

# Joint statement

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## **Leading health experts, unions and asbestos victims back national roadmap to remove 6.2m tonnes of asbestos from Australian workplaces, public buildings and homes that will save more than 28,000 lives**

Despite efforts to ban asbestos and to eliminate asbestos-related disease, every year more than 4,000 Australians die from exposure to asbestos.

This week commonwealth, state and territory Work Health and Safety Ministers will consider the [Phase Three Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024-2030](#) which sets a roadmap to implement actions aimed at removing more than 6 million tonnes of asbestos from the built environment over the next 40 years that will save more than 28,000 lives.

This six-year plan contains significant reforms to our workplace laws and has been meticulously developed by the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency (ASSEA) in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including all levels of government, unions, industry and asbestos disease support groups. It provides a clear roadmap with achievable actions to eliminate asbestos-related diseases in Australia; to support workers and others who are affected by asbestos-related diseases and to be an international leader in securing a worldwide ban on the production and trade of asbestos.

The discovery of asbestos contaminated soil and mulch in NSW, the ACT and more recently in Victoria, serves as a stark reminder that the risk of being exposed to deadly asbestos fibres is far from over.

It is estimated that around 6.2 million tonnes of asbestos materials remain in our built environment, and that asbestos is in 1 in 3 homes. These materials are now ageing and degrading, with many beyond their intended life, increasing the risk of releasing asbestos fibres and exposing future generations. More frequent extreme weather and other disaster events in Australia also increases the risk of asbestos exposure and environmental contamination.

This is why the Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024-2030 focuses on strategies that facilitate proactive, safe removal and disposal of asbestos. Some of these key strategies include:

- Reviewing and revising the model Work Health and Safety (WHS) regulations to improve asbestos risk controls, including a review of unlicensed removal, training requirements and occupational exposure limits;
- Empowering WHS regulators and health and safety representatives (HSRs) to take stronger actions in workplaces;
- Measures aimed at improving the identification and removal of asbestos from the residential environment;
- Taking stronger action to ban asbestos globally, where more than 250,000 workers die each year from asbestos related disease;

- To improve the quality of life for people with asbestos-related diseases (ARDs) by improving their diagnosis, treatment and support.

Modelling undertaken by ASSEA highlights that if we don't invest in safe removal, there will still be around 1 million tonnes of asbestos material in our homes and workplaces by 2060, with a long tail until at least 2100.

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