Volume and value of Assistance Packages provided.	ART Director	
	Low number of client complaints and claims together with quick response times.	ART Director	
	Adequacy of risk controls.	ART Director	
	Costs contained within approved budget.	ART Director	
	Quality and timeliness of advice, Ministerial Briefs and reporting.	ART Director	
Outputs		Responsibility	Taskforce Head Approval
	Phase 1 Milestone Program.	ART Director	✓
	Phase 1 Risk Control Plan.	ART Director	✓
	Progress and Performance Reports to ESSC.	ART Director	
	Cash Payments to Clients.	ART Director	✓ (under delegation)
	Financial forecast.	ART Director	✓
	Phase 1 Briefs to Minister and/or Taskforce Head.	ART Director	✓

⁴⁹ Please note that the responsibility titles were developed early within the Scheme's lifecycle and do not represent the actual titles of key staff within the Taskforce post-January 2015.

Appendix C

Phase 2: Purchase			
Outcome	1. Purchase 1021 loose fill asbestos insulation affected properties as soon as possible.		
	2. Value for money purchase.		
Performance Measures	3. Client satisfaction.		
	Responsibility - ART		
	Secure funding for buyback.	Manager Finance	
	Number of properties valued.	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Number offers made on properties.	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Number of properties under exchanged Deed of Surrender.	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Number of properties purchased.	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Costs contained within approved budget.	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Low number of client complaints and claims together with quick response times.	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Effectiveness of risk controls.	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Maintain stakeholder confidence (e.g. REIA, API, Law Society).	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Quality and timeliness of advice, Ministerial Briefs and reporting.	ART Director - Acquisition	
Outputs		Responsibility	Taskforce Head Approval
	Phase 2 Milestone Program.	ART Director - Acquisition	✓
	Phase 2 Risk Control Plan.	ART Director - Acquisition	✓
	Progress and Performance Reports to ESSC.	ART Director - Acquisition	
	Payments to clients on property settlement.	ART Director - Acquisition	✓ (under delegation)
	Financial forecast.	ART Director - Acquisition	✓
	Phase 2 Briefs to Minister and/or Taskforce Head.	ART Director - Acquisition	✓

Phase 3: Demolish			
Outcome	1. Safely and securely maintain all properties purchased. 2. Safely demolish and remediate all properties as quickly as possible. 3. Value for money by minimising property holding costs and demolition costs. 4. Local community and stakeholder confidence. 5. Increase Local Industry capability through training and development opportunities.		
Performance Measures	Responsibility - EDD		
	Number of properties maintained.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Number of properties demolished and ready for release.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	WHS - No lost time injuries or deaths.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Reduction in Phase costs over time as process efficiency evolves.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Costs contained within approved budget.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	On time property settlement inspections, removal of contents and security.		
	Activities undertaken in accordance with regulatory approval requirements and relevant Policy.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Effectiveness of Phase 3 risk management plan and controls.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Speed at which properties are held within Phase 3.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Low number of local community complaints together with quick response times.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
Outputs		Responsibility	Taskforce Head Approval
	Phase 3 Milestone Program.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART ED Risk & PM
	Phase 3 Risk Control Plan.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART ED Risk & PM
	Progress and Performance Reports to ESSC.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	EDD Invoices for payment of services.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ Manager Finance
	Financial forecast and budget allocation request.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART Head
	Tender Evaluation Reports.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART Head
	WHS reporting.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Local Community Engagement Plan.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART Director Comms
	Material for neighborhood signage and notifications.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART Director Comms
	Relevant content and information for input into ART Annual report.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓
	Phase 3 Briefs to Taskforce Head as requested.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓

Appendix C

Phase 4: Sales			
Outcome	1. Value for money by minimising costs and maximising revenue through the sale of properties. 2. Local community and stakeholder confidence.		
Performance Measures	Responsibility - EDD		
	Number of new Crown Leases created for remediated properties.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Number of properties released for sale.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Number of properties with exchanged sales contracts.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Number of properties settled.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Revenue targets achieved or exceeded.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Amount of additional property value added (Uplift) through strategic acquisitions and land use changes.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Costs contained within approved budget and decreasing over time as pipeline integration between Phase 3 and 4 evolves.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Delivery of Scheme policy requirements (e.g. Client (original owner) 1st right of purchase and availability of Land Rent)	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Low number of community complaints together with quick response times for matters associated with Phase 4 activities.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Maintain stakeholder confidence (e.g. EPD, MBA, HIA, Local Community Groups and neighbours).	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	Quality and timeliness of advice, Ministerial Briefs, responses to requests from ART and reporting.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
Outputs		Responsibility	Taskforce Head Approval
	Phase 4 Milestone Program.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART ED Risk & PM
	Phase 4 Risk Control Plan.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART ED Risk & PM
	Progress and Performance Reports to ESSC.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	
	EDD Invoices for payment of services.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ Manager Finance
	Financial forecast and budget allocation request.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓ ART Head
	Relevant content and information for input into ART Annual report.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓
	Phase 4 Briefs to Taskforce Head as requested.	EDD Director - Demolition & Sales	✓

Source: Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure, December 2014

Appendix F. Lessons Learned

Lesson learnt	Audit report finding	Report Reference	Information artefacts	Objective Reference
1. Consult lessons learnt from similar programs and seek program knowledge from experts that have 'lived' experience.	When initiating the Taskforce in June 2014, the Taskforce Head examined other disaster events when developing a strategic approach to administering the Scheme	5.2.1	Taskforce Corporate Governance and Risk Management Chief Minister Brief.	A12228022
2. Establish, and adhere to, a sound program management framework that is consistent with better practice, from the outset of the program.	Although a recognised better practice program management methodology was not used to initiate the Scheme, many features of better practice program management methods and techniques were used throughout the Scheme's initiation	5.2.2	2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure.	A12228020
	During Scheme initiation, the Taskforce established objectives, outcomes, outputs, and performance measures that remained in place throughout the life of the Scheme	5.2.3	The ACT Government's Preferred Way Forward on Loose fill Asbestos.	A12228039 A12228040
			Long Term Management of Loose fill Asbestos Insulation in Canberra Homes.	A12228032
			2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure.	A12228020
	During Scheme initiation, the Taskforce established a dynamic, and effective organisational structure that provided the then Taskforce Head with timely and accurate information to make informed decisions	5.2.9	Asbestos Response Taskforce Governance Strategy.	A25366504
			Asbestos Response Taskforce Structure 2015.	A11536879
			Asbestos Response Taskforce Structure 2018.	A15930271
3. During program initiation develop a sound strategy to communicate with internal and external stakeholders	The Taskforce established an effective steering committee to advise the Taskforce Head and oversee the delivery of the Scheme	6.2.1	Asbestos Response Taskforce Structure 2021.	A30454926
			ESSC terms of reference and structure.	A12227620
			Example of ESSC Reporting.	A32175617
	The Taskforce established an effective approach to communicate with the homeowners, tenants, and former residents of affected and impacted properties	5.2.5	Asbestos Response Taskforce Communication Strategy.	A11053251 A11053248 A11053249

Appendix C

Lesson learnt	Audit report finding	Report Reference	Information artefacts	Objective Reference
throughout the life of the program. Ensure this strategy includes community representation.	The Taskforce identified, and engaged with, key ACT Government stakeholders early in the Scheme's life	5.2.6	Asbestos Response Taskforce Internal Stakeholder Strategy.	fA7012788
			WorkSafe ACT and Asbestos Taskforce SLA.	A32992765
	The Taskforce facilitated the formation of community reference and support groups to support affected owners, residents, and tenants	5.2.7	Establishment of Community and Expert Reference Group Chief Minister Brief.	A11714083
			CERG Charter of Action.	A28845168
4. Secure program funding as early as possible in the life of the program through sound budgeting practices.	Funding commitments were obtained early from the Commonwealth Government by providing detailed and logical models justifying the funding request	5.2.8	Asbestos program Funding Proposal to the Commonwealth. Commonwealth Loan Agreement (Asbestos Program).	A11396997 A11402184
5. Developing and implementing a comprehensive assurance framework will save time and resources throughout the program's lifecycle.	The Taskforce established a comprehensive and multi-levelled assurance framework from the outset of the Scheme. Establishing a robust and comprehensive assurance approach from the outset provided comfort to the ACT Auditor-General and the ACT Government, thereby reducing the amount of scrutiny required throughout the Scheme	5.2.4	2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure.	A12228020
			Asbestos Response Taskforce Assurance Plan.	A25366507
	The Taskforce established an effective steering committee to advise the Taskforce Head and oversee the delivery of the Scheme	6.2.1	ESSC terms of reference and structure.	A12227620
			Example of ESSC Reporting.	A32175617
	Although the Taskforce did not report against the established performance measures within its monthly ESSC reports, these reports contained information that supported the assessment of the Scheme against its four strategic objectives	6.2.2	2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure.	A12228020
			Example of ESSC Reporting.	A32175617
6. Develop and implement an effective risk management	The Taskforce had an effective risk management approach from the commencement of the Scheme	6.2.3	2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure.	A12228020

Lesson learnt	Audit report finding	Report Reference	Information artefacts	Objective Reference
approach. From the commencement of the program.			Asbestos Response Taskforce Risk Management Plan. Asbestos Response Taskforce Risk Tolerance Statement. ART Strategic Risk Register. ART Phase 1 Risk Register. ART Phase 2 Risk Register. ART Phase 3 Risk Register. ART Phase 4 Risk Register.	A25346662 A11011606 A29362935 A29362064 A29573036 A11861441 A10992164
7. Clearly define the benefit to both the public and the Territory.	The Taskforce used audits that were equivalent to stage (phase) reviews, and associated EPSDD Audit and Risk Committee and ESSC monitoring Although not documented clearly by the Taskforce, the Scheme's benefits can be derived from the Scheme's objectives, and achievement of these benefits can be derived from the Scheme's performance reporting	6.2.4 6.2.5	2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure. Asbestos Response Taskforce Assurance Plan. 2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure. ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce Review.	A12228020 A25366507 A12228020 A1111809
8. Developing, implementing and reporting on robust governance controls is essential to ensure a	The Taskforce had an effective risk management approach from the commencement of the Scheme	6.2.3	2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure.	A12228020 A25346662

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Lesson learnt	Audit report finding	Report Reference	Information artefacts	Objective Reference
recovery program achieves its strategic objectives.			Asbestos Response Taskforce Risk Management Plan.	A11011606
			Asbestos Response Taskforce Risk Tolerance Statement.	A29362935
			ART Strategic Risk Register.	A29362064
			ART Phase 1 Risk Register.	A29573036
			ART Phase 2 Risk Register.	A11861441
			ART Phase 3 Risk Register.	A10992164
			ART Phase 4 Risk Register.	
	The Taskforce developed and implemented an approach to Scheme quality planning, control and assurance	6.2.6	Asbestos Response Taskforce Quality Plan.	A25338015
	The Taskforce established an appropriate issue and change management	6.2.7	Example of ESSC Reporting.	A32175617
			Asbestos Response Taskforce Issue Management Strategy.	A11410352
			Asbestos Response Taskforce Issue Management Plan.	A25353664
	The Taskforce's organisational structure has remained substantially unchanged since its inception. Further, the Taskforce staff had a clear understanding of the Scheme's strategic objectives and effectively managed its teams	6.2.8	2014 Loose fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme – Governance Structure.	A12228020
			2020 Loose fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme Revised Governance Structure.	A26407830
	Based on a high-level assessment, there are indicators the Scheme has achieved its strategic objectives	7.2.4	Eradication Scheme Steering Committee meeting papers, March 2022.	A33630296

Lesson learnt	Audit report finding	Report Reference	Information artefacts	Objective Reference
9. Developing effective processes and procedures (including a document metadata taxonomy) is essential to: allow future recovery program to access key artefacts; and provide the public with assurance that the program has achieved its objectives.	Although the Taskforce records for each phase are kept, these records were not always easy to locate and retrieve	6.2.9	McGrathNicol Report for Demolition Phase Audit. McGrathNicol Report for Sales Phase Audit.	A27641364 A28061118
	Although the Taskforce identified a transition approach in its 2020 Governance Strategy, this transition approach did not include all better practice closure activities	7.2.1	Asbestos Response Taskforce Governance Strategy.	A25366504
	The Taskforce has documented a range of lessons learned throughout the life of the Scheme, however these need to be collated and documented for reference by future disaster response programs	7.2.2		
	The preferred location for storing key Taskforce artefacts (for future disaster response programs) had not been determined at the time of audit fieldwork	7.2.3		

Appendix G. EPSDD Records Management Principles

The Standard sets out seven principles for ACT Government entities to comply with to promote open and accountable government and ensure records are managed and preserved in accessible formats now and into the future.

PRINCIPLE 01: STRATEGY

EPSDD will strategically manage records, information, and data by:

- developing and implementing a Records Management Program;
- developing and implementing clear and concise procedures and guidelines that support staff in meeting their information governance obligations; and
- actively engaging with business units to ensure records, information and data management principles are included in key organisational policies and procedures.

PRINCIPLE 02: CAPABILITY

EPSDD will establish and maintain appropriate records, information, and data management capabilities by:

- measuring records, information, and data management activities to ensure increasing organisational maturity;
- ensuring resourcing for the implementation of the Records Management Program; and
- developing and delivering training aimed at increasing organisation-wide understanding of records, information, and data management requirements.

PRINCIPLE 03: ASSESS

EPSDD will assess records, information, and data management requirements by:

- developing simple guidelines that articulate when and how to create records, information and data which comply with legislative requirements
- undertaking appraisal activities to determine the significance of their records, information, and data

PRINCIPLE 04: DESCRIBE

EPSDD will deliberately manage records, information, and data by:

- articulating clear and consistent naming conventions for records, information, and data; and
- ensuring that systems that provide context to records, information, and data, are managed, and updated to ensure that records remain relevant.

PRINCIPLE 05: PROTECT

EPSDD will manage the appropriate storage and preservation of records, information, and data by following guidelines for:

- identifying records, information, and data protection requirements; and
- monitoring records storage providers to ensure records that are historically significant are available now and into the future.

PRINCIPLE 06: RETAIN

EPSDD will identify the retention requirements of records, information, and data by:

- assessing which records, information and data must be retained as Territory archives;
- assessing which records, information and data are eligible for destruction; and
- ensuring timely destruction of records, information and data is managed appropriately, in accordance with legislative and security requirements.

PRINCIPLE 07: ACCESS

EPSDD will support open access to records, information, and data by:

- encouraging open access to records, information, and data;
- ensuring records, information and data can be found, accessed, and used; and
- enabling appropriate public access.



LESSONS LEARNED

ACT Government: Asbestos Response Taskforce

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Appendix D

REPORT

Document status

Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Date
1.0	Lessons learned report	Fiona Thompson	Rebecca Butchart	Kathryn Looke	30 June 2022
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Approval for issue

Ben Green, Executive Group Manager,
Development and Implementation

Electronically

9 September 2022

This report was prepared by RPS within the terms of RPS' engagement with its client and in direct response to a scope of services. This report is supplied for the sole and specific purpose for use by RPS' client. The report does not account for any changes relating the subject matter of the report, or any legislative or regulatory changes that have occurred since the report was produced and that may affect the report. RPS does not accept any responsibility or liability for loss whatsoever to any third party caused by, related to or arising out of any use or reliance on the report.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background and purpose

The Asbestos Response Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established in 2014 to develop and deliver a response to the ongoing challenge of loose fill asbestos insulation (Mr Fluffy) in Canberra homes. The asbestos insulation was known to be present in over 1000 Canberra homes.

