



The Hon Greg Pearce MLC

Minister for Finance and Services

Minister for the Illawarra

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW NSW GROUP TO TACKLE ASBESTOS

Minister for Finance and Services Greg Pearce, today announced the establishment of an interdepartmental group and \$1 million for new prevention programs to improve the management of asbestos.

“The NSW Government is committed to keeping people safe from asbestos-related diseases,” Mr Pearce said.

“This week we established the Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities (HACA) group to improve the way the Government manages, monitors and responds to asbestos,” he said.

“Chaired by the Chief Executive of WorkCover, representatives include staff from the Office of Environment and Heritage, Department of Health, Division of Local Government, the Dust Diseases Board, Department of Planning and Infrastructure and a nominee of the Local Government and Shires Associations.

“The group has been tasked with developing a state-wide Asbestos Plan and will oversee the development of a model asbestos policy and a support program to build the capacity of local councils to address asbestos issues.

“The group will also develop an extensive educational campaign to raise public awareness and help prevent the risk of exposure.

“The new group is backed by an additional \$1 million over four years for new prevention programs to secure the safe management of asbestos in NSW.

“A further \$6.3 million has been provided over three years for a risk mitigation program at the abandoned Woods Reef Mine site near Tamworth.

While the dangers of unsafely handling asbestos are now well-known, last year the Dust Disease Board reported 273 deaths due to an asbestos-related disease.

“Sadly, this number is expected to rise due to the considerable lapse of time between exposure and the onset of symptoms,” Mr Pearce said.

“Last year the NSW Ombudsman highlighted a number of concerns with the level of co-ordination between intergovernmental agencies. Today’s announcement directly addresses those issues.

“I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the safe removal and management of asbestos. Only through better co-ordination and improved public awareness can we prevent further exposure,” Mr Pearce said.

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