



Dominic Perrottet MP

Minister for Finance and Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION INTO LOOSE-FILL ASBESTOS

NSW Minister for Finance and Services Dominic Perrottet today announced an independent investigation to help determine the number of premises in NSW that may contain loose-filled asbestos ceiling insulation material.

The Minister said the investigation follows community concerns about those residential buildings that may contain asbestos material installed by contractor “Mr Fluffy” during the 1960s and 1970s.

“The NSW government is absolutely committed to ensuring the health and safety of all citizens in this state,” said Mr Perrottet.

“This commitment stands when it comes to the issue of asbestos.”

“I have now asked WorkCover NSW to contract an independent specialist to work with the NSW Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities (HACA) to help establish the scope of properties impacted.”

HACA was established in August 2011 as part of the NSW Government’s commitment to asbestos safety, and since then it has rolled out a State-wide Asbestos Plan to promote the safe management of asbestos material in homes and workplaces.

The Minister said free independent technical assessments will be offered to affected homeowners to advise on and confirm the adequacy of risk controls in each of the identified homes for a 12 month period.

“This is so we can verify that known loose-fill asbestos affected houses meet NSW Government current recommendations for limiting exposure, and ensure occupants in identified houses are not exposed to asbestos levels above those found in comparable housing stock of its generation,” Mr Perrottet said.

“A free testing service will also be offered to residents in the 14 local government areas, for any suspected loose-fill asbestos from homes built prior to 1980, for a 12 month period.

“We will also continue to fund the role of the Project Manager – Asbestos Policy at Local Government NSW throughout 2015 and 2016 to support and assist councils in adopting and implementing the Model Asbestos Policy across the State.”

“In addition, the Chief Health Officer has convened an advisory committee to provide ongoing independent expert advice for HACA on the potential health risks for those living in properties containing loose-fill asbestos insulation” Mr Perrottet said.

The Minister said the investigation, to be funded by WorkCover NSW, will review and assess relevant records including inspections reports, risk assessments and compliance and disposal records.

It is expected an independent specialist will commence the investigation next month.

“The NSW Government will consider the findings of the investigation and possible measures to assist affected householders.”

WorkCover’s Acting General Manager Work Health and Safety Division Peter Dunphy, who also chairs HACA, said the body continues to provide homeowners with advice about risk management and information on effective controls to safely manage asbestos material in their homes.

“While the investigation will help determine the extent of properties that may be impacted it is important to remember that the risk of exposure to asbestos in buildings containing loose-fill asbestos is likely to be very low if the asbestos is undisturbed and sealed off,” Mr Dunphy said.

“Sprayed asbestos insulation like loose-fill asbestos is a highly hazardous asbestos material and should not be disturbed. It requires appropriate risk controls to prevent disturbance or exposure to air-borne fibres.”

“Only qualified tradespeople with training in suitable asbestos control measures can work in any areas identified as containing asbestos,” said Mr Dunphy.

“Advice on managing asbestos insulation is available on the WorkCover website at www.workcover.nsw.gov.au or call 13 10 50.”