Following consultation with asbestos experts, it was concluded that eradication was the preferred way forward as there was no enduring way to effectively manage the ongoing risk that loose fill asbestos insulation in residential homes would continue to present. In October 2014, the ACT Government announced the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (the Scheme) would be implemented by the Taskforce.

The Taskforce delivered the Scheme from 28 October 2014 until the Taskforce closed on 30 June 2022. The Scheme was delivered in the following stages:

- **Assistance:** providing tangible support to people affected or impacted by the legacy of loose fill asbestos insulation. This included case management, support and information, communications and financial assistance.
- **Buyback:** providing homeowners with the value of their property, with the valuation based on the value if no loose fill asbestos insulation was present.
- **Demolition:** demolishing and remediating affected and impacted properties.
- **Sales:** resale of affected and impacted blocks that had been remediated.

The original Buyback Program of the Scheme closed on the 17 August 2021. Following this closure, an ongoing Buyback Program and Scheme offerings, were implemented on 18 August 2021, for remaining and potential future properties.

The ACT Government engaged RPS AAP Consulting (RPS) to complete a Lessons Learned process and develop a report ahead of closure of the Taskforce. This report summarises findings and recommendations from a number of existing audits completed throughout the life of the Taskforce, as well as the additional lessons identified during the Lessons Learned process. It is designed as a tool that can be utilised by ACT Government in setting up and managing future taskforces.

1.2 Approach and methodology

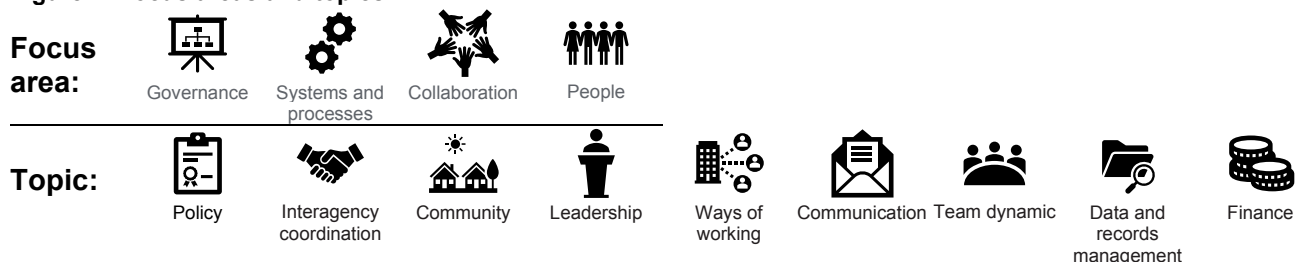
The lessons learned process aimed to identify, analyse and make recommendations from key lessons learned through the Taskforce and its activities. It included a literature review of existing audit documents, and an interactive process with Taskforce members to identify and outline lessons learned that had not been captured by previous audits. The interactive process focused on identifying and documenting lessons learned at a Taskforce level, in contrast to previous audits and reviews, many of which were more focused on lessons learned at a Scheme level.

1.3 Summary of findings

The Taskforce successfully managed the ACT Government's response to loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes between 2014 and 2022. It achieved excellent performance against scheme and phase objectives. Lessons learned were categorised by area of focus and topic through previous audits and the lessons learned process. The focus areas and topics were selected through engagement with current Taskforce members. They are outlined in Figure 1.

















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Figure 1: Focus areas and topics






1.4 Summary of recommendations

Many of the core recommendations are designed to leverage and replicate areas of better practice that were implemented by the Taskforce, with others focused on driving improvement to manage risk and make taskforce management easier for future taskforces from their inception.

Ref.	Focus area	Topic	Summary of recommendation	Context
R1			Data governance framework and systems: develop and implement appropriate naming conventions and systems for data governance and records management, with consideration to future reporting requirements.	While this was implemented progressively throughout the life of the Taskforce, it would benefit future taskforces to implement a detailed data framework it from inception.
R2			Single source of truth: implement a “single source of truth” for governance structures – where all relevant governance frameworks and documentation are stored and easily accessible.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce once progressively implemented – future taskforces should implement from inception.
R3			Priority reporting lines: maintain a positive and inclusive culture while implementing appropriate reporting lines – for example taskforces remaining attached to central government until policy and program commitments are completed.	This was implemented in the beginning of the Taskforce, and was beneficial – future taskforces should consider keeping the arrangement in place until closure.
R4			Start with the end in mind: identify a ‘trigger point’ for closure early in planning (at both a Taskforce and Phase level) – once the taskforces trigger point is hit, implement a pre-planned closure strategy.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce for many of its work areas – future taskforces should replicate this at a Taskforce level.
R5			Recruitment and retention: ensure interagency agreements developed at inception provide a framework for consistent, equitable recruitment and retention for the life of the taskforce.	While this was implemented with varying success by the Taskforce, it would benefit future taskforces if the ACT Government reviewed policy instruments to allow consistent application in future taskforce inception.
R6			Simple financial reporting: future Taskforces should develop a financial dashboard that clearly summarises the overall financial health of the program.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated
R7			Consistent, tailored communication approach: take an open and transparent approach to communications, considering the relevant audiences and ensuring communications are accessible.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated
R8			Develop and implement engagement guidelines: develop, update and maintain robust engagement guidelines, or ‘rules of engagement’, to manage community and	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated

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Ref.	FocusTopic Summary of recommendation area	Context
	reputational risk and ensure the wellbeing of community members.	
R9	 Interagency agreements: in the early phases, establish Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and memoranda of understanding (MoU) to guide interagency coordination.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated – with potential to improve by scheduling and frequently updating these instruments to ensure they are appropriate at each phase of the taskforce lifecycle
R10	 Lessons learned process: implement a formalised, systematic lessons learned process at inception, to be completed at various pre-defined trigger points throughout the life of the Taskforce.	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce across some areas – future taskforces should implement a systemised process at taskforce inception.
R11	 Taskforce Toolkit: develop an ACT Public Service specific Taskforce Toolkit to align with ACT Government processes, using the Australian Government's Taskforce Toolkit (Australian Public Service Commission, 2021) as a guide.	The Australian Government Toolkit referenced did not exist when the Taskforce was created so it was not possible for the Taskforce to leverage this. However, it would provide a good base for a similar, ACT Government focused, Toolkit to guide future taskforces.

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2 INTRODUCTION

The ACT Government engaged RPS AAP Consulting (RPS) to complete a Lessons Learned process and develop a report ahead of closure of the Asbestos Response Taskforce (Taskforce) on 30 June 2022. The Taskforce developed and managed the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (Scheme).

This report summarises findings and recommendations from a number of existing audits completed throughout the life of the Taskforce and existing lessons learned documentation, as well as the additional lessons identified during the Lessons Learned process. The lessons learned process is covered in detail in Section 4.1, and was focused on identifying and documenting lessons learned at a Taskforce level, in contrast to previous audits and reviews, which were more focused on lessons learned at a Scheme or phase level.

This report is designed as a tool to assist the ACT Government in setting up and managing future taskforces, with lessons learned considered generally to ensure they are transferable to taskforces required to respond to different types of issues. It specifically seeks to form recommendations based on the lessons learned incrementally through Taskforce operations – in some cases they are based on things that worked well, and in others the recommendations are made with the benefit of hindsight. That is, if the Taskforce team were to set up a new taskforce, what would they do differently to make it easier and more efficient to deliver against Taskforce objectives.

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3 BACKGROUND

3.1 History of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes

3.1.1 About asbestos

Historically, asbestos was a common building material in Australia, including in Canberra. Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring mineral fibres that were used extensively in many products due to their strength, insulating features and resistance to fire. In Australia, most building products containing asbestos were banned in the mid-1980s due to health risks associated with inhaling asbestos fibres, although some products were used in other equipment until 2003.

Most asbestos used in residential homes was bonded asbestos-cement, for example fibro walls and rooves. When they are in good condition, these products don't normally release asbestos into the air and are considered a low risk for people in contact with them. Once damaged, bonded asbestos can become 'friable', at which point it may pose a health risk if the fibres are inhaled.

Loose fill asbestos insulation is particularly dangerous because it is made up of loose raw asbestos fibres that are very fine and can move into living areas through cracks or holes in walls or ceilings.

3.1.2 Mr Fluffy and loose fill asbestos insulation

Mr Fluffy was a company that installed loose fill asbestos insulation in more than 1000 houses in Canberra in the 1960s and 1970s. This loose fill asbestos insulation was typically pumped directly into roof spaces.

Between 1988 and 1993, the Commonwealth and ACT Governments delivered a loose fill asbestos removal that aimed to remove visible and accessible loose fill asbestos insulation from identified Mr Fluffy houses.

Loose fill asbestos insulation material remained in these houses, in areas such as internal and external wall cavities, subfloor spaces and behind cornices. In a number of cases, assessments found that fibres migrated and had penetrated into the homes living spaces .

3.1.3 Timeline

Refer to Appendix C. for a full timeline of the issue of loose fill asbestos installation, the Taskforce and the Scheme.

3.2 Asbestos Response Taskforce

The Asbestos Response Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established in 2014 to develop and deliver a response to the ongoing challenge of loose fill asbestos insulation (Mr Fluffy) in Canberra homes.

3.3 Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme

In October 2014, the ACT Government announced the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (the Scheme) would be implemented by the Taskforce. The Scheme was developed following consultation with asbestos experts, noting that there was no effective way to manage the ongoing risk of loose fill asbestos insulation, which was known to be present in over 1000 Canberra homes.

3.3.1 Scheme objectives

The objectives of the Scheme were to:

- eliminate, by demolishing all known affected houses, the ongoing risk of exposure to loose fill asbestos insulation for homeowners, tenants, tradespeople and the wider community
- provide a fair outcome for owners of affected homes
- provide, so far as possible and reasonable, flexibility and options for informed choices to be made by owners of affected homes

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- minimise overall net costs to the Canberra community and the ACT Government (thereby minimising the flow-on impact to other government policy and program delivery areas).

3.3.2 Scheme phases

Table 1: Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme phases



Assistance (2014 – end of Program)

This phase was designed to respond to the impact of the Scheme on the lives of current and former homeowners and tenants. It aimed to ensure those people affected or impacted by the legacy of loose fill asbestos insulation could access the identified personal supports they needed. The phase's initiatives included individual case management, personalised support and information, financial assistance and targeted communications to provide people with the personal support and assistance they needed.



Buyback (Late 2014 – mid-2021)

The Buyback phase was a voluntary program that included separate arrangements for **affected** properties (properties where loose fill asbestos insulation was present) and **impacted** properties (properties that would be directly impacted by demolition of an affected property for example where they are closely located or share walls). It provided affected/impacted homeowners the value of their property as at 28 October 2014 and 19 November 2015, respectively; an additional \$1,000 to cover legal fees incurred; and a right to waiver of stamp duty on residential property purchased in the ACT. This phase was extended into mid-2020.



Demolition (Mid 2015 – 2022)

This phase involved demolishing and remediating affected/impacted properties. Its primary objective was the eradication of loose fill asbestos insulation. Demolition was completed in seven stages, each completed for every property:

1. Decommission and secure: transfer property ownership and complete maintenance activities.
2. Planning and assessment: scoping, planning and assessment ahead of site work.
3. Site set up: preparing the site for demolition.
4. Internal asbestos removal: safe removal of any asbestos fibres.
5. Demolition: demolishing structures and ensuring waste is safely disposed of, as well as removing the top 10cm of soil.
6. Soil testing: testing soil and removing any residual traces of asbestos, including validation by an independent assessor.
7. Deregistration: completion of documentation, handover of cleaned block to Taskforce, property is then removed from the Affected Residential Premises Register.



Sales (2015 – ongoing)

The Sales phase focused on the resale of affected/impacted blocks that were remediated through the Demolition phase. The sale of these blocks partially offset the overall cost of the Scheme for the ACT government. The Sales phase included three sales channels, in order of opportunity for purchase:

1. First right of refusal.
2. ACT government agencies.
3. Public sales.

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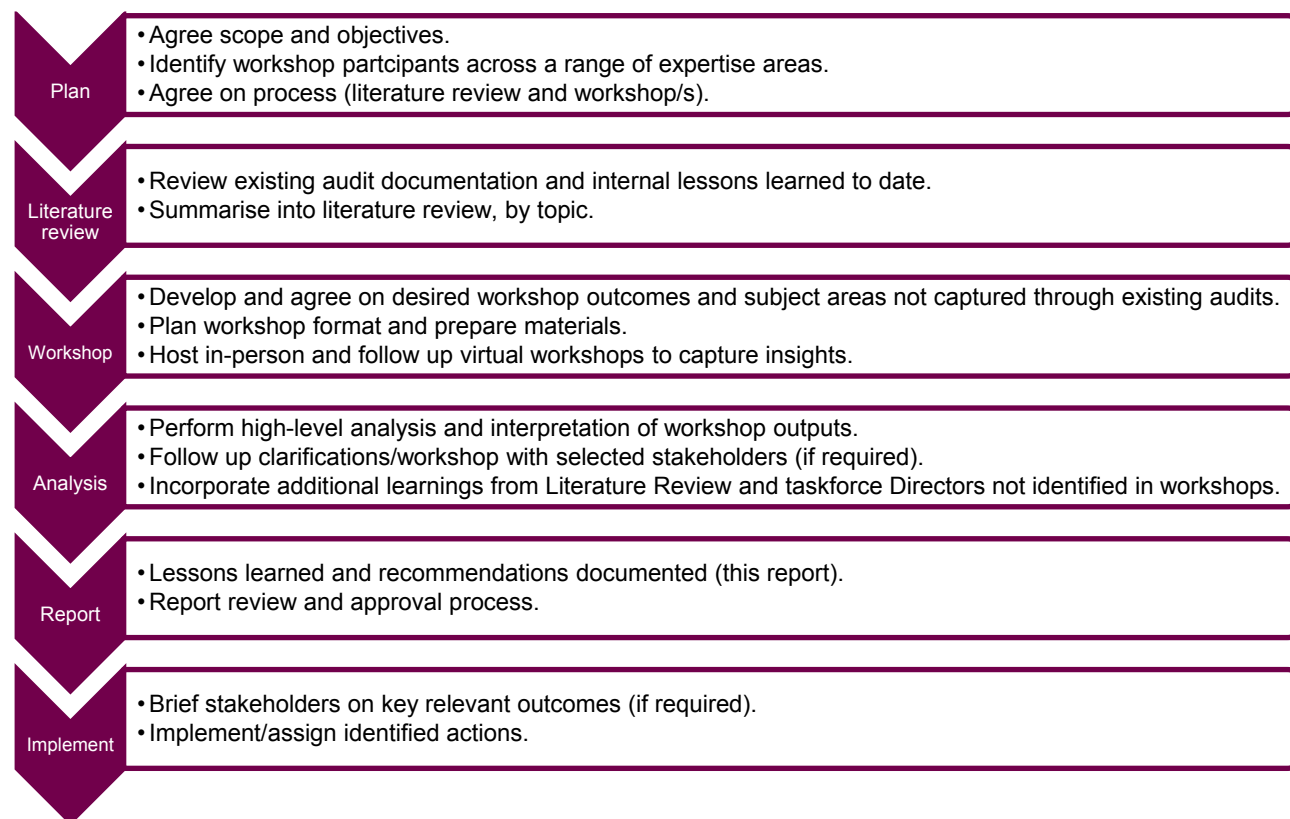
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4 APPROACH

4.1 Lessons learned process

The approach used to identify, analyse and make recommendations from key lessons learned through the Taskforce and its activities is outlined in Figure 2: Lessons learned process.

