



MEDIA RELEASE

A STATE-WIDE BUY-BACK OF 'MR FLUFFY' HOMES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

17 December 2014

A New South Wales parliamentary inquiry has urged the New South Wales Government to implement a state-wide buy back and demolition scheme for all residences contaminated by loose-fill asbestos insulation, otherwise known as 'Mr Fluffy' insulation.

Committee Chairman, Revd the Hon Fred Nile MLC, said "This is an issue which warrants the immediate attention of the NSW Government. Although the precise number of affected homes has not yet been established we do know that there are 59 homes that have been identified as being contaminated by loose-fill asbestos insulation state-wide, with the potential for there to be many hundreds more."

Revd Nile then stated: "The evidence received by the inquiry makes it clear that if loose-fill asbestos fibres are present in a home then it is ultimately uninhabitable, posing continuing risks not only to residents and visitors but also to the general public. It is for this reason that the committee is recommending the adoption of a state-wide buy-back and demolition scheme for all affected residences, similar to that recently adopted by the ACT Government."

Revd Nile continued: "We believe that ultimately a buy-back scheme is the only way the NSW Government will achieve a viable and enduring overall solution to the problem of loose-fill asbestos insulation. We were originally due to complete our report in February 2015 but the committee unanimously agreed to bring forward our reporting date because urgent action is required."

"The Committee has also sought to address the uncertainty faced by those who own or have lived in a home contaminated by loose-fill asbestos by recommending that the government provide financial assistance as well as free counselling and support. In addition, we have recommended that legislative changes be made to prevent people from unknowingly purchasing a 'Mr Fluffy' property in future. Furthermore, a number of recommendations have been made to protect tradespersons from exposure to loose-fill asbestos" Revd Nile stated.

A list of the committee's recommendations is attached. The report is on the committee's website: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/asbestosinsulation>. Hard copies are available on request.

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For further information please contact Committee Chairman Revd the Hon Fred Nile MLC, on 9230 2478

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the NSW Government publish the final report of the PricewaterhouseCoopers forensic investigation concerning the number of New South Wales properties that may contain loose-fill asbestos insulation, when it is completed in April 2015.

Recommendation 2

That the NSW Government provide emergency financial assistance to the owners and residents of homes affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation to cover immediate expenses such as crisis accommodation, replacement of personal goods, rates and utility bills and short-term maintenance or remediation work.

Recommendation 3

That the NSW Government implement a mandatory testing program for homes built before 1980 in areas in which there are known to be, or it is likely that there are, a number of homes affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation.

Recommendation 4

That the NSW Government amend Schedule 4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 to ensure that the presence of loose-fill asbestos insulation in a home is included on a section 149 planning certificate.

Recommendation 5

That the NSW Government take a leadership role with local government and governments across Australia, through the Council of Australian Governments process, to undertake an urgent study into the costs and benefits of establishing a comprehensive asbestos register or reporting system to apply to all residential properties at time of sale.

Recommendation 6

That the NSW Government impose a specific legal requirement on vendors, their agents and advisors, to disclose to prospective buyers the current or past presence of loose-fill asbestos insulation in a home.

Recommendation 7

That the NSW Government implement measures to protect tradespeople and emergency service workers from being exposed to loose-fill asbestos insulation, including:

- tagging of all properties known to be affected, with penalties for non-compliance
 - imposing a legal requirement on homeowners to disclose that their home is affected by loose-fill asbestos
 - developing a regular, mandatory asbestos awareness training program for relevant industries and trades
 - ensuring that all reasonable steps are being taken to effectively advise the emergency services authorities of the location of contaminated homes.
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Recommendation 8

That the NSW Government examine reducing the costs levied for the disposal of asbestos waste, in order to encourage its safe disposal.

Recommendation 9

That the NSW Government make provision for free counselling and mental health support to individuals and families affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation.

Recommendation 10

That the NSW Government urgently establish a taskforce to develop and implement a buy-back scheme to demolish homes identified as being contaminated by loose-fill asbestos insulation in New South Wales, modelled on the approach adopted by the ACT Government.
