



Governance of waste asbestos in Australia

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Recently completed project for ASEA

Undertaken with  **REC** | **RANDELL
ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSULTING**

Follow-up to [Asbestos Waste in Australia](#)

Brief to investigate

- threshold quantities
- socially optimal levy and fee arrangements
- storage and stockpiles
- accessibility of disposal facilities

Elements

- desktop research, 32 consultations with state environmental & safework regulators, local government, waste industry, asbestos industry, others
- GIS analysis of travel times to known facilities
- discussion paper (April) then report (unpublished at the time of writing)

Ideal waste asbestos disposal system

Waste asbestos is safely transported to a landfill and then safely and indefinitely buried.

Prerequisites:

- ***Asbestos industry*** : a well-functioning network of trained operators is available for asbestos removal and disposal
- ***Infrastructure*** : a convenient network of safe disposal facilities
- ***Disposal pricing*** : is predictable, secure and perceived as reasonable
- ***Governance systems*** : responsibilities are coordinated and balance risks and costs, tightly and consistently enforce regulations and comprehensively track asbestos waste
- ***Community understanding*** : high levels of understanding about asbestos and appropriate local options for disposing of it.

29 recommendations under these italicised headings

Asbestos industry

1. States and territories should ensure that, as a matter of principle, policy avoids providing financial or other advantages for waste ACM management by untrained non-professionals. Policy that needs to distinguish between small and larger loads should refer to a cut-off limit of 10 m² without distinguishing between source or the type of transporter.
2. States and territories should ensure that penalties for illegal disposal of waste asbestos provide an adequate disincentive. Unless companies are able to demonstrate systems to prevent and discourage staff from illegal disposal, directors should share guilt and licences should be forfeit. Licence applications should include assessment of criminal history.
3. States and territories should consider requiring global positioning system (GPS) tracking on vehicles licensed to carry waste asbestos (and other hazardous wastes where the risk of dumping is significant).
4. States and territories should consider requiring asbestos removalists to provide a receipt to waste generators demonstrating appropriate disposal.

Infrastructure

5. States and territories should aim to provide convenient disposal options for waste asbestos. For small loads of non-friable ACM (under 10 m²), driving time to a facility is considered convenient if less than about 40 minutes in off-peak traffic. For large loads and for friable asbestos, it is considered convenient if less than about two hours.
6. States and territories should monitor the convenience of accessibility to disposal options for asbestos waste on an ongoing basis, and take steps to improve the convenience where appropriate.
7. States and territories should consider helping to insure waste facilities to accept asbestos, potentially by providing cover through state insurance agencies.
8. ASEA should consider working with Safe Work Australia and the states and territories to develop or endorse guidance on safe and cost-effective management of waste asbestos at Australian waste management facilities.

Infrastructure (2)

9. In areas where accessibility to facilities accepting waste asbestos is inconvenient, states and territories should consider subsidising the provision of appropriate on-site infrastructure at landfills or transfer stations to encourage facilities to accept asbestos.
10. If a landfill permitted to accept asbestos declines to do so, states and territories should consider approving an additional local facility to satisfy the community need. This may include a competing landfill.
11. States and territories seeking to expand the network of facilities that accept waste asbestos should seek options in the following priority list, to the extent they are available
 1. landfills that currently accept asbestos from restricted sources
 2. landfills that are permitted to take asbestos but currently do not
 3. landfills that are not permitted to accept asbestos
 4. suitable transfer stations
 5. new facilities – landfills, transfer stations, drop off facilities or temporary mobile storage.

Infrastructure (3)

12. State and territory landfill licences should allow smaller loads of non-friable ACM (up to 10 m²) to be managed similarly to the requirements on transfer stations (see Recs 17-19), involving storage in a lidded or tarped bin for later burial.
13. State and territory landfill licences and guidelines should minimise risk of exposure to asbestos dust during and after burial by requiring
 - operators burying asbestos to stay within an enclosed cab throughout the operation
 - that no-one is in the open within the burial area without appropriate personal protective equipment
 - asbestos burial only in designated areas, the locations of which are recorded via a GPS tracker mounted on the burial machinery
 - asbestos burial areas to be reported to regulators and never disturbed.
14. States and territories should rigorously enforce asbestos management requirements to ensure consistency.
15. The asbestos removal industry should seek technological solutions to reduce exposure risks during burial in landfill.

Infrastructure (4)

16. Rural local governments, with support from the state, should progressively fence rural landfills and staff them when open to the public.
17. When a transfer station is suitable and needed for accepting non-friable waste ACM, the state or territory should allow it to accept small loads (up to 10 m²).
18. Transfer stations accepting non-friable waste ACM should do so within a separate area of the site that is fenced, locked when not in use, has a hardstand floor, has a water supply, provides high quality plastic and tape for wrapping waste asbestos or repairing torn wrapping, has signage with handling instructions, and contains a lidded or tarped bin for asbestos storage.
19. Transfer stations receiving non-friable waste ACM should ensure disposal occurs separately from other materials, preferably through pre-booked arrangements and on limited days when the site is not busy.

Disposal pricing

20. States and territories should carefully consider adopting the WA levy model in which there is no levy on wrapped ACM but a levy is imposed on asbestos contaminated waste.
21. States and territories should keep licence and permit fees for asbestos removers and transporters low. Fees should ideally be related to quantities managed rather than set at standard rates that disadvantage small operators.
22. States and territories should ensure that requirements on managers of waste asbestos are not unnecessarily onerous.
23. ASEA should discuss with the Australian Landfill Owners Association means of promoting 'no minimum transaction fee' arrangements for customers presenting very small quantities of non-friable ACM for disposal.

Governance systems

24. Agencies within each state and territory should work to make asbestos databases mutually accessible and comparable to aid tracking and enforcement, potentially using geographical information systems.
25. Agencies within each state and territory should develop memoranda of understanding to clarify responsibilities in relation to the governance of waste asbestos.
26. WA should include asbestos in its tracking system for controlled waste. The ACT, NT and Tas should consider establishing electronic tracking systems incorporating waste asbestos.
27. The Department of the Environment and Energy should spearhead the creation of a separate code – N221 – for asbestos contaminated waste. Wrapped asbestos contaminated material would continue to be coded as N220.
28. States and territories should limit the quantity of ACM waste asbestos that can be transported without using hazardous waste tracking systems to 10 m².

Community understanding

29. States and territories should provide broad community education programs about asbestos, including on waste asbestos and appropriate management of it.

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