

Asbestos management policy and strategy for the Northern Territory Government

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Contact details	Asbestos Compliance Manager DIPL: (08) 8999 2920
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5.0	22 June 2021	Inter-Agency Asbestos Management Working Group	Government agency names updated to reflect MOG changes

Acronyms	Full form
ACD	Asbestos Containing Dust or Debris
ACM	Asbestos Containing Material
DIPL	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics
NT	Northern Territory
NTG	Northern Territory Government
PCBU	Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking
WOG	Whole of Government
PWMC	Person with Management Control of a Workplace
WHS (NUL)	Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011
CW	Capital Works
MNW	Minor New Works
R&M	Repairs & Maintenance

Contents

1. Asbestos management policy	4
1.1. Policy statement.....	4
1.2. Policy objective.....	4
1.3. Scope	4
1.4. Principles.....	4
1.5. Responsibilities	5
1.6. Policy implementation.....	8
1.7. Policy review	8
2. Asbestos management and control strategy	8
2.1. Risk management approach	8
2.2. Implementation.....	9
2.3. Asbestos management in the Northern Territory	9
2.4. Consultation framework and awareness programs.....	10
2.5. Implementation support	10
Appendix A – Definitions of key terms	11
Appendix B – Relevant legislation, codes and guidelines	15
Appendix C – Asbestos background information	16
What is asbestos?	16
When is asbestos hazardous to health?	17
Further information about asbestos.....	17

1. Asbestos management policy

1.1. Policy statement

The Northern Territory Government is committed to meeting its obligations under the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* (WHS (NUL)), with regard to the management and control of ACM in government controlled buildings and contaminated land to protect the health, safety and well-being of workers, contractors and the community.

1.2. Policy objective

The Northern Territory Government's long term objective is for all government controlled buildings and land to be free of ACM or where it is uneconomical to do so, ensure the ACM in the government controlled asset is safe and managed appropriately.

This will be achieved through a risk management based strategy that is consistent with and supports the requirements of the WHS (NUL) and Regulations, using the Code of Practice - Managing Asbestos in the Workplace, as guide.

1.3. Scope

This Policy applies to all Northern Territory Government agencies with the obligation to manage and control ACM in government controlled buildings and contaminated land (as defined in **Appendix A**).

This Policy does NOT apply to Statutory Bodies and Government Owned Corporations, with the exception of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation which has agreed to be covered by this policy. Entities not covered by this policy are required to implement their own asbestos management and control policies to fulfil their legislative and broader community obligations.

While the majority of ACM is likely to be found in buildings and on land, agencies should be aware that ACM may be found in other assets not covered under this Policy. Agencies need to develop and implement management regimes to ensure any associated risks are appropriately managed.

Any Asbestos-Contaminated Dust or Debris (ACD) created as part of repairs or renovation works is covered specifically by Work Health and Safety legislation and so does not need to be covered by this policy. Agency Chief Executive Officers and building managers need to be aware of their obligations under those circumstances.

1.4. Principles

This Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- agencies will take all necessary steps to protect the health and safety of workers, contractors and the community from the risks associated with ACM within government controlled buildings and contaminated land;
- a risk management based approach will be adopted for the management and control of ACM;
- agencies will be responsible for ensuring the removal of ACM is considered in conjunction with building renovation, refurbishment, demolition and maintenance programs;

- prior to purchasing or leasing buildings on behalf of government, agencies will complete all reasonable due diligence for ACM. Where ACM exists, an asbestos management plan will be developed to manage the assessed risk;
- for government controlled buildings, agencies will ensure that required surveys are undertaken; site-specific asbestos management plans are maintained and required information is included in its register of buildings containing ACM;
- for government controlled land, agencies will ensure that surveys are undertaken on an as required basis against an assessed level of risk for exposure or disturbance that results in a health and safety risk; site-specific asbestos management plans will be maintained where required;
- registers will be maintained to record the presence, or presumed presence, of ACM within all government controlled buildings;
- agencies will consult with workers and their representatives and, where appropriate, contractors and the community in relation to the management and control of ACM in all government controlled buildings and contaminated land; and
- Government decision making is informed by the Australian Government's National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness (NSP) 2019-2023

1.5. Responsibilities

1.5.1. Inter-Agency Asbestos Management Working Group

The Inter-Agency Asbestos Management Working Group is aimed at progressing a collaborative whole of government approach to improve asbestos awareness and management of government controlled assets, including both within and outside the built environment.