Figure 2: Lessons learned process



4.2 Workshops

RPS independently facilitated an in-person workshop, as well as a follow-up virtual session with team members who had been unable to participate due to illness. In addition to the two workshops, key senior Taskforce leaders were interviewed to capture additional insights. Details of how the workshops and feedback mechanisms were managed are provided in Table 2: Summary of workshop methodology.

Table 2: Summary of workshop methodology

Deliverable	Format	Details
Workshop 1	In-person	<p>An in-person workshop attended by 10 members of the Taskforce team and facilitated by an independent facilitator from RPS. At the workshop, each Taskforce member was asked to specify the outcome/s they hoped to achieve through participating in the workshop. These were captured on post-it notes and transferred to an outcomes report.</p> <p>Taskforce members brainstormed key topics for discussion and worked together to prioritise topics that should be taken forward for further discussion.</p> <p>Each prioritised topic was then discussed in more detail in pairs, using the Rose/Bud/Thorn/Soil framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rose: what went well • Bud: what could've been improved

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Deliverable	Format	Details
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thorn: what didn't go well Soil: recommendations for a future taskforce – building a solid foundation. <p>On completion of this collaborative exercise, Taskforce members were given the opportunity to add any additional recommendations, which were also captured.</p> <p>At the end of Workshop 1, the intended outcomes were re-visited. Participants confirmed they were happy their intended outcomes had been achieved and stated they felt the workshop was extremely valuable and would assist future taskforces.</p>
Workshop 2	Virtual – Teams	At the time of Workshop 1, a number of team members were unable to attend due to illness. Insights gathered in Workshop 1 were transferred into a MURAL board (an online collaboration tool). In a shorter online workshop, the remaining six team members were taken through the insights and asked to add anything missed. Participants were actively engaged and generous with their feedback, though they broadly agreed that the key items had been covered in Workshop 1.
Interviews	Virtual – Teams	Taskforce Executive Group Manager, Ben Green, and Executive Branch Manager, Lea Durie, were interviewed between Workshop 1 and Workshop 2. During the interview, Ben and Lea were taken through the outputs from Workshop 1 and asked to add any additional feedback or lessons to be captured. They broadly agreed that the key learnings had been covered and were satisfied the process would lead to recommendations that would assist future leadership teams in setting up and running taskforces.

4.3 Stakeholders engaged

Through the lessons learned process, recent Taskforce team members were asked to provide their feedback. These Taskforce team members were chosen due to their role as current/recent Taskforce members. Former Taskforce members had already been interviewed as part of the final audit. Table 3 includes the details of Taskforce members engaged during the process.

Table 3: Stakeholders engaged through lessons learned process

Role on Taskforce	Area of expertise	Engagement method
Executive Group Manager, Development and Implementation	Executive leadership	Interviews
Executive Branch Manager, Development and Implementation	Executive leadership	Workshop 1 (introduction only), Interviews
Senior Director, Asbestos Response Taskforce	Governance, leadership, program delivery, case coordination, community engagement and recovery	Workshop 1, Interviews, Workshop 2 (introduction only)
Former Senior Director	Communications and engagement, leadership	Workshop 1
Director Governance and Risk	Governance and risk	Workshop 1, Interviews
Former Director Finance and Budgets	Financial management	Workshop 1
Director Personal Support	Case coordination, community engagement and recovery	Workshop 2
Director Demolition and Complex Properties	Infrastructure Project management	Workshop 1
Director Policy	Policy	Workshop 1
Project Manager Demolition and Complex Properties	Project management	Workshop 2

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Role on Taskforce	Area of expertise	Engagement method
Assistant Director, Government Business, Reporting and Sales Former Personal Support Engagement Officer	Community engagement, Sales and Government business	Workshop 2
Senior Case Coordinator	Case coordination and frontline community engagement	Workshop 2
Project Officer Demolition and Sales	Project management, contracts and procurement	Workshop 2
Project Officer, Governance Risk and Finance	Governance, information management, finance, secretariat services	Workshop 1
Records Coordinator	Information and records management	Workshop 2
Administration Officer	Administration, reporting and data	Workshop 2
Project Officer Demolition and Complex Properties	Project management	Workshop 1

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5 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Taskforce was audited throughout its delivery, as a way of capturing performance against objectives. This literature review summarises the findings of these audits into the Taskforce's development and implementation of the Scheme. The full literature review, including the full list of recommendations and existing lessons learned, is included in Appendix B: Literature review.

Ultimately, each audit of the Asbestos Response Taskforce found that the Taskforce had effectively and efficiently managed the separate phases attributed to the Scheme.
















While areas of the Taskforce would benefit from reflection on their Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and stricter understandings of long term outcomes of certain actions, as outlined in the summary of key recommendations, the program is seen through the literature review, to have successfully supported affected/impacted homeowners and tenants. Lessons learned through these audits are summarised in Appendix B: Literature review.

5.1 Sources

Author	Name of report	Release date	Phases covered	Listed as
PWC	ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce Review	2015	   	PWC (2015)
Reynolds, Chris	ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce: Implementing a Positive Risk Culture in Government	2016	   	Reynolds (2016)
Synergy	Close Out Evaluation of Buyback Phase	2019		Synergy (2019)
Elton Consulting	Assistance Phase Review Report	2020		Elton Consulting (2020)
Asbestos Response Taskforce	Team Charter	2020	   	ACT Government (2020)
McGrathNicol	Close Out Evaluation Demolition Phase	2020		McGrathNicol (2020)
McGrathNicol	Close Out Evaluation Sales Phase	2021		McGrathNicol (2021)
Asbestos Response Taskforce	ART Phase 1 Risks – Assistance	2021		ACT Government (2021)
Asbestos Response Taskforce	ART Phase 2 Risks – Buyback	2021		ACT Government (2021a)
Asbestos Response Taskforce	ART Phase 3 Risks – Demolition	2021		ACT Government (2021b)
Asbestos Response Taskforce	ART Phase 4 Risks – Sales	2021		ACT Government (2021c)
Asbestos Response Taskforce	ART Strategic Risks	2021	 	ACT Government (2021d)

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Author	Name of report	Release date	Phases covered	Listed as
			 	
McGrathNicol	Asbestos Response Taskforce Scheme Delivery Closure Final Report	2022	 	McGrathNicol (2022)
			 	
Asbestos Response Taskforce	Project Lessons Learned – Demolition and Rebuild	2022		ACT Government (2022)
Asbestos Response Taskforce	Project Lessons Learned – Personal Support Team	2022	 	ACT Government (2022a)
			 	
Asbestos Response Taskforce	Project Lessons Learned – Policy	2022	 	ACT Government (2022b)
			 	

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6 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK










During the lessons learned process, participants brainstormed key areas for further exploration under the overarching categories of **Governance, Collaboration, Systems and processes, and People**. Through a process of prioritisation, stakeholders selected nine key topics (**Policy, Interagency coordination, Community, Leadership, Ways of working, Communication, Team dynamic, Data and records management, and Finance**) where they felt there were lessons learned that had not already been captured by existing audits.

During the process, stakeholders were generous with their time and insights. A number of high level lessons learned by topic, along with recommendations for future taskforces, is provided in Section 7: Lessons learned.

Stakeholders worked together to outline for each topic area:

- What went well
- What could've been improved
- What didn't go well
- Recommendations for future taskforces.

A full summary of the feedback provided by stakeholders during this process is included in Appendix A: WORKSHOP OUTPUTS.

Icon	Name	Definition
	Policy	Changes to the regulatory environment or Government policy to allow efficient Taskforce operations
	Interagency coordination	Collaboration across agencies, both within the ACT Government and with Commonwealth Government and private entities
	Community	Interaction with and support of the community
	Leadership	Functioning of leadership positions in both external facing roles and internal to the Taskforce
	Ways of working	How the Taskforce team works together, collaborates and interacts, both formally and informally
	Communication	Release of information to community, including physical and digital communications, and systems to manage materials
	Team dynamic	Interaction between the team, including leadership
	Data and records management	Systems and processes related to consistent data and records management
	Finance	Management of finance through operating systems, targets and modelling














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7 LESSONS LEARNED

This section summarises lessons learned by focus area and topic through previous audits and the lessons learned process. For ease of reference, the icons shown in Table 4 have been used to categorise feedback and lessons throughout this report.

Table 4: Legend - areas of focus and topics

Focus area:									
	Governance	Systems and processes	Collaboration	People					
Topic:									
	Policy	Interagency coordination	Community	Leadership	Ways of working	Communication	Team dynamic	Data and records management	Finance

7.1 Governance

Taskforce governance was a key area identified by workshop participants and previous audits. Overall, Governance arrangements were well implemented by the Taskforce, with a focus on the whole of Government response to the issue of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes.

Since the Taskforce was established, the Australian Government has developed a Taskforce Toolkit (Australian Public Service Commission, 2021). This Toolkit did not exist when the Taskforce was established, so it was not possible for the Taskforce to leverage this. However, it contains relevant lessons and suggestions that are transferrable to the ACT Government environment, and could be leveraged by the ACT Government to create a similar resource for ACT based taskforces. Interestingly, the Taskforce followed a large proportion of the guidance in the Toolkit – and many of these items helped ensure its success against objectives.



7.1.1 Policy

The Scheme's clear objectives were made publicly available, demonstrating transparency. Further, appropriate policies continued to be developed to address outstanding concerns, with core consistency and policy alignment maintained over the Taskforce's eight year lifecycle.

It should be acknowledged that policy implementation should be considered at the time that the policy is made, and re-evaluated and adjusted if required as program implementation progresses. For example, consideration of interdependencies of the First Right of Refusal Sales program with the finalised timing of the demolition program schedule.

At a Taskforce level, appropriate governance arrangements were in place throughout the life of the Taskforce, however the program may have benefited from a "single source of truth" for its governance structures. This includes a single source of truth for Taskforce stakeholders, which were captured across a variety of systems due to limitations in data and records management.



7.1.2 Leadership

Taskforce members described its leadership structure as a "flat culture" (see 7.1.1: Policy). This helped foster understanding of the work being delivered, but should not be confused with a flat structure, given appropriate approvals processes and governance structures were in place to ensure delegations were maintained.

From a culture perspective, the "flat culture" (as opposed to a flat structure, given clear approval and governance arrangements were in place) within the Taskforce, where senior leaders were accessible, helped to expedite decision making. This was especially true in the earlier Taskforce phases where the Taskforce

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reported directly into the Chief Minister's office. This Governance structure saw effective management of legislation change, with the Taskforce overseeing the amendment of 26 pieces of legislation to facilitate Scheme delivery. The Taskforce engaged early with key stakeholders in developing policy, and this helped ensure the Scheme's success.

In the early days of the Taskforce, the "flat culture" allowed for expedited decision making. Some functional areas of the Taskforce had a very broad span of control in leadership, and this led to delayed decision making on occasion, particularly during peak periods. Future taskforces should consider appropriate span of control and adjust delegations to respond to peaks and troughs in deliverables (in relation to both team management and to topic areas of responsibility). This could be considered across different Taskforce phases in future Taskforces – for example, where public facing communications are at a peak, consider splitting the reputation management and Government relations functional areas from frontline delivery decision making, or revisit delegations of authority to ensure decisions on individual cases can be expedited. However, during quieter periods it would be appropriate to group these functions.

In earlier phases, the Taskforce reported directly into the Chief Minister's office and this expedited decision making. Future taskforces should consider appropriate reporting lines, with the recommendation that future taskforces remain within central government until policy and program commitments are completed.

7.2 Systems and processes

Overall, the Taskforce has robust SOPs, data and records management, with particular focus on SOPs by program phase. These SOPs made it easier for Taskforce members to deliver against objectives, providing a solid framework for delivery. In earlier phases, there was some room for improvement in this space, for example during the Buyback phase where the SOPs did not cover timeframes for processing Buyback applications.



7.2.1 Data and records management

Data and records management was an area where the Taskforce could make significant improvements. While data management requirements were met by the program, its use of multiple systems to capture community and project information made it difficult for team members to navigate and find the right data.

Future taskforces should put in place a robust data governance framework and policy during taskforce inception. The framework should simplify data and records management requirements and require taskforce members to keep records up to date. It should include standard naming conventions and consider using systems that can act as a "single source of truth" for the program.

This should be backed up by regular training and refreshers, supported by a detailed data onboarding process, and monitored and reported upon regularly. Instruction manuals for key systems and processes should also be developed (note: these were developed for some systems and processes used by the Taskforce, however this should be systemised).

In terms of reporting, this should also be considered during taskforce inception, ensuring it is clear what data points are being collected and why.

File naming conventions and record management was set out well theoretically but impacted by inconsistency in practice. This could be resolved through earlier consideration and appropriate data governance frameworks.



7.2.2 Finance

Effective financial modelling and cost efficiencies driven by economies of scale saw the Taskforce achieve against most of its financial targets – an example is the reduction of the cost to demolish a structure from \$120,000 in the beginning of the Taskforce to around \$90,000 towards the end (before COVID19 and its associated escalation of building materials and labour costs).

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The financial assistance packages for the community were considered to be adequate and had the flexibility to respond to differences in circumstance, with the eligibility criteria in place appropriate and able to mitigate financial insecurity.

In its early days, the Taskforce did not have adequate appropriation, and this should be put in place at inception. Appropriation should also be reviewed to consider funding and consultation mechanisms for ongoing community recovery costs such as Legacy projects.

Taskforce expenditure was accurately recorded and reported, and importantly took a human-centred approach, considering the impacts to the community and focusing on supporting recovery.

From a reporting perspective, future taskforces should consider developing a succinct financial dashboard that clearly summarises the overall financial health of the program.

7.3 Collaboration



7.3.1 Interagency coordination

In the earlier days of the Taskforce, and in phases where a large volume of work was happening at various sites, interagency coordination was successfully managed, including through clear Service Level Agreements (SLA). Interagency coordination was key to the Taskforce's success, with customers benefiting from clear and coordinated arrangements and agreements with banks, insurance companies, the Australian Tax Office, Centrelink, and other agencies. Taskforce leadership brokered good networks, goodwill, and established SLAs, memorandums of understanding (MoU), contractual and support arrangements to achieve delivery and objectives of the Scheme. Regular meetings and robust contractual agreements with delivery partners ensured delivery against objective.

As the Taskforce continued and the issue began to be managed, it became more difficult to engage with key stakeholder organisations. Due to a decreasing quantum of properties, there were expected gaps in delivery, based on the necessity of prioritisation. External agencies were unable to plan around this as newly acquired properties appeared randomly and the maintenance of resources to ensure immediate action on these was unachievable. This was especially true for engagement with utility providers, for example the time it took to arrange updates to utility connection following completion of demolition increased, causing delays. Future taskforces should allow for revised contractual agreements and SLAs when the program begins to slow down. An example of this may be to consolidate groups of properties through three quarters of the year, with a consolidated delivery push in the last quarter to create consistent workload for partners across that quarter.

The Taskforce took an open and transparent approach to communications, and this ultimately set the Program up for success, despite the extremely difficult subject matter. While time consuming, a tailored approach to communication with homeowners ensured community members were given information relevant to their personal circumstances. However, tailoring communications was labour intensive, especially given the sheer volume of tailored hardcopy communications for delivery.

Written communication guidelines for frontline team members, as well as information sheets, ensured message consistency and reduced reputational risk. This was supported by a better practice Communications Strategy and community in reach. The Taskforce also considered its audiences and ensured communications were accessible, providing translation services when required.

7.3.2 Ways of working



The Personal Support Team (PST) developed a Team Charter to establish a values based culture through ways of working. This included conflict management through monthly surveys, where issues related to Taskforce functionality were broken down and it was determined whether they were a people or systems issue. This helped build buy-in to the Charter, providing an opportunity to work through solutions as a team and acted to depersonalise issues, creating an overall better way of working. This method was eventually implemented across the Taskforce, providing a shared vision. This helped drive consistency in interactions both across the Taskforce and with community.

Team members highlighted the benefits of co-location and the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on ways of working, however this is something that applies to all teams, not just the Taskforce. COVID-19 presented

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challenges including the inability to learn incidentally – this could be resolved by more formal update processes or regular team stand-ups in remote working environments.

The Taskforce consisted of flexible, small teams, arranged by the subject matter area of expertise – this helped drive agility and encouraged teams to work together to respond to challenges. The collaborative culture within the Taskforce allowed for good community outcomes, including increased efficiency that ultimately led to reduced costs and a more consistent community experience.

The remaining properties tracker was an area that Taskforce team members felt required additional focus, and future taskforces are encouraged to consider implementing this earlier and ensuring it remains current.

While it was clear the Taskforce had looked to similar large scale remediation programs to guide its activities, it would benefit from a formalised, systematic Lessons Learned process that could be templated and completed at various trigger points throughout the life of the Taskforce, to ensure a more consistent method of documenting lessons learned and opportunities. This should be considered at taskforce inception.

7.4 People



7.4.1 Communication

The Taskforce took an open and transparent approach to communications, and this ultimately set the Program up for success, despite the extremely difficult subject matter. While time consuming, a tailored approach to communication with homeowners ensured community members were given information relevant to their personal circumstances. However, tailoring communications was labour intensive, especially given the sheer volume of tailored hardcopy communications for delivery.

Written communication guidelines for frontline team members, as well as information sheets, ensured message consistency and reduced reputational risk. This was supported by a better practice Communications Strategy and community in reach. The Taskforce also considered its audiences and ensured communications were accessible, providing translation services when required.

The original 2014 Taskforce website needed improvement – it was difficult to navigate and community members couldn't submit forms online. This was due to initial lack of access to resourcing and over the course of the Taskforce, website functionality and accessibility was improved. Future taskforces should consider initial investment into the creation of a website that can act as a first point of contact for the affected and general community. This may be done through proper resource allocation to allow for a third party hosted site, if corporate websites are unable to provide a functional user experience (in particular, hosts specifically designed to manage community engagement and consultation).

Social media was an area for improvement – the Taskforce aimed for transparency, which generally requires commenting to be left open on social media channels. However, this presents the challenge of protecting privacy and ensuring the wellbeing of community members interacting via the channel, and requires careful consideration. Future taskforces should develop and implement social media policies and procedures as part of inception to mitigate this risk and ensure a consistent community experience.



7.4.2 Team dynamic

During Taskforce inception, team dynamic benefited from the ability to select team members based on relevant skillsets and experience from directorates within the ACT government and externally. This resulted in a genuinely committed and equipped team. Team members held consistent values, and were dedicated to providing a consistent, empathetic service to community members – and this was evident across all functions, from Finance to Personal Support, leading to a strong culture within the Taskforce.

Team building appears to have been managed inconsistently across the Taskforce. However, there are some examples where things that worked well in one part of the Taskforce were replicated or extended across the Taskforce, benefitting the team dynamic. For example, the Personal Support Team (PST) developed a Team Charter to guide its operations (see 7.3.2: The Taskforce took an open and transparent approach to communications, and this ultimately set the Program up for success, despite the extremely difficult subject matter. While time consuming, a tailored approach to communication with homeowners ensured community members were given information relevant to their personal circumstances. However,

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tailoring communications was labour intensive, especially given the sheer volume of tailored hardcopy communications for delivery.

Written communication guidelines for frontline team members, as well as information sheets, ensured message consistency and reduced reputational risk. This was supported by a better practice Communications Strategy and community in reach. The Taskforce also considered its audiences and ensured communications were accessible, providing translation services when required.

Ways of working), and this was eventually implemented across the Taskforce, providing a shared vision for ending well.

Team dynamic benefited from a critical incident debriefer and Workplace Coach, who reviewed and provided feedback on the functionality of the systems and culture for frontline responders initially and later the broader team. The Workplace Coach acted as a mediator; identified and navigated interpersonal, process and system tensions; and removed fear of risking internal relationships. The Workplace Coach provided one-on-one feedback and delivered group sessions to discuss surveys completed by staff, preventing burnout and enabling maintenance of the 'person-centred support' that the Taskforce was providing for affected/impacted homeowners and tenants.

An area for improvement is around consistency in application of recruitment and retention practices. This was managed inconsistently by the various 'home directorates' of Taskforce team members. There was inconsistency in treatment of employees on temporary contracts compared with those on secondment from other directorates, as well as inconsistency between how home directorates responded to requests for contract extensions. This led to inequity in team members' employee experience. An example is that some business units within the Taskforce understood the longer term nature of the programs' work, such as the demolition program, and contracted employees for longer temporary contracts of up to one year. Other business units within the Taskforce offered staff three to six month contracts. This presented a risk of talented team members looking elsewhere to ensure continued employment.

In addition, there was no mechanism to ensure recognition of increased skills and capability, leading to uncertainty and potential loss of benefits for team members on secondment from other directorates. While this is less of an issue for future taskforces of limited duration, some team members in the Taskforce worked on the Scheme for eight years – these employees have had a significant uplift in their skills and experience and may be acting at employment grades several above their substantive roles. When these team members return to their home directorates, there is no merit based mechanism for the employee or directorate to recognise their performance capabilities and new level of skill. This negatively impacts them, given it is likely they would have progressed in their home directorates had they remained in their substantive roles. It also presents a risk of regrettable turnover, should these employees choose to leave the ACT public service in search of roles representing their new skills and experience. Unfortunately, this is not an issue that can be resolved by the Taskforce, as it relates to employment legislation and ACT Government policy. However, at a whole of service level there is an opportunity to ensure legislation and/or policy allowing for consideration/recognition of increased skill level to support staff in transition back to their regular roles.

Consideration should also be given to implementing strong MoUs between ACT Government agencies, with a focus on consistency in treatment of taskforce members on return to home agencies and in the case of restructure in their home teams (see 7.4.1: Communication).



7.4.3 Community

The Personal Support Team (PST) is a great example of how the Taskforce delivered an empathetic and broadly consistent response to community members, especially considering the difficult subject matter.

Individual case managers were able to successfully support impacted/affected community members, and this model should be replicated by future taskforces. Given the emotive nature of the topic and its impacts on human health, as well as the early decision to buyback properties, it would be difficult to completely manage community perception. However, by taking a transparent approach, the Taskforce managed this as successfully as it could.

Implementation of a Community Engagement Reference Group (CERG) was an excellent strategy, however the CERG could have been better leveraged to reach community. Consideration of Legacy project funding

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and consultation mechanisms for ongoing community recovery should be considered early or shortly after program implementation.

Public forums were an area for improvement. While face to face engagement was a good choice, given the difficult subject matter, options other than town hall meetings may have been a better choice for community engagement. At the time these were held, virtual sessions were not commonly used. Given the improvements to online engagement technology and digital literacy in the community in a post-COVID environment, future taskforces should consider virtual engagement as a tool to manage potentially challenging engagements.

Contact centre staff were recognised as a frontline response for the Taskforce, however their location was initially apart from the rest of the Taskforce. Prior to movement into the central Taskforce offices, call centre staff were unaware of information in a timely manner, leading to an inability to complete their task. Future taskforces should ensure the contact centre is located with the rest of the Taskforce. Appropriate training and education for contact centre staff would have improved their ability to perform assigned roles effectively.

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8 CONCLUSIONS AND CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Taskforce successfully managed the ACT Government’s response to loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes between 2014 and 2022. It achieved excellent performance against scheme and phase objectives. There are a number of lessons learned and recommendations that could benefit future taskforces, broadly under the focus areas of **Governance, Collaboration, Systems and processes, and People**. The lessons and recommendations are further categorised by topic: **Policy, Interagency coordination, Community, Leadership, Ways of working, Communication, Team dynamic, Data and records management, and Finance**. This section provides a summary of the highest priority recommendations from the lessons learned process and previous audits. It is designed as a tool for future taskforces. For the full list of recommendations, please refer to Appendix A: WORKSHOP OUTPUTS

Activity 1: Making a call – topic identification and prioritisation

During Workshop 1, Taskforce members brainstormed key topics for discussion (under the focus areas of Governance, People, Systems and processes, and Collaboration) and worked together to prioritise topics that should be taken forward for further discussion. At the completion of the workshop, participants’ feedback was transferred into a MURAL board (an online collaboration tool – see screenshot below), so that they could be further developed in the follow up interviews and workshops. The collated insights are shown in the table overleaf. In the prioritisation exercise, participants added dots to their focus topics (shown in the table by +). These are raw outputs from the session and require interpretation – this is provided in the Taskforce lessons learned report.

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Figure: Activity - screenshot of MURAL board

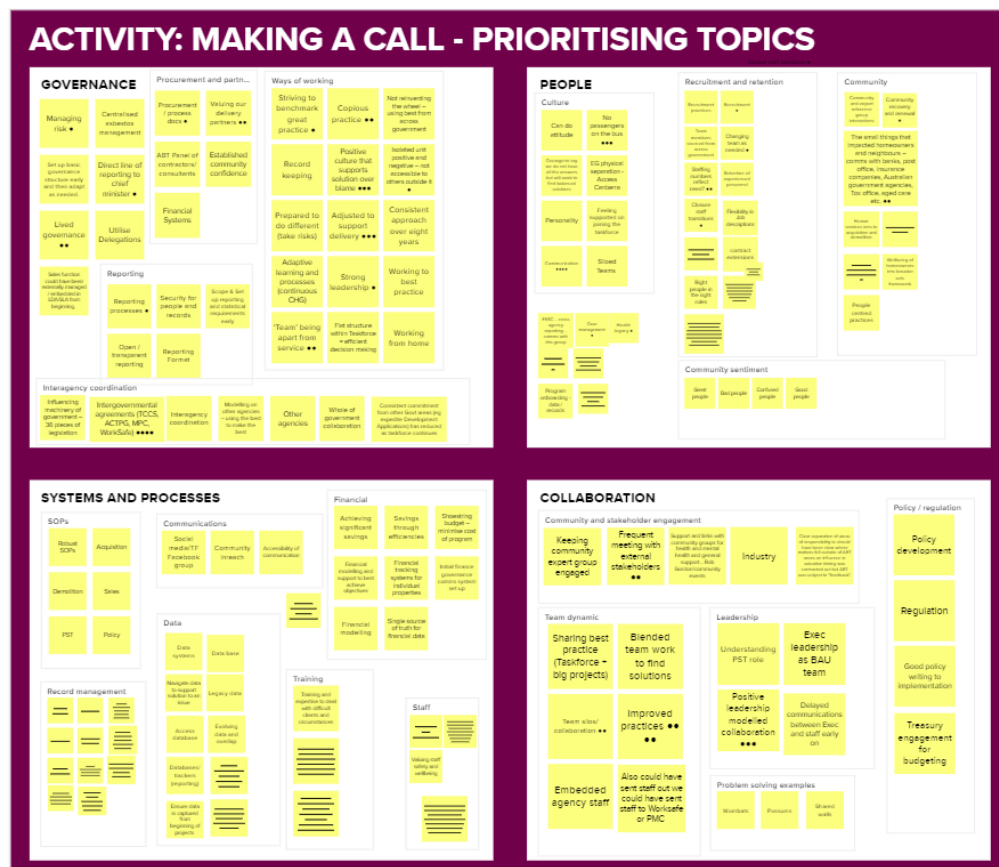


Table: Topic prioritisation

Governance	People	Systems and processes	Collaboration	Other topics
Reporting and governance structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct line of reporting to Chief Minister + Reporting processes + Open/transparent reporting 	Recruitment and retention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment + Staffing numbers reflect need? ++ Retention of experienced personnel Closure staff transitions + 	Financial ++++++ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieving significant savings Savings through efficiencies Shoestring budget – minimise cost of program 	Community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping Community Expert Reference Group engaged Wombats Possums Support and links with community groups for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Openness + Case studies Respect + Values driven + Values based + COVID Integrity

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Governance	People	Systems and processes	Collaboration	Other topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security for people and records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing team as needed + Team members sourced from across government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial modelling and support to best achieve objectives Financial tracking systems for individual properties Initial finance governance comms system set up Financial modelling Single source of truth for financial data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> health and mental health and general support. Rob Gordon clinical psychologist/community events Understanding PST role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to market forces Trust earned +++++ Trust Empathy/respect and systems > solutions Listen to understand History Reasons Modelling on other agencies – using the best to make the best Legislative change (26) to support positive outcomes
Leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lived governance ++ Strong leadership + 'Team' being apart from service ++ Flat culture within Taskforce = efficient decision making 	Team dynamic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No passengers on the bus +++ Courage to say we do not have all the answers but will work to find balanced solutions Isolated unit positive and negative – not accessible to others outside it + Positive culture that supports solution over blame +++ Striving to benchmark great practice + 	Data +++++ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data systems Data base Access database Navigate data to support solution to an issue Legacy data Databases/tackers (reporting) Evolving data and overlap 	Ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing best practice (Taskforce + big projects) Treasury engagement for budgeting Embedded agency staff Blended team work to find solutions Team silos/collaboration ++ Executive leadership as BAU team Positive leadership modelled collaboration +++ Frequent meeting with external stakeholders ++ Ways of working: Prepared to do different (take risks) Adaptive learning and processes (continuous change) Centralised asbestos management Copious practice ++ 	

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Governance	People	Systems and processes	Collaboration	Other topics
Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influencing machinery of government – 26 pieces of legislation Consistent approach over eight years Not reinventing the wheel – using best from across government Adjusted to support delivery +++ Managing risk + Improved practices (industry / regulation) ++++ Policy development Good policy writing to implementation 	Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community and export reference group interactions Communication ++++ Health legacy + The small things that impacted homeowners and neighbours – comms with banks, post office, insurance companies, Australian government agencies, Tax office, aged care etc. ++ Wellbeing of homeowners into broader acts framework Valuing the people impacted compassionately + Staff/homeowner wellbeing Homeowners Community recovery and renewal + Case management + Human services lens to acquisition and demolition Established community confidence 	Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and expertise to deal with difficult clients and circumstances Learning across range of tasks and processes Tip disposal Finance Demolition Remediation Legal processes Rebuild Program onboarding + 	Communication ++ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media/Taskforce Facebook group Community in reach Accessibility of communication 	
	Community sentiment / approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personality Cooperation Great people Value people Bad people Confused people Good people 	Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust SOPs Acquisition Demolition Sales PST Policy 	Interagency coordination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intergovernmental agreements ++++ Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS), ACT Property Group, Major Projects Canberra (MPC), WorkSafe 	

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Governance	People	Systems and processes	Collaboration	Other topics
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modelling on other agencies – using the best to make the best Other agencies Valuing our delivery partners ++ Whole of government collaboration ABT Panel of contractors/consultants Eradication Scheme Steering Committee (ESSC) – cross agency reporting – comms with this group	
	Staff + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting staff development Valuing staff safety and wellbeing 	Documentation/Record management ++++++ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record keeping Objective Documents Information navigation Records ownership Procurement/process docs + Records management (easy internal access – access/Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD)) 		

Activity: Rose, bud, thorn and soil – unpacking lessons learned

Each prioritised topic was then discussed in more detail in pairs, using the Rose/Bud/Thorn/Soil framework, as shown in the table below:



- Rose:** what went well

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- **Bud:** what could've been improved
- **Thorn:** what didn't go well
- **Soil:** recommendations for a future taskforce – building a solid foundation.



Please note: These are raw outputs from the session – they have been summarised and interpreted in the Taskforce lessons learned report

Table: Rose, bud, thorn and soil outputs



Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Came up with clear objectives for scheme – and made public • Easily accessed scheme on website • Developed further appropriate policies to address outstanding concerns but maintained core consistency over eight years • People impact considered • Bluebook – long term management/preferred way forward • Information into cab-sub • Implementing new initiatives and offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made commitments to policy without ability to properly scope - i.e., compulsory acquisition announced without known remaining cohort and “how” • Scoped with extent possible while allowing homeowners ability to make decisions • More time for framing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health related policy i.e., disease support scheme not considered at beginning (noting not within original ‘emergency response’ scope) • Sales validation policy • First Right of Refusal policy – good concept, challenging to implement • Regular reviews/more planning • Review with Commonwealth/ACT government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with key stakeholders at beginning to inform decisions/policy • Document all policies, and adaptations from day dot to ensure understanding of reason for change
Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial modelling, cost efficiencies • Expenditure accurately recorded/reported • Considered impacted community and supporting recovery • Minimised cost of scheme to the community • Well managed by all financial directors • Innovative and efficient procurement models and process that brought industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking system Australian Public Affairs Information System (APAIS)/Project Management and Reporting System (PMARS) > understanding costs (demolition) • Better engagement with Commonwealth to seek shared costs vs Loan? What could we have done differently if anything? • Appropriation to be inclusive of related legacy response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No initial appropriation • No consideration of funding for health impacts earlier • Lack of understanding of financial impacts by/on community (communication and education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise records and previous Commonwealth scheme info to model cost of scheme • We had access to list of properties identified as containing loose fill asbestos • Template financial modelling

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Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
	<p>onboard – modified and repackaged once the volume reduced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance offered supported general needs and provided options Visibility and accountability high 			
Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flat culture Strong leaders, cohesive team Led by example Holistic consideration Leaders part of team not separate from team Flexible and collaborative Great motivators that connected team to objectives Shared networks Listened to advice from staff Human services advice accepted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive resourcing business as usual (BAU) environment Stay separate until completion (once integrated to BAU/directorate, slower decisions etc.) Earlier exit strategy (resource it) (START WITH IT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always need a Senior Director/leader across teams even after downsizing Communication with intersecting delivery partners (internal/external) regularity and prioritisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Straight/direct reporting line to Chief Minister, decision making authority Stay within central agency CMTEDD until all commitments (policy and program) are completed Executive leadership journey insights
Team dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team lunches Worked as one unit – shared problems and shared success No such thing as “not my job” – flexible sharing workload, willing to bring new members on board, welcoming Evident that all of team cares about community they are serving No blame Risks considered and monitored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New staff coming in after eight years – better onboarding process Team building workshops/days Values based/focused team sessions (but light not too formal) Whole team risk workshops Recruitment process Lessons learnt structured into ways of operating explicitly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing successes – systemised Transitional staffing arrangements Retention of staff and loss of corporate knowledge upon exit Impact of COVID-19 on team gathering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located as one team apart from broader service BAU Embed/co-locate key partners Selecting/secondment of right staff for the job in a timely fashion

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Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Our' documented team charter created by the team for the team • Staff development encouraged and supported 			
Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation services • Developed options in managing property/circumstances • All Taskforce connection with community • Tailored communication • Early engagement with community groups • We listened to community • Managed expectations: • Mapped out who needed to know i.e., neighbours, schools, churches, childcare, aged care... everyone • Location of outreach centres • Empathy • Personal Support Team and contact centre accessibility • Community outreach activities • Supporting for community (elective finance service agreements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better/more ways to get community feedback • Clearer ways for CERG to be involved/take action – "privacy" got in the way • Community park events and townhall events, could have been coordinated more safely • Website design user friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low participation in Legacy Project Report consultation • Early communication on strategic process (Feb 14-Oct 14) • Given the emotive topic, Community understandably displayed strong emotions (including aggressive behaviour from time to time) • Security guards required @ office door • Duress alarms required for staff in community engagement • Community events like townhall better venues and style • Tailored psychological support groups earlier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of community demographics from outset • Tailoring deliveries as program evolves • Consider <u>all</u> community impacted (even a little) • Two way communication with broader community impacted groups
Data and records management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and system • Access • Objective/Objective connect • Customer Relationship Management (CRM) • CMTEDD/H/One Drive • Teams • Drop Box 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single data share point/ Warehousing • C10 – Navigator • Records management structure • Commencement - ongoing • Security permission more reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues in navigation – file/folder structure + navigation, with a better onboarding process for systems • Lack of documented audit after a core activity i.e. debrief post sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular document audits • Navigation aids • Regular record health checks, ensuring fit for delivery • Appoint a Chief Information Officer at the start •

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Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure records/ audit trail in Objective EDRMS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naming conventions Cohesive reporting, liking systems for data accuracy Records in virtual registered files 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sharing outside delivery partner 	
Interagency coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings/ contractual agreements and collaboration with intersecting delivery partners Key messages and tailored comms to support intersecting delivery partners. Made use of staff individual networks to make progress Leadership brokered good networks, goodwill and established service level agreements (SLA), memoranda of understanding (MoU), contractual and support arrangements to achieve delivery and objectives of the scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory time frames Quick turnaround for responses/ approval process Incompatible timeframes Inconsistent contact points within delivery partners Inconsistent delivery standards with delivery partner e.g. Occupation Certificate (OC) authorisation and contractor management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues with management in intersecting delivery being clunky Closure plan for MoUs, SLAs, as funding needs reducers Ongoing interest/ engagement of ESSC, MPC and Worksafe. Interest limited towards closure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership and commitment from intersecting delivery partners, needs to reiterate thought out delivery (beginning to end) Suggest we remain the central agency Consistent messaging regardless of agency
Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mail outs and newsletters with transparent and tailored communication with homeowners People centric and active listener Vary methods to communicate Adaptive communication We asked for feedback and they responded Human services and Communication Minister style of team worked well Community in reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular review and assessment of stakeholder communications list Positive culture regarding updating content to suit delivery as is changes Regular updating of processes to the stakeholders, due to staff movements' Sharing communications strategies across government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider community consultations Labour intensive process, tailored communications for targeted audiences, stuffing envelopes and hard copy delivery. Systems, technically, were less supportive. Better use of CERG to reach community Public forums better planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database system Robust communications strategy/SOPs Know the end goal and exit strategy Regularly reviewed and updated

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Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications strategy listen to understand needs and barriers Written communication guidelines and info sheets 			
Ways of working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible small teams Regular quick updates to whole team without a formal meeting, for overall context. Great leadership (collaborative culture) Strength based use of team skills to find solutions Standard procedures and established policies/process Great reporting Built strong trust within government for risk management and governance Upskilling quickly for staff, with a team downsizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working from home (update status) Task central tracker, knowing what has been achieved and keeping who needs to know in the loop Keeping SOPs up to date to retain corporate knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working from home, no visibility of staff availability, when in person you can see who is busy Single communication Limited learning through osmosis due to working from home due to COVID-19 Teams only environment not suitable or optimal to support production Keeping talent towards closure Trust in corporate services to support staff transition Procurement and recruitment being lengthy and time consuming. Poor corporate systems for a taskforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified scrum Regular office days, when safe Team building Establish program to review lessons learned from beginning to end.

8.1 Activity: Recommendations

On completion of this collaborative exercise, Taskforce members were given the opportunity to add any additional recommendations, which were also captured. They were asked to brainstorm on the topic 'If I were to set up the next Taskforce, I would...'. Additional recommendations were:

- Read the report that comes out of this session to guide decision making
- Good governance structure
- Consider and link staff at all levels to strategic community objectives
- Risk management is embedded
- Head of Service leadership beginning to end
- Value staff
- Regular reviews

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development and transition plan early • Dedicated communication support • Break it into phases • Good record management • Motivated generalist • Collaborative leadership • Chief Information Officer • Look at what others had done • Transition staff out as soon as practical, staff to stay in touch with their nominal agency • Define records structure and a naming convention • Establish structure • Commitment • Willingness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record keeping • Resources • Seek different views • Impacted/reference community group established • Project plan including closure plan with formal government agreement (including HR considerations for staff) • Go to online toolkit resource • Research team for similar projects • Call on staff who have experience • Establish governance and records/information management • Define the end point – exit strategy • Define the scope and objectives and how to measure achievement • Live the governance as active and ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment process review • Build the team and culture (call the ART team) • Robust MOUs with external/internal stakeholders • Policy/governance framework • Robust financial systems for tracking • Website management/shared networks • Review lessons from past taskforce or a taskforce tool kit • Support innovation and best practice • Appoint CIO data and systems • Frontline experts • Comms integrated (comms led thinking) • Regular toolbox tasks |
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9 CONCLUSIONS




The lessons learned workshop series allowed participants the opportunity to give their feedback and collaboratively work through lessons learned and recommendation. It led to a number of key insights that will inform the Taskforce lessons learned report.

and Appendix B: Literature review.







Ref.	Focus area	Topic Summary	Detail	Context
R1		 Data governance framework and systems	<p>Plan up front to ensure appropriate data governance and records management. Some steps to ensure this is done effectively would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership – appoint a Chief Information Officer (CIO) at Taskforce inception. • Data Governance Framework and associated policy – should be robust, developed and implemented at Taskforce inception and then be reviewed at trigger points throughout the Taskforce. The framework should simplify data and records management requirements and require taskforce members to keep records up to date. It should include standard naming conventions and consider using systems that can act as a “single source of truth” for the program. • Training and instruction – deliver regular training and refreshers on data governance, supported by a detailed data onboarding process, and monitored and reported upon regularly. Instruction manuals for key systems and processes should also be developed. <p>Reporting – consider future requirements during taskforce inception, ensuring it is clear what data points are being collected and why, and aligning reporting to Taskforce objectives.</p>	While this was implemented progressively throughout the life of the Taskforce, it would benefit future taskforces to implement a detailed data framework it from inception.
R2		 Single source of truth	<p>Implement a “single source of truth” for governance structures – a location where all relevant governance frameworks and documentation can be stored and easily accessed by all taskforce members. It should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Global’ reporting documents to provide decision makers with a view of overall project status, including key activities and interdependencies, including an overarching view of the financial health of the program, progress against objectives and risks and issues. • Taskforce level plans, including but not limited to: 	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce once progressively implemented – future taskforces should implement from inception.

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Ref.	Focus area	Topic Summary	Detail	Context
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Overarching Governance framework (including reporting mechanisms) – Program management approach aligned to better practice models – Assurance frameworks – Detailed objectives, along with associated performance metrics – Probity and procurement related plans – Environmental management plans – Risk management and risk registers, linked to the Scheme's Governance framework – Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, along with associated key messaging and narrative frameworks and explanations of where master stakeholder listings are available – Program level quality plans to strengthen controls and enable improved compliance reporting – Data governance frameworks, to include naming conventions and standards for records management 	
R3		Priority reporting lines	<p>The Taskforce had great success in decision making in its early phases, with a direct reporting line to the Chief Minister's office. This expedited decision making. The reporting lines into central government also ensured an appropriate level of priority and Taskforce oversight. Future taskforces should replicate this structure. Consider appropriate reporting lines, with Taskforces to remain attached to central government until policy and program commitments are completed.</p>	This was implemented in the beginning of the Taskforce, and was beneficial – future taskforces should consider keeping the arrangement in place until closure.
R4		Start with the end in mind	<p>A 'trigger point' for closure should be identified early in planning (at both a Taskforce and Phase level). On reaching this trigger, a pre-planned phase/taskforce closure/exit strategy should be implemented. This exit strategy should include arrangements for handing over remaining deliverables (for example cases in progress) to an appropriate alternative ACT government directorate.</p>	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce for many of its work areas – future taskforces should replicate this at a Taskforce level.
R5		Recruitment and retention	<p>Future taskforces should ensure interagency agreements developed at inception provide a framework for consistent, equitable recruitment and retention for the life of the taskforce. These should ensure consistent approaches to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising skill and capability uplift • Keeping in touch with seconded employees • Contract extensions <p>At a whole of service level, the ACT Government should look to review employment legislation and policy, with a view to allowing for consideration of increased skill levels to support staff as they transition back to regular roles. Doing this would benefit the employees by recognising capability uplift, and the service by reducing regrettable turnover risk.</p>	While this was implemented with varying success by the Taskforce, it would benefit future taskforces if the ACT Government reviewed policy instruments to allow consistent application in future taskforce inception.

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Ref.	Focus area	Topic Summary	Detail	Context
R6		 Simple financial reporting	<p>Future taskforces should develop a financial dashboard that clearly summarises the overall financial health of the program. This should be a concise, 'global' report that clearly demonstrates the overall financial health of the program.</p> <p>The recommendation is based on the success the Program had by developing financial health reporting early in the Program – doing this effectively helped to build trust in the Program with key stakeholders. Future taskforces should also do this, not just to build trust but to ensure robust, transparent financial reporting early in the Program that continues for the duration of its operation.</p>	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated
R7		 Consistent, tailored communication approach	<p>The Taskforce took an open and transparent approach to communications, and this ultimately set the Program up for success, despite the extremely difficult subject matter. The Taskforce also considered its audiences and ensured communications were accessible, providing translation services when required, and future taskforces should replicate this model. These approaches should be duplicated by future taskforces.</p> <p>While time consuming, a tailored approach to communication with homeowners ensures community members are given information relevant to their personal circumstances – future taskforces should consider ways that communications can be tailored, while still automated. This could potentially be done through implementation of an effective content management system (for example, Engagement HQ) and contact management system (for example, Consultation Manager). Putting these systems in place would also contribute to improving website user interface.</p> <p>The Taskforce developed written information and talking points, ensuring consistent messaging for the community – again this would be further supported through effective content and contact management systems.</p>	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated
R8		 Develop and implement engagement guidelines	<p>Future taskforces should develop, update and maintain robust engagement guidelines, or 'rules of engagement'. While the Taskforce did implement some of these items, a holistic document would help guide community engagement and ensure consistent community experience. These guidelines should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media procedures and policy, including rigour around management of comments • Complaint and enquiries management • Working in the community • Selection of engagement channels (for example online vs in person, tailored vs general) <p>Managing personal safety at public forums.</p>	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated

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Ref.	Focus area	Topic Summary	Detail	Context
R9		 Interagency agreements	<p>Interagency coordination was key to the Taskforce's success, with customers benefiting from clear and coordinated arrangements and agreements with banks, insurance companies, the Australian Tax Office, Centrelink, and other agencies. In the early phases, future taskforces should establish Service Level Agreements (SLAs) as well as memoranda of understanding (MoU). These should cover the following topics at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractual and support arrangements • Recruitment and retention (including shared understanding of contract extension and recognition) • Time, cost, and quality requirements <p>Interagency agreements should be collaboratively updated at agreed trigger points for the life of future taskforces – for example on completion of phases or annually.</p>	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce and should be replicated – with potential to improve by scheduling and frequently updating these instruments to ensure they are appropriate at each phase of the taskforce lifecycle
R10		 Lessons learned process	<p>While it was clear the Taskforce had looked to similar large scale remediation programs to guide its activities, it would benefit from a formalised, systematic lessons learned process that could be templated and completed at various trigger points throughout the life of the Taskforce.</p> <p>The process should be inclusive of audit findings and provide taskforce members with the opportunity to workshop lessons learned and recommendations. This would ensure a more consistent method of documenting lessons learned and opportunities. This process should be developed at taskforce inception and implemented at various hold points throughout taskforce operation – for example on completion of phases or at pre-agreed milestones.</p>	This was an area of better practice for the Taskforce across some areas – future taskforces should implement a systemised process at taskforce inception.
R11		 Taskforce Toolkit	<p>Future Taskforces should refer to the Australian Government's Taskforce Toolkit (Australian Public Service Commission, 2021) as a guide to develop an ACT Public Service specific taskforce Toolkit. While this Toolkit did not exist when the Taskforce was established, it contains relevant lessons and suggestions that are transferrable to the ACT Government environment.</p>	The Australian Government Toolkit referenced did not exist when the Taskforce was created so it was not possible for the Taskforce to leverage this. However, it would provide a good base for a similar, ACT Government focused, Toolkit to guide future taskforces.

APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP OUTPUTS

During Workshop 1, Taskforce members brainstormed key topics for discussion (under the focus areas of Governance, People, Systems and processes, and Collaboration) and worked together to prioritise topics that should be taken forward for further discussion. At the completion of the workshop, participants' feedback was transferred into a MURAL board (an online collaboration tool – see screenshot below), so that they could be further developed in the follow up interviews and workshops. The collated insights are shown in the table overleaf. In the prioritisation exercise, participants added dots to their focus topics (shown in the table by +). These are raw outputs from the session and require interpretation – this is provided in the Taskforce lessons learned report.

Figure: Activity - screenshot of MURAL board



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Table: Topic prioritisation

Governance	People	Systems and processes	Collaboration	Other topics
Reporting and governance structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct line of reporting to Chief Minister + • Reporting processes + • Open/transparent reporting • Security for people and records 	Recruitment and retention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment + • Staffing numbers reflect need? ++ • Retention of experienced personnel • Closure staff transitions + • Changing team as needed + • Team members sourced from across government 	Financial ++++++ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving significant savings • Savings through efficiencies • Shoestring budget – minimise cost of program • Financial modelling and support to best achieve objectives • Financial tracking systems for individual properties • Initial finance governance comms system set up • Financial modelling • Single source of truth for financial data 	Community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping Community Expert Reference Group engaged • Wombats • Possums • Support and links with community groups for health and mental health and general support. Rob Gordon clinical psychologist/community events • Understanding PST role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness + • Case studies • Respect + • Values driven + • Values based + • COVID • Integrity • Responding to market forces • Trust earned +++++ • Trust • Empathy/respect and systems > solutions • Listen to understand • History • Reasons • Modelling on other agencies – using the best to make the best • Legislative change (26) to support positive outcomes
Leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived governance ++ • Strong leadership + • ‘Team’ being apart from service ++ • Flat culture within Taskforce = efficient decision making 	Team dynamic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No passengers on the bus +++ • Courage to say we do not have all the answers but will work to find balanced solutions • Isolated unit positive and negative – not accessible to others outside it + • Positive culture that supports solution over blame +++ • Striving to benchmark great practice + 	Data +++++ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data systems • Data base • Access database • Navigate data to support solution to an issue • Legacy data • Databases/tackers (reporting) • Evolving data and overlap 	Ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing best practice (Taskforce + big projects) • Treasury engagement for budgeting • Embedded agency staff • Blended team work to find solutions • Team silos/collaboration ++ • Executive leadership as BAU team • Positive leadership modelled collaboration +++ • Frequent meeting with external stakeholders ++ 	

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Governance	People	Systems and processes	Collaboration	Other topics
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways of working: • Prepared to do different (take risks) • Adaptive learning and processes (continuous change) • Centralised asbestos management • Copious practice ++ 	
Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing machinery of government – 26 pieces of legislation • Consistent approach over eight years • Not reinventing the wheel – using best from across government • Adjusted to support delivery +++ • Managing risk + • Improved practices (industry / regulation) ++++ • Policy development • Good policy writing to implementation 	Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and export reference group interactions • Communication ++++ • Health legacy + • The small things that impacted homeowners and neighbours – comms with banks, post office, insurance companies, Australian government agencies, Tax office, aged care etc. ++ • Wellbeing of homeowners into broader acts framework • Valuing the people impacted compassionately + • Staff/homeowner wellbeing • Homeowners • Community recovery and renewal + • Case management + • Human services lens to acquisition and demolition • Established community confidence 	Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and expertise to deal with difficult clients and circumstances • Learning across range of tasks and processes • Tip disposal • Finance • Demolition • Remediation • Legal processes • Rebuild • Program onboarding + 	Communication ++ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media/Taskforce Facebook group • Community in reach • Accessibility of communication 	

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Governance	People	Systems and processes	Collaboration	Other topics
	Community sentiment / approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality • Cooperation • Great people • Value people • Bad people • Confused people • Good people 	Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust SOPs • Acquisition • Demolition • Sales • PST • Policy 	Interagency coordination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergovernmental agreements ++++ • Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS), ACT Property Group, Major Projects Canberra (MPC), WorkSafe • Modelling on other agencies – using the best to make the best • Other agencies • Valuing our delivery partners ++ • Whole of government collaboration • ABT Panel of contractors/consultants 	
	Staff + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting staff development • Valuing staff safety and wellbeing 	Documentation/Record management ++++++ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record keeping • Objective • Documents • Information navigation • Records ownership • Procurement/process docs + • Records management (easy internal access – access/Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD)) 	Eradication Scheme Steering Committee (ESSC) – cross agency reporting – comms with this group	

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Activity: Rose, bud, thorn and soil – unpacking lessons learned

Each prioritised topic was then discussed in more detail in pairs, using the Rose/Bud/Thorn/Soil framework, as shown in the table below:

- **Rose:** what went well
- **Bud:** what could've been improved
- **Thorn:** what didn't go well
- **Soil:** recommendations for a future taskforce – building a solid foundation.



Please note: These are raw outputs from the session – they have been summarised and interpreted in the Taskforce lessons learned report

Table: Rose, bud, thorn and soil outputs


Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Came up with clear objectives for scheme – and made public • Easily accessed scheme on website • Developed further appropriate policies to address outstanding concerns but maintained core consistency over eight years • People impact considered • Bluebook – long term management/preferred way forward • Information into cab-sub • Implementing new initiatives and offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made commitments to policy without ability to properly scope - i.e., compulsory acquisition announced without known remaining cohort and “how” • Scoped with extent possible while allowing homeowners ability to make decisions • More time for framing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health related policy i.e., disease support scheme not considered at beginning (noting not within original ‘emergency response’ scope) • Sales validation policy • First Right of Refusal policy – good concept, challenging to implement • Regular reviews/more planning • Review with Commonwealth/ACT government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with key stakeholders at beginning to inform decisions/policy • Document all policies, and adaptations from day dot to ensure understanding of reason for change
Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial modelling, cost efficiencies • Expenditure accurately recorded/reported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking system Australian Public Affairs Information System (APAIS)/Project Management and Reporting System (PMARS) > 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No initial appropriation • No consideration of funding for health impacts earlier • Lack of understanding of financial impacts by/on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise records and previous Commonwealth scheme info to model cost of scheme • We had access to list of properties identified as containing loose fill asbestos

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Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considered impacted community and supporting recovery Minimised cost of scheme to the community Well managed by all financial directors Innovative and efficient procurement models and process that brought industry onboard – modified and repackaged once the volume reduced Assistance offered supported general needs and provided options Visibility and accountability high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding costs (demolition) Better engagement with Commonwealth to seek shared costs vs Loan? What could we have done differently if anything? Appropriation to be inclusive of related legacy response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community (communication and education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Template financial modelling
Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flat culture Strong leaders, cohesive team Led by example Holistic consideration Leaders part of team not separate from team Flexible and collaborative Great motivators that connected team to objectives Shared networks Listened to advice from staff Human services advice accepted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive resourcing business as usual (BAU) environment Stay separate until completion (once integrated to BAU/directorate, slower decisions etc.) Earlier exit strategy (resource it) (START WITH IT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always need a Senior Director/leader across teams even after downsizing Communication with intersecting delivery partners (internal/external) regularity and prioritisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Straight/direct reporting line to Chief Minister, decision making authority Stay within central agency CMTEDD until all commitments (policy and program) are completed Executive leadership journey insights
Team dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team lunches Worked as one unit – shared problems and shared success No such thing as “not my job” – flexible sharing workload, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New staff coming in after eight years – better onboarding process Team building workshops/days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing successes – systemised Transitional staffing arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located as one team apart from broader service BAU Embed/co-locate key partners

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Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> willing to bring new members on board, welcoming Evident that all of team cares about community they are serving No blame Risks considered and monitored 'Our' documented team charter created by the team for the team Staff development encouraged and supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values based/focused team sessions (but light not too formal) Whole team risk workshops Recruitment process Lessons learnt structured into ways of operating explicitly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention of staff and loss of corporate knowledge upon exit Impact of COVID-19 on team gathering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting/secondment of right staff for the job in a timely fashion
Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretation services Developed options in managing property/circumstances All Taskforce connection with community Tailored communication Early engagement with community groups We listened to community Managed expectations: Mapped out who needed to know i.e., neighbours, schools, churches, childcare, aged care... everyone Location of outreach centres Empathy Personal Support Team and contact centre accessibility Community outreach activities Supporting for community (elective finance service agreements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better/more ways to get community feedback Clearer ways for CERG to be involved/take action – "privacy" got in the way Community park events and townhall events, could have been coordinated more safely Website design user friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low participation in Legacy Project Report consultation Early communication on strategic process (Feb 14-Oct 14) Given the emotive topic, Community understandably displayed strong emotions (including aggressive behaviour from time to time) Security guards required @ office door Duress alarms required for staff in community engagement Community events like townhall better venues and style Tailored psychological support groups earlier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of community demographics from outset Tailoring deliveries as program evolves Consider <u>all</u> community impacted (even a little) Two way communication with broader community impacted groups

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Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
Data and records management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data and system Access Objective/Objective connect Customer Relationship Management (CRM) CMTEDD/H/One Drive Teams Drop Box Secure records/ audit trail in Objective EDRMS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single data share point/ Warehousing C10 – Navigator Records management structure Commencement - ongoing Security permission more reviews Naming conventions Cohesive reporting, liking systems for data accuracy Records in virtual registered files 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues in navigation – file/folder structure + navigation, with a better onboarding process for systems Lack of documented audit after a core activity i.e. debrief post sales Information sharing outside delivery partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular document audits Navigation aids Regular record health checks, ensuring fit for delivery Appoint a Chief Information Officer at the start
Interagency coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings/ contractual agreements and collaboration with intersecting delivery partners Key messages and tailored comms to support intersecting delivery partners. Made use of staff individual networks to make progress Leadership brokered good networks, goodwill and established service level agreements (SLA), memoranda of understanding (MoU), contractual and support arrangements to achieve delivery and objectives of the scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory time frames Quick turnaround for responses/ approval process Incompatible timeframes Inconsistent contact points within delivery partners Inconsistent delivery standards with delivery partner e.g. Occupation Certificate (OC) authorisation and contractor management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues with management in intersecting delivery being clunky Closure plan for MoUs, SLAs, as funding needs reducers Ongoing interest/ engagement of ESSC, MPC and Worksafe. Interest limited towards closure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership and commitment from intersecting delivery partners, needs to reiterate thought out delivery (beginning to end) Suggest we remain the central agency Consistent messaging regardless of agency
Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mail outs and newsletters with transparent and tailored communication with homeowners People centric and active listener 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular review and assessment of stakeholder communications list Positive culture regarding updating content to suit delivery as is changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider community consultations Labour intensive process, tailored communications for targeted audiences, stuffing envelopes and hard copy delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database system Robust communications strategy/SOPs Know the end goal and exit strategy Regularly reviewed and updated

REPORT

Topic	Rose	Bud	Thorn	Soil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vary methods to communicate • Adaptive communication • We asked for feedback and they responded • Human services and Communication Minister style of team worked well • Community in reach • Communications strategy listen to understand needs and barriers • Written communication guidelines and info sheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updating of processes to the stakeholders, due to staff movements' • Sharing communications strategies across government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems, technically, were less supportive. • Better use of CERG to reach community • Public forums better planned 	
Ways of working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible small teams • Regular quick updates to whole team without a formal meeting, for overall context. • Great leadership (collaborative culture) • Strength based use of team skills to find solutions • Standard procedures and established policies/process • Great reporting • Built strong trust within government for risk management and governance • Upskilling quickly for staff, with a team downsizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working from home (update status) • Task central tracker, knowing what has been achieved and keeping who needs to know in the loop • Keeping SOPs up to date to retain corporate knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working from home, no visibility of staff availability, when in person you can see who is busy • Single communication • Limited learning through osmosis due to working from home due to COVID-19 • Teams only environment not suitable or optimal to support production • Keeping talent towards closure • Trust in corporate services to support staff transition • Procurement and recruitment being lengthy and time consuming. Poor corporate systems for a taskforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified scrum • Regular office days, when safe • Team building • Establish program to review lessons learned from beginning to end.

Appendix D

REPORT

9.1 Activity: Recommendations

On completion of this collaborative exercise, Taskforce members were given the opportunity to add any additional recommendations, which were also captured. They were asked to brainstorm on the topic 'If I were to set up the next Taskforce, I would...'. Additional recommendations were:

- Read the report that comes out of this session to guide decision making
- Good governance structure
- Consider and link staff at all levels to strategic community objectives
- Risk management is embedded
- Head of Service leadership beginning to end
- Value staff
- Regular reviews
- Staff development and transition plan early
- Dedicated communication support
- Break it into phases
- Good record management
- Motivated generalist
- Collaborative leadership
- Chief Information Officer
- Look at what others had done
- Transition staff out as soon as practical, staff to stay in touch with their nominal agency
- Define records structure and a naming convention
- Establish structure
- Commitment
- Willingness
- Record keeping
- Resources
- Seek different views
- Impacted/reference community group established
- Project plan including closure plan with formal government agreement (including HR considerations for staff)
- Go to online toolkit resource
- Research team for similar projects
- Call on staff who have experience
- Establish governance and records/information management
- Define the end point – exit strategy
- Define the scope and objectives and how to measure achievement
- Live the governance as active and ongoing
- Recruitment process review
- Build the team and culture (call the ART team)
- Robust MOUs with external/internal stakeholders
- Policy/governance framework
- Robust financial systems for tracking
- Website management/shared networks
- Review lessons from past taskforce or a taskforce tool kit
- Support innovation and best practice
- Appoint CIO data and systems
- Frontline experts
- Comms integrated (comms led thinking)
- Regular toolbox tasks

REPORT

10 CONCLUSIONS

The lessons learned workshop series allowed participants the opportunity to give their feedback and collaboratively work through lessons learned and recommendation. It led to a number of key insights that will inform the Taskforce lessons learned report.

APPENDIX B: LITERATURE REVIEW



Each audit of the Asbestos Response Taskforce found that the Taskforce had effectively and efficiently managed the separate phases attributed to the Scheme. In general, the Taskforce delivered against its objectives, although there were some recommendations for improvement. Audits found a number of areas of better practice, while areas of the Taskforce would benefit from reflection on their SOPs and stricter understandings of long term outcomes of certain actions, the program successfully supported affected/impacted homeowners and tenants. This section summarises lessons learned from the literature review by focus area and topic. For ease of reference, the icons shown in Figure 3 have been used to categorise feedback and lessons throughout this report, and are replicated in the footer.

