

INQUIRY INTO LOOSE FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 31/10/2014

Partially Confidential

Joint Select Committee on Loose Asbestos Insulation
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Re: Request for Submission on Loose Fill Asbestos

On advice from Queanbeyan City Council I make a submission to the Joint Select Committee in relation to loose fill asbestos insulation. We are an owner of a unit in a complex in Queanbeyan that has been identified as having loose fill asbestos in the roof cavity.

We have owned the property since 2007 and my husband was a resident of this property until 2010. We were aware of the asbestos in the roof space when purchasing and were advised that there was no issue if the roof was not accessed. Since 2010 we have rented the property out to a number of tenants. The last tenant vacated the property in [redacted] and was paying \$220 per week rent. The previous tenant was made aware of the loose fill asbestos in the property before the lease was signed.

The property has been vacant for four months and we have had numerous enquiries to rent the property. As soon as full disclosure of the loose fill asbestos was mentioned the potential tenants declined taking up a tenancy. We have now managed to secure a tenant at the rent of \$180 per week.

This has been a difficult time financially for us as we did not have any rent coming in for four months and had strata levies and council rates to pay as well as the mortgage on top of our existing financial commitments.

Strata levies have increased for the property in excess of \$200 a quarter since our purchase, which is a direct result of trying to place more money in the sinking fund to allow for asbestos air quality testing and eventual removal.

It has become apparent from the coverage in the media of the ACT asbestos issue that the properties that have asbestos are to be demolished as this is the only way to eliminate the issue.

I worry about the residents of our unit, but financial restraints have meant we have had no option to place a tenant in the property. The agency managing the property has provided full disclosure to the tenant of the asbestos issue. We are also unable to sell our property as the price would drop dramatically once the asbestos issue is raised with a potential purchaser. I have also had conversations with other owners in this complex and the issues surrounding the selling of their units. For example; no solicitors are willing to act on behalf of a purchaser; properties being on the market for over six months and the reduced rate they have had to put on their properties just to sell them.

The complex has already had to remove the asbestos from one unit as there was a leak in the ceiling. What happens if there is a natural event that damages the roof or a fire that spreads this asbestos all over the neighbourhood?

No contractor will work on the complex. I have heard of had an instance at this complex where a painter walked off the job as he was not made aware of the asbestos issue and with that knowledge stopped work. As this would not be an isolated incident, how are we to maintain the complex if we cannot get trades people to attend to maintenance?

I ask what the NSW government will be doing in relation to the asbestos as this is a highly emotive issue, with people's homes and lives at risk. The time for complacency and denial is over.

I propose the NSW government adopt a similar model to the ACT and act now for the buy back and demolition of these already identified properties.

Quality air testing on properties that have already been identified as having asbestos are redundant and do not offer solutions. They only add to the cost for government. I note the NSW government had broadened their testing to all residents in the Queanbeyan area on properties built pre the 1980's. This is a good step, forward but something needs to be done immediately in relation to the properties that were identified by the NSW government previously.

The advice given previously given by the NSW government of, if the asbestos is not disturbed that there is no health issue no longer applies. The ACT government have identified demolition is the only way to eradicate the issue and make safe.

I ask for swift decisive action on this matter and look forward to a positive outcome, as ignoring and doing nothing will only exacerbate the problem.

Kind regards