Upon direction, the Working Group shall conduct periodic reviews of this Policy and the Strategy developed for its implementation.

Its role incorporates the following activities:

- implement and actively promote this Policy and Strategy;
- review and advise on the effectiveness of this Policy and Strategy;
- review the formulation of funding submissions for Whole-of-Government (WOG) programs and, as required, review and advise on specific agency programs; and
- consider and advise on the rate of progress with approved WOG programs and any significant issues/incidents arising.

The Inter-Agency Asbestos Management Working Group includes representation from the following agencies:

- Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics – Chair and Secretariat
- Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet
- Department of Attorney-General and Justice / NT WorkSafe

- Department of Education
- Department of Health
- Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security
- Department of Corporate and Digital Development
- Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services
- Department of Families, Housing and Communities
- Power and Water Corporation
- Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory
- Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade.

1.5.2. Northern Territory Government agency chief executives

Northern Territory Government agency chief executives have the responsibilities of a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) under the WHS (NUL). Chief Executive Officers may also have a duty of an Officer under the WHS (NUL) and as such, they are personally accountable for protecting the health and well-being of workers and others in servicing and occupying of agency controlled (owned and leased) buildings and contaminated land.

PCBUs have, amongst other things, a legal obligation under the WHS NUL (2011) and Regulations to ensure:

- the provision and maintenance of a work environment without risks to health and safety;
- the provision and maintenance of safe plant and structures;
- the provision and maintenance of safe systems of work; and
- the safe use, handling and storage of plant, structures and substances.

This responsibility extends to all buildings constructed before 31 December 2003 and includes:

- ensuring an asbestos survey is completed at least every five years; and that
- workers have access to an asbestos management plan, including an asbestos register for each facility.

Generally, each agency has a responsibility to provide and maintain safe and healthy work environments and related work practices. In relation to ACM, agencies exercise this responsibility by ensuring compliance with the relevant Commonwealth and Northern Territory legislation including, but not limited to, meeting obligations under the WHS NUL (2011) and Regulations, WOG policies, guidelines and national codes of practice with regard to managing and controlling ACM in government owned or leased buildings for which they are responsible.

A person can have more than one duty and more than one person can have the same duty at the same time. All Duty Holders have a responsibility to coordinate and share information pertaining to risk and risk management. Specifically in regards to the management of asbestos in workplaces. Duties under the WHS (NUL) are not transferable.

1.5.3. Persons with Management Control of a Workplace (PWMC)

Note that under legislation, the Person with Management Control of a workplace (which may include agency managers other than Chief Executives, and Dept. of Infrastructure Planning and Logistics project managers) have specific WHS responsibilities.

- In regards to asbestos, all Persons with Management Control of a Workplace (PWMC), must ensure that all identified and or presumed asbestos is recorded in an asbestos register, which forms part of the asbestos management plan. PWMC at the workplace must ensure the provision of information to workers (including past present and potential future workers).

1.5.4. Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) provides asbestos management and compliance services to agencies to assist the meeting of legislative requirements.

DIPL is responsible for delivering the following services to client agencies:

- development, maintenance and promotion of the *Asbestos Management Policy and Strategy for the Northern Territory Government*;
- undertaking surveys of ACM and managing asbestos registers;
- support in the development of a facility/asset Asbestos Management Plan;
- ensuring that works managed by DIPL are conducted according to the Code of Practice – Management and Control of Asbestos in the Workplace and Code of Practice – Safe Removal of Asbestos;
- managing the development and delivery of specific DIPL programs for the removal of ACM, where required by client agencies;
- providing assistance in terms of information, technical advice and removal processes; and
- providing assistance in the development of education and awareness training programs.

1.5.5. Department of Corporate and Digital Development

The NT Property Management unit of Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD) is responsible for compiling asbestos registers and associated documentation for all government leased commercial accommodation and ensure this information is readily accessible by all NTG employees.

This involves liaising with building owners who are responsible for arranging asbestos surveys and reports, and where ACM have been identified, or assumed to be present in their premises, ensuring there is an asbestos management plan for the building.

Noting that implementing an asbestos management plan for the area leased and occupied by the NT Government, is the responsibility of the PWMC (refer to section 1.5.3).