The audits returned a selection of recommendations for the development and implementation of the Taskforce, as well as for other future taskforces. These recommendations are summarised in Table 5: Recommendations from previous audits.

Figure 3: Legend - focus areas and topics








































































Focus area:	 Governance	 Systems and processes	 Collaboration	 People					
Topic:	 Policy	 Interagency coordination	 Community	 Leadership	 Ways of working	 Communication	 Team dynamic	 Data and records management	 Finance



















Table 5: Recommendations from previous audits

Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
Governance could be further strengthened through documenting an internal stakeholder strategy and a formal monitoring framework.			 	PwC, 2015
Scope could be further refined by the articulation of the explicit boundaries of what the project does and does not include.			 	PwC, 2015
Increased administrative attention on job descriptions as new positions continue to be created within the Taskforce.			 	PwC, 2015
Consideration should be given to developing a concise and 'global' report that clearly demonstrates the overall financial health of the project.			 	PwC, 2015
Implement a risk based approach to strengthening the control framework in place for the management of supplies.			 	PwC, 2015

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Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
Develop and document an overarching fit-for-purpose quality plan that would strengthen the controls for ensuring that the desired levels of compliance and behaviours are adhered to by Taskforce and Directorates.			 	PwC, 2015
Ensure sound governance arrangements, including record keeping practices, are in place as the project continues to evolve and mature.			 	PwC, 2015
Overall governance framework should continue to be monitored closely and matured to ensure that sound governance practices are in place to support all activities undertaken by the Taskforce.			 	PwC, 2015
Refinement and streamlining of risk management documents to ensure alignment with better practice.			 	PwC, 2015
Develop and document an overarching risk appetite statement.			 	PwC, 2015
Strengthen the planning for future phases of the project (including the development of 'global' document/s) to provide decision makers with an overall view of the status of all key activities and interdependencies.			 	PwC, 2015
Clearer documentation in relation to the quantifiable benefits for the Territory around sale prices of impacted properties.			 	PwC, 2015
The Taskforce successfully documented and implemented a governance framework including expected outcomes, Buyback policy, standard operating procedures (SOPs), performance measures and requirements to report progress to the Eradication Scheme Steering Committee.			 	Synergy, 2019
The development of the Personal Support Team (PST) was integral to managing client satisfaction.			 	Synergy, 2019
Risk Registers developed during the Buyback Phase were insufficient as they did not address the residual risk of the 17 properties that were not part of the phase. They should have been updated when affected parties did not voluntarily participate in the Buyback Phase to address the risk associated.			 	Synergy, 2019

Legend



















Focus area:	 Governance	 Systems and processes	 Collaboration	 People	Phase:	 Assistance	 Buyback	 Demolition	 Sales	 Overall
Topic:	 Policy	 Interagency coordination	 Community	 Leadership	 Ways of working	 Communication	 Team dynamic	 Data and records management	 Finance	

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Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
Identify how the controls identified in the Risk Register fit into the Scheme's governance framework.			 	Synergy, 2019
Integrate mechanisms for identifying and managing risk into existing governance framework.			 	Synergy, 2019
Ensure that all key records relating to each individual Buyback application are stored in Objective.			 	Synergy, 2019
Encompass all successful outcomes in the expected outcomes and performance measures of the Buyback phase.			 	Synergy, 2019
Records should include sufficient records to document the identification of factual errors in valuation reports and how these reports were amended.			 	Synergy, 2019
Consider all alternatives or options for action for achieving an objective or expected outcome.			 	Synergy, 2019
Uncertainty surrounding affected/impacted homeowners' ability to sell their property at market value was successfully mitigated through the implementation of the Buyback Phase.			 	Synergy, 2019
The Buyback Phase educated affected/impacted homeowners of their options, including private demolition, and removed the need for ongoing asbestos audits and maintenance of Asbestos Management Plans.			 	Synergy, 2019
Clearly describe the objective or expected outcomes of an activity.			 	Synergy, 2019
Ensure performance measures sufficiently inform progress towards achieving objectives and/or expected outcomes.			 	Synergy, 2019
Introduce a mechanism of verifying independent valuations to provide assurance that value for money was being achieved.			 	Synergy, 2019



















Legend

Focus area:	 Governance	 Systems and processes	 Collaboration	 People	Phase:	 Assistance	 Buyback	 Demolition	 Sales	 Overall
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



























Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
Taskforce governance was executed satisfactorily with particular focus placed on the positive influence of a community facing leadership team including the Chief Minister and Taskforce Head. This aspect of the Taskforce would have benefitted from the further presence of these leaders at non-government organised public meetings.			 	Elton Consulting, 2020
Short-term employment contracts enabled leadership to move people out of the Taskforce if necessary for the satisfaction of one or both parties.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020
The option of visiting staff at an outreach office location as a community outreach system improved the ability of affected/impacted persons to access information.		 		Elton Consulting, 2020
Agencies would have benefitted from a collaborative approach to supporting and communicating with affected/impacted persons.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020
Earlier collaboration between WorkSafe and other directorates may have avoided fallout from inconsistent comms.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020
The original 2014 website was difficult to manage, and forms could not be submitted online. The continuity and level of information provided was often overwhelming for community members, creating confusion around where to find the most up to date or appropriate information.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020
The provision of a formal 'letter of comfort' to confirm affected or impacted communities' status was well executed and allowed those that received them to access non-government organisational support. However, there was an opportunity to improve the level of information and reassurance provided to the community once the decision to notify people of a situation had been made.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020
Team dynamic benefited from a Workplace Coach, who reviewed and provided feedback on the functionality of the systems and culture. The Workplace Coach acted as a mediator; identified and navigated interpersonal, process and system tensions; and removed fear of risking internal relationships. The Workplace Coach provided one-on-one feedback and delivered group sessions to discuss surveys completed by staff, preventing burnout, and enabling maintenance of the 'person-centred support' that the Taskforce was providing for affected/impacted homeowners and tenants.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020

Legend



















Focus area:	 Governance	 Systems and processes	 Collaboration	 People	Phase:	 Assistance	 Buyback	 Demolition	 Sales	 Overall
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Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
An overhaul of the current data management system is needed and should be completed should a similar Taskforce be required and/or this Phase replicated. It should be rebuilt to support evolving data collection methods and role responsibilities, including managing 'big data', as data management was done inconsistently, which resulted in challenges later in the Scheme.				Elton Consulting, 2020
Confusion before the scheme was developed impacted the community's interaction with the Assistance Phase.			  	Elton Consulting, 2020
In future implementations of similar programs, greater consideration should be given to family models when applying caps on access to financial assistance.			 	Elton Consulting, 2020
A slow staff recruitment process meant insufficient staff were available before the Scheme was announced.			   	Elton Consulting, 2020
When a decision is made to notify people of a situation, there needs to be a level of information and/or reassurance provided.			  	Elton Consulting, 2020
The varied work experience of the PST staff before they joined the Taskforce meant there was a deeper understanding of housing, aged care, government funded programs, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and additional support services. This resulted in quick referrals and expedited access to additional support for affected/impacted homeowners and tenants.			   	Elton Consulting, 2020
There was a strong internal feedback loop, including a mechanism for reporting to line managers via weekly internal catch ups. The information gathered in these was used to further improve resources.			   	Elton Consulting, 2020
The Community and Expert Reference Group (CERG) established in 2014 acted as a trusted 'bridge' of information between the Taskforce, the extended community, and affected/impacted homeowners. Additionally, the presence of external industry experts at forums and information sessions increased community confidence and the credibility of the Taskforce.			  	Elton Consulting, 2020
The Taskforce underestimated the volume of enquiries that community service organisations and community groups would receive directly. These agencies would have benefitted from a collaborative approach to supporting and communicating with affected/impacted persons.			  	Elton Consulting, 2020



















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



















Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
An improved ability to manage uncertainty would be essential to the success of future taskforces. This may include a more assertive campaign to mainstream media on the early progress against Taskforce objectives.			 	Elton Consulting, 2020
Taskforce team members were 'cherry picked' from directorates within the ACT government, resulting in a genuine and equipped team. In maintaining a positive team environment, the development of a Team Charter and a monthly staff survey allowed for continuous review and improvement.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020
The Taskforce had a good understanding of community communication barriers. This allowed for these to be overcome and each community member to have complete access to all information provided by the Taskforce.		 		Elton Consulting, 2020
Individual case managers met with those affected/impacted – this was seen as a positive outcome by community members.		 		Elton Consulting, 2020
A stronger communication focus earlier on in the development of the Taskforce would have avoided ambiguity. This extends to ensuring the community understands early what elements of the scheme can be influenced.		 		Elton Consulting, 2020
Development of effective internal systems, including written information and talking points, ensured consistent messaging for the community. As part of this, information sheets used by the Taskforce team were easy to understand and refer to, making it easy for them to communicate with the community and stakeholders.		 		Elton Consulting, 2020
Earlier access to offices to improve team communication, shared learning, and knowledge transfer.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020
The Assistance Phase structure had closure processes for individual cases included, and this was useful, but there was no exit strategy provided for the Phase as a whole.		 		Elton Consulting, 2020
Limited access to data and internal records created potential vulnerability for affected/impacted homeowners and tenants to under or overclaim their entitlement. Improved data collection on affected/impacted homeowners and tenants would enable future taskforce teams to assist in this.		  		Elton Consulting, 2020

Legend



















Focus area:	 Governance	 Systems and processes	 Collaboration	 People	Phase:	 Assistance	 Buyback	 Demolition	 Sales	 Overall
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Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
Contact centre staff should have been recognised as a frontline response for the Taskforce, resulting in improved recognition of their importance and consistent flow of information to and from this team. <u>Appropriate training and education for staff would have improved their ability to perform assigned roles effectively.</u>			  	Elton Consulting, 2020
Finance systems in place during the Assistance Phase were successful. The capped amounts provided as emergency financial relief were generally sufficient for short term needs of affected/impacted persons and the eligibility criteria for access to financial support was appropriate, helping to alleviate financial insecurity for the community.			 	Elton Consulting, 2020
Individual case management proved variable and affected/impacted homeowners and tenants interacted with the Scheme for substantially different periods of time.			  	Elton Consulting, 2020
Improved recognition of and knowledge share with the frontline role of call centre staff.			  	Elton Consulting, 2020
Improved data collection on homeworkers/tenants of affected properties.			 	Elton Consulting, 2020
Appropriate training and education of staff, improving ability to perform assigned roles			  	Elton Consulting, 2020
Identification of a 'trigger point' for closure to prompt a phase closure/exit strategy OR handover of remaining cases to an alternate ACT government directorate.			 	Elton Consulting, 2020
Comprehensively document that current governance structure, either in a single document or suite of structure documents, including all relevant individuals, organisational constructs, and stakeholders.			  	McGrathNicol, 2020
Document the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of relevant individuals, organisational constructs, and stakeholders.			  	McGrathNicol, 2020
Undertake a reconciliation of notifiable incidents between MPC monthly report to the ESSC and the Issues Log and amend the monthly report or Issues Log accordingly.			  	McGrathNicol, 2020



















Legend

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Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
Identify performance measures that provide meaningful measures of desired outcomes.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Ensure that all performance measures have specific targets or normatives against which performance can be assessed.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Report systemically against performance measures from the commencement of the program or taskforce to identify and manage poor performance in a timely manner.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Develop and apply a standardised file naming convention for all key Taskforce documents.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Ensure that all records are stored systemically and consistently within the current document management file structure.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Include an explanation in filing systems of where a record is missing and the potential impact that missing document has on the assurance levels associated with the Demolition phase.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Review and complete priority rankings for all issues.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Investigate all issues that refer to a future assessment of whether an issue is a notifiable incident and update the Issues Log appropriately.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Document the dependencies between individuals, organisational constructs, and stakeholders.			 	McGrathNicol, 2020
Identify key drivers of Sales phase outcomes which the Taskforce can directly influence through its activities.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Establish measurable targets against the established indicators specific to each of the three sales channels.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021

Legend



















Focus area:	 Governance	 Systems and processes	 Collaboration	 People	Phase:	 Assistance	 Buyback	 Demolition	 Sales	 Overall
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Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
Develop and apply a standardised file naming convention for all key Taskforce documents.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Ensure that all records are stored systemically and consistently within its current document management file structure.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Include an explanation in filing systems of where a record is missing and the potential impact that missing document has on the assurance levels associated with the Sales phase.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Document how records management system users are able to identify sales correspondence records relevant to a specific property.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Develop a data map providing a listing of key data fields being used for analysis and reporting and setting out a meaningful description of the data contained in those fields.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Review key data fields being used for analysis and reporting to identify potential limitations, inconsistencies, and completeness issues within those fields.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Document a description of data and record management limitations, inconsistencies, and completeness issues and the likely impacts those issues will have on reporting and analysis being undertaken.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Develop and implement a data management strategy early in the taskforce/program development that identifies data that is needed to be captured to analyse and report against performance targets and key compliance requirements in order to inform the development of a data map and database that will enable meaningful reporting and analysis.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Review and update existing standard operating procedures (SOPs) and other associated guidance materials.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021
Prepare and publicly publish information on the Taskforce's approach to setting the asset transfer price for ACT government sales.			 	McGrathNicol, 2021



















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Lesson learned / recommendation	Phase	Focus area	Topic/s	Source
Consult lessons learned from similar programs and seek program knowledge from experts that have “lived” experience.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022
Establish and adhere to a sound program management framework that is consistent with better practice from the outset of the program.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022
Secure program funding as early as possible in the life of the program through sound budgeting practices.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022
Clearly define the benefit to both public and the Territory.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022
Developing, implementing, and reporting on robust governance controls is essential to ensure a recovery program achieves its strategic objectives.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022
Develop and implement a comprehensive assurance framework to save time and resources throughout the program’s lifecycle.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022
Develop and implement an effective risk management approach from the commencement of the program.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022
Develop effective processes and procedures (including a document metadata taxonomy) to allow future recovery programs to access key artefacts and provide the public with assurance that the program has achieved its objectives.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022
Develop a sound strategy to communicate with internal and external stakeholders throughout the life of the program, including community representation, during program initiation.			 	McGrathNicol, 2022

Legend

Focus area:	 Governance	 Systems and processes	 Collaboration	 People	Phase:	 Assistance	 Buyback	 Demolition	 Sales	 Overall
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APPENDIX C: TIMELINE

Date	Activity/milestone
30 June 2022	The Taskforce closed on 30 June 2022. During the Taskforce administration of the Scheme: 1002 voluntary buyback offers and 12 offers of assisted private demolition had been accepted by homeowners of affected residential properties. 975 affected residential properties and 16 impacted properties had then been acquired by the Territory. A total of 1006 of the 1029 affected residential properties in the Canberra community had been remediated and removed from the Register through the Taskforce demolition program or private homeowner demolition activity. Additionally, 967 remediated properties had been sold through the Sales Program to effectively support community renewal and assist to defray the costs of the Scheme to the Canberra community.
June 2022	In preparing for The Loose Fill Asbestos Coordination Team was announced to deliver the remaining work of the Scheme and maintain support for legislative obligations of the Minister under Chapter 3A of the Dangerous Substances Act 2004 .
25 March 2022	The Loose Fill Asbestos Disease Support Scheme opened.
18 August 2021	The ongoing voluntary Buyback Program and Request for Acquisition for deceased estates buyback offering commenced.
17 August 2021	After seven years, the Scheme's original voluntary Buyback Program closed.
June 2021	992 properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation have been removed.
June 2021	An ongoing voluntary Buyback Program for newly identified loose fill asbestos contaminated properties and a Request for Acquisition for deceased estates buyback offering was announced would be available from 18 August 2021, after the original Buyback Program closed.
November 2020	The Buyback Program application closing date was decoupled from the declaration of the end of the Covid-19 pandemic and set at 17 August 2021.
1 July 2020	The Loose Fill Asbestos Legislation Amendment Act 2020 commenced, placing further obligation and restriction on owners and occupiers of affected residential properties, including increased rules for AMP, introduction of Occupancy Prohibition following transfer of ownership, limitations on Development and Building approvals etc.
June 2020	983 properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation have been removed.
May 2020	The Mr Fluffy Legacy Project Consultation Report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly
April 2020	The voluntary Buyback Program application date was extended to 30 June 2020 or 6 months after the declaration of the end of the Covid-19 pandemic in the ACT.
November 2019	The Pathways to Eradication Package was announced to increase safety for trades people and others visiting affected residential premises. The package included a provision for Transition Assistance to help homeowners move forward with their participation in the voluntary Buyback Program.
June 2019	973 properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation have been removed.
2019	CERG conducted community consultation on acknowledgement of the legacy of Mr Fluffy.
June 2018	949 properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation have been removed.
July 2017	The due date for voluntary Buyback Program applications was extended.
June 2017	760 properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation have been removed.
21 June 2017	Final report of the ACT Asbestos Health Study was released.
February 2017	The Taskforce arranged and CERG attended workshops for homeowners, with an internationally recognised expert in community recovery, Dr Rob Gordon.
31 July 2016	Taskforce had completed 856 face-to-face meetings with homeowners and people in their local areas as a result of Community Outreach.
June 2016	249 properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation have been removed.

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Date	Activity/milestone
May 2016	Auditor General released the performance audit ACT Auditor-General Report No. 4/2016, May 2016, <i>the management of the financial arrangements for the delivery of the Loose fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme</i> . The first 15 First Right of Refusal offers were made.
April 2016	First public auctions were held for five blocks in Pearce, Duffy, Waramanga, and Chapman auctioned by Ray White and five blocks in Scullin, Fraser, Downer, Campbell and Macgregor auctioned by Independent Property Group.
February 2016	Territory Plan Variation 343 commenced, allowing more options for building on remediated blocks.
19 November 2015	The voluntary Eligible Impacted Property Buyback Program Policy was released.
November 2015	20-page guide Mr Fluffy – from Removal to Renewal, inserted in the Canberra Times to inform the wider ACT community.
July 2015	The Affected Residential Premises Register (the Register) was published online.
June 2015	First houses surrendered under the voluntary Buyback Program are demolished and remediated. Original due date for the receipt of applications for the voluntary Buyback Program.
April 2015	Asbestos Management Plans (AMPs) introduced for residential properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation.
December 2014	First three properties are surrendered as part of the voluntary Buyback Program. Legislation is passed to enable the implementation of the buyback and demolition phases.
November 2014	Community Outreach commenced: In addition to homeowner meetings being available in the central office in Canberra City, Taskforce team members from the Personal Support Team were made accessible for drop in and scheduled face to face meetings in key regional community hubs across Woden, Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Dickson,.
October 2014	ACT Government announces Loose Fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme (the Scheme) to include support of affected people and the Buyback, Demolition and Sales of affected properties.
August 2014	Community and Expert Reference Group (CERG) is established to allow the Taskforce to explore issues with direct input from those most impacted.
June 2014	ACT Government establishes Asbestos Response Taskforce (Taskforce) to develop and implement a response to the challenge of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes and act as a main point of contact for the community.
2013	Downer property forensically deconstructed and demolished to reveal extent of asbestos fibre migration throughout the structure, informing an ongoing residential asbestos awareness campaign focused on DIY activity.
2012	Downer property purchased. Chief Minister sought assistance from Prime Minister for remediation of loose fill asbestos affected homes.
2011	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 enacted. Loose Fill asbestos affected Downer house identified as having been missed in the 1988-1993 removal program.
2008	ACT Government enacted Work Safety Act 2008 which applied core principles for safe handling of asbestos in the workplace.
2006-2007	ACT Asbestos Task Force and Implementation Group discontinue operation.
2006	Budget funding for compliance activities in relation to asbestos management and improved disclosure of Mr Fluffy for property and lease conveyance enquiries.
2005	ACT Asbestos Task Force partnered with industry associations and unions to develop asbestos awareness and training programs for trades people. ACT Asbestos Task Force report in relation to residential and commercial premises and the building trades formed the basis for a five-year asbestos management strategy (reviewed in 2010).
November 2004	ACT Asbestos Task Force and Implementation Group established to create an ongoing and extensive information campaign and consistent communication channel.

Appendix D

APPENDIX B

Date	Activity/milestone
August 2004	Enactment of <i>Dangerous Substances (Asbestos) Amendment Act 2004</i> to introduce a best practice asbestos management regime.
April 2004	Enactment of <i>Dangerous Substances (Asbestos) Amendment Act 2004</i> legislation governing explosives and chemicals including asbestos.
31 December 2003	Prohibition of Chrysotile Asbestos, national ban on the importation, manufacture and use of all products containing Chrysotile (white) Asbestos comes into effect.
1988-1993	Joint Commonwealth and ACT Government funded program to remove visible / accessible loose fill asbestos insulation from Canberra homes. Program was largely delivered by the newly formed ACT Government.
1980s	Growing research into asbestos related health impacts. Asbestos phased out and ultimately banned due to it posing a significant health risk.
1968-1979	Loose fill asbestos (Mr Fluffy) installed in more than 1,000 Canberra homes as a roofing insulation material by D. Jansen & Co. Pty Ltd and its successor firms.

Dr Rob Gordon

ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce Service Evaluation and Recommendations

June 2017

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Appendix E

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**ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce
Service Evaluation and Recommendations.
Canberra, ACT, 06/06/17**

Community relationship to authorities in disaster recovery.

The asbestos problem has the same fundamental characteristics as a natural disaster although it is human caused. It involves loss of dwelling and disruption of life outside the individual's control and affected people have no say over many aspects of the situation. In such circumstances the relationship to government and regulating authorities is profoundly changed. Under normal circumstances, community members have limited contact with regulating agencies and usually around one issue at a time. Many regulations are taken for granted, so when a house is purchased, the building regulations governing its construction do not have to be considered, but when a new house is built, the regulations are encountered in all their complexity and detail. The same occurs with regulations and laws governing other areas of life affected by the event.

The recovery authority (in this case the Taskforce) is perceived as the mediator between the community and these bodies of regulations. Since most people do not concern themselves with the structure and jurisdictions of various levels and types of government, they do not clearly understand the limitations of responsibility or authority of the recovery agency. Hence they are likely to attribute responsibility to it for much more than it can control.

Influences on community relations with the recovery agency

When community members have to relinquish one house and find or build another, they encounter a number of issues which influence their relationship to the recovery agency.

1. They encounter all relevant regulations and laws as a body, and although they were designed to safeguard community rights and quality of life, they feel as though they are designed to frustrate them, since what is most vivid in their experience are the regulations which prevent them doing what they want.
2. This leads to the impaired sense of autonomy and independence. These are core values of liberal democracy and taken for granted in normal life. However after the disaster, it seems suddenly they encounter restrictions over what was previously an unquestioned right such as access to their own property. They are exposed to many dimensions of regulations which they may have never had to consider before.
3. The boundary between authority and responsibility becomes blurred, so the recovery agency has to implement government policies and regulations which they do not create.
4. The regulations and their frustrations become the focus of their emotions (anger, grief, pessimism, cynicism and hope) since there is no tangible object related to the cause of the disaster to focus on.
5. The recovery agency therefore becomes the representative of the damaging event and becomes the object of the emotions about it.

6. The relationship of community members to the recovery agency is highly emotional and therefore takes on a symbolic quality and many of the actions of the agency are viewed in a symbolic way. They are symbolic of what the community members are concerned about – whether their needs are recognised, they are respected supported and valued.
7. The recovery agency therefore has a capacity to provide a sense that community members are valued and supported or devalued and ignored and everything in between.
8. The effect of stress and heightened arousal from threat, causes selective attention toward threat-related information and to ignore reassuring information. Hence actions of the recovery agency which symbolise being devalued and not supported register more strongly than those which symbolise the care and support.
9. Another effect of stress is to impair strategic planning, analysis of issues and decision-making so that stressed community members tend to see issues in a simplistic and concrete manner and fail to understand complexity and longer term implications which undermines their trust in the agency.
10. The recovery agency therefore is subject to processes of *displacement*, where the attitudes and emotions attached to one object that is not available are displaced onto one that is and tend to carry many of the reactions of those affected.

Strategies which support the relationship between community and recovery agency.

Community reactions are only partially accounted for by the actual actions of the recovery agency, and they are taken symbolically as part of the damaging effects of the disaster. On the other hand, there are many strategies that counteract the damaging effects of viewing the recovery agency as the problem and maximise its symbolic value as supporting recovery.

1. Community representation in advice, policy and decision-making.
2. Two-way communication and feedback between agency and community.
3. Access to key figureheads and decision makers so community feel recognised, understood and close to decision-makers.
4. Detailed information and explanation about the context for decisions, policies, relevant regulations and various jurisdictions.
5. Community identity and access to community members to feel part of a larger social unit.
6. Information and education opportunities to assist members to make more informed decisions.
7. Flexibility in policies and processes to help people feel they have had the opportunity to make the decision they want under the circumstances.
8. Individual case coordination or support to help stressed and anxious community members negotiate the unfamiliar regulations and make plans and decisions.
9. Outreach to contact those members who are reluctant to come to the agency or who feel lacking in trust, understanding or confidence.

Taskforce Services and Approach.

The range and structure of support and assistance offered by the Taskforce is in line with these strategies.

1. The Community and Expert Reference Group gives a “link to those affected ... allowing the Taskforce to explore the issues with direct input from those impacted.”
2. The website offers a range of information and technical detail about the whole project.
3. The website has clear opportunities for two-way communication, feedback and complaints with a phone contact service.
4. The Personal Support Team is clearly identified and accessible with a range of qualified staff.

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5. Case coordinators are available to assist community members for both technical and personal needs.
6. Outreach services have been offered by the Personal Support Team.
7. Counselling services have been available on request.
8. Community groups and meetings have been provided.
9. Facilitated community support groups are in consideration.

The overall design of the Taskforce program with the Personal Support Team meets the requirements of an effective recovery agency. These initiatives have been of great benefit to affected community members.

However, as mentioned in the previous report, some community members reported strong feelings of distrust in relation to the Taskforce and its decisions. Their reasoning was not always rational, but this did not lessen the sense of injustice, isolation and helplessness. While there will always be individuals who feel aggrieved and displace blame onto the available agency, it does suggest that enhanced communication opportunities may have been of assistance. In this context some individuals indicated they felt the lack of opportunities to speak directly to senior decision-makers and hear from them about the decisions that were made. Personal contact with the Head of the Taskforce was acknowledged and appreciated, but it was not clear how widely this was used by community members.

Opportunities to attend meetings and hear and speak to senior decision makers is an important symbolic activity which has been shown in Victorian and New Zealand disasters to successfully recruit community trust and good will. However to do this successfully, strategies are required to design the meeting format and manage the emotions that may be expressed. Recent Victorian experience indicates attendance of senior emergency management and recovery figures at community meetings provides a unique symbolic expression of commitment and interest in the affected community.

From my limited exposure at community meetings, it was evident that as in other disasters, moving into the new house is the beginning of a new phase of recovery rather than the conclusion. It will be important to ensure that information is available about this aspect and to publicise support arrangements as people arrive at this phase. It is likely reactions will include depressed mood, loss of direction and social isolation. These responses have been described as *identity issues* as people establish the “new normal” and seek to establish new routines while at the same time coming to terms with this unwanted and potentially destructive disruption to their lives. It is also often associated with a deep sense of fatigue as they emerge from the protracted stress state. Since there are few direct links to the disaster, there is the risk people do not recognise their reactions are still part of recovery.

Research on resilience shows that those communities that recover best are those with rich and varied community networks and organisations (Aldrich, 2012). The website lists the walking group and there are other advocacy groups, but it may be important to facilitate other forms of community groupings which enable people to keep in touch, share information and have a place where their experiences will be understood and respected. It is frequently observed that unaffected people who are otherwise supportive say tactless or misguided things and those affected stop talking about their experiences with them. If they are their main sources of support it will mean a sense of isolation and inability to resolve some issues. Therefore there is a unique value in having access to those who have been through it too.

As noted in the report, there was little reference to the threat of mesothelioma. However, it is possible that a series of publicised cases especially affecting younger people will cause a groundswell of anxiety which is likely to be displaced into anger at the recovery agency. It will be important to ensure that a strategy is developed to prepare for the management of such an event. It

is likely to re-ignite much of the emotion about the whole event even if some years hence. A valuable resource in managing such an event will be community groupings or contacts that have been developed in these latter recovery stages to serve recovery needs after people have moved into their new houses. The health monitoring study will be an important focus but will not replace community support among those affected or at risk.

Available psychosocial supports may also be important at this time such as medical advice, counselling and legal advice. The transition from the formal Taskforce as it winds down to community agencies will be important, since they are often stretched and have other priorities. The sense of support and recognition are important symbolic processes that enhance people's capacity to cope with adversity. The transition to community services will need to be designed so that Mr Fluffy community members feel their continuing needs are still recognised by agencies.

The asbestos problem has provide a unique challenge to the ACT, and the response by the Taskforce has been impressive and has provided valuable learnings for the emergency recovery field. All recovery is painful for those involved and those most affected often seem like people without a skin and in fact the "skin" consists of the security of predictability of routines and environment and when this is lost, any contact however sensitive is painful. Unfortunately, there are some people whose life experience or temperament makes it difficult to accept what is happening. The opportunities offered by the Taskforce Personal Support Team are an important symbol of care which even when it does not change the situation for people will give them the confidence to have their say and express their views to the Taskforce. This is an important assistance to their recovery.

Overview.

The Taskforce program is responsive and has many features of recovery programs for natural disasters in Australia and New Zealand. Outreach, case coordination and community information have all been valuable. There is evidence of the inevitable displacement of anger and frustration of community members onto the Taskforce with consequent distrust and suspicion. However the provision of support and communication has been appreciated by most people attending community meetings.

The next phase of recovery will occur when people have moved and need to establish their "new normal" which will mean coming to terms with the identity implications of the whole event and to understand the fatigue often associated with it. It may be important for there to continue to be facilitated opportunities for affected people to meet, share experiences and gain support from time to time over the next several years. In the case of the Taskforce concluding its work, it will be important there are arrangements for transition to community agencies and they provide appropriate recognition for affected people.

Such arrangements will be particularly important if there are a number of people contracting mesothelioma and this is featured in the media. It is likely to evoke high levels of anxiety in the affected community and will need a community strategy to manage the resulting emotions.

Recommendations.

1. Support for people to clarify the identity issues and understand recovery from long term stress. They need not be frequent but can provide a sense of validation and recognition.
2. Support groups for those still feeling in need of social support and wanting a venue in which to discuss their experiences.
3. Opportunities for community meetings should they be required to discuss developments.

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4. Continuing availability to discuss and understand health related information from the health monitoring project and a strategy to manage community anxiety if there are publicised mesothelioma cases.

Aldrich, Daniel P. (2012) Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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