1.5.6. Workers

Workers (including contractors) have a responsibility to ensure any work that will disturb ACM (e.g. removal, maintenance work or the installation/alteration of services) is undertaken in accordance with all relevant codes of practice, legislative requirements, conditions of contract and issued instructions.

1.6. Policy implementation

An Asbestos Management and Control Strategy has been developed as part of this document to provide direction for the implementation and achievement of this Policy's objectives.

1.7. Policy review

This Policy is scheduled for review on a 2-yearly basis, or sooner, as Government deems necessary.

2. Asbestos management and control strategy

The objective of the Asbestos Management and Control Strategy is to provide a framework and direction for agencies on the management, control and safe removal of ACM. This will assist in providing a consistent approach to management of ACM in and on government controlled buildings and land.

The strategy will focus on the removal of ACM from all government controlled buildings and land where possible. The strategy includes management and control of ACM using a risk management based approach.

The strategy will enable the NTG, as a responsible employer, major building owner and service provider, to meet its responsibilities and obligations to its workers, contractors and the community, consistent with the relevant legislation, codes and guidelines (refer to **Appendix C**).

The Northern Territory has adopted two model codes of practice under the harmonised Work Health and Safety legislation, namely:

- [How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace](#)
- [How to Safely Remove Asbestos](#)

These model codes of practice provide guidance for PCBU that have duties under the legislation or corresponding regulations; and form the basis of the risk management based approach adopted by the Strategy.

The strategy will guide initiatives and allocation of available funding to achieve the policy objective.

2.1. Risk management approach

The strategy provides a uniform base for each agency to manage ACM.

The risk management approach has been established to guide agencies to:

- identify and record ACM;
- assess the risks posed by any ACM identified;
- remove ACM based on the assessed level of risk;
- manage in situ ACM based on its assessed level of risk and cost benefit analysis; and
- develop and maintain effective consultation and awareness frameworks.

2.2. Implementation

DIPL on behalf of agencies will undertake identification, recording and assessment of risk of ACM, through:

- undertaking surveys/audits and recording the results of ACM in government controlled buildings, owned or leased buildings and contaminated land;
- during surveys/audits of in situ ACM, assess the risk associated with that material;
- In collaboration with stakeholders, develop mechanisms to record, store and maintain data which includes, but is not limited to:
 - asbestos registers / land management plans;
 - asbestos management plans;
 - asbestos survey reports;
 - clearance certificates;
 - clearance reports; and
 - waste tracking records.

2.3. Asbestos management in the Northern Territory

- All agencies are responsible for assets and activities relating to the management of asbestos as stated in the WHS (NUL) and in accordance with its core service deliverables.
- DIPL provides services to assist agencies in their responsibilities.
- Removal of ACM is based on its assessed level of risk.
- Removal of any assessed/identified high risk ACM is an immediate priority.
- Management of in situ ACM based on its assessed level of risk, through:
 - development and maintenance of asbestos management plan;
 - development and implementation of programs, where necessary, for the removal of ACM where a risk assessment indicates the need for removal;
 - development of requirements for identification and assessment of ACM prior to works or activities such as pre-demolition/major refurbishment surveys which provide more detail than a comprehensive sampling survey;
 - removal of ACM, during renovation, refurbishment, demolition and maintenance works instead of enclosure, encapsulation or sealing, with a requirement for an independent Asbestos Hygienist or NT Licensed Asbestos Assessor to undertake monitoring (including air monitoring as appropriate) and issue the appropriate clearances of asbestos removal works;
 - maintenance of asbestos registers to record all changes in the status of ACM and works undertaken in areas where ACM has been confirmed, or are presumed, to exist;

- facilitation of stakeholder understanding and implementation of the requirements for transportation, temporary storage and disposal of asbestos waste;
- facilitation of stakeholder understanding and implementation of the requirements for notification, remediation and clearance to re-occupy premises; and
- development and implementation of measures to ensure that workers, contractors and the community are aware of the risks associated with ACM and their responsibilities as part of those measures.

2.4. Consultation framework and awareness programs

Each agency will develop and implement education and awareness frameworks for asbestos management and control. Where practical, DIPL will provide expert advice and support to agencies in developing asbestos awareness training programs.

2.5. Implementation support

2.5.1. Management and control funding

Funding for the management and control of ACM, in accordance with this Policy and Strategy is the joint responsibility of DIPL and agencies that control buildings or land with identified ACM. All operational expenses shall be funded by the agency, whilst all costs associated with asbestos surveys and maintaining asbestos registers shall be funded from the Repairs & Maintenance program which is controlled by DIPL.

2.5.2. Removal funding

Funding for the removal of ACM undertaken in conjunction with refurbishment, renovation and planned maintenance projects will be sourced from the relevant works program e.g. Capital Works (CW), Minor New Works (MNW), or Repairs and Maintenance (R&M); as follows:

- if the removal is to be undertaken as part of a CW project, it will be the responsibility of the agency to secure funding via a CW business case;
- where the removal will be undertaken as part of a MNW project, the agency will need to agree to including the cost in the MNW scope and estimate; and
- where the works will be undertaken under R&M, it will be DIPL responsibility to source the funds from the R&M budget.

Appendix A – Definitions of key terms

Term	Definition
Airborne asbestos	<p>Means any fibres of asbestos small enough to be made airborne. For the purposes of monitoring airborne asbestos fibres, only respirable fibres are counted</p> <p>Refer; <i>Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations</i></p>
Asbestos	<p>Means the asbestiform varieties of mineral silicates belonging to the serpentine or amphibole groups of rock-forming minerals, including actinolite asbestos, grunerite (or amosite) asbestos (brown), anthophyllite asbestos, chrysotile asbestos (white), crocidolite asbestos (blue) and tremolite asbestos.</p>
Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM)	<p>Is any material or thing that, as part of its design, contains asbestos. Has the meaning pursuant to r.5 <i>Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations</i></p>
Asbestos-Contaminated Dust or Debris (ACD)	<p>Means dust or debris that has settled within a workplace and is, or assumed to be, contaminated with asbestos.</p>
Asbestos Management Plan	<p>In accordance with NT WorkSafe definition: A person who has management or control of the workplace must ensure that an Asbestos Management Plan is prepared if asbestos has been identified or is likely to be present in the workplace.</p> <p>The asbestos management plan must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the location of asbestos and any naturally occurring asbestos. • Include decisions and reasons for them about the management of asbestos at the workplace, for example safe work procedures and control measures. • Outline procedures for incidents and emergencies involving asbestos, including who is responsible for what. • Be maintained with up-to-date information. • Be reviewed at least every five years or when requested by a health and safety representative, or when asbestos is removed, disturbed, sealed or enclosed, or when changes to a control measure are made or when the plan is no longer adequate. • Be accessible to any worker or the PCBU who has carried out or intends to carry out work at the workplace and any health and safety representatives who represent workers at the workplace. • Provide information, consultation and training responsibilities to workers carrying out work involving asbestos. <p>Other information that could be included in the asbestos management plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outline of how asbestos risks will be controlled, including consideration of appropriate control measures. • A timetable for managing risks of exposure, including dates and procedures for the review of the asbestos management plan and activities that could affect the timing of a review.

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify those with responsibilities and their responsibility under the asbestos management plan. Air monitoring procedures at the workplace, if required.
Asbestos Register	<p>Has the meaning pursuant to r.425 <i>Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations</i></p> <p>In lay terms, this includes asbestos registers developed and maintained by respective agencies used to record the presence, or presumed presence, of ACM and changes made thereto (e.g. those asbestos registers maintained by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics in respect of its assets or the Department of Families, Housing and Communities in relation to the domestic premises which it controls).</p>
Asbestos-related work	Means work involving asbestos (other than asbestos removal work)
Asbestos removalist	Means a person conducting a business or undertaking who carries out asbestos removal work and holds either class A or Class B.
Asbestos removal work	<p>Means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work involving the removal of asbestos or ACM Class A asbestos removal work or Class B asbestos removal work as outlined in Part 8.10 of the WHS Regulations.
Building	Means any roofed structure, the site on which the building is located, fixed plant and equipment items that are associated with buildings (e.g. air conditioning systems and generators), site infrastructure (e.g. fencing, water supply and drainage) and special purpose facilities (e.g. swimming pools).
Competent person	Means a person who has acquired, through training, qualification or experience, the knowledge and skills to carry out the task.
Contaminated land	Means government owned or controlled land that is contaminated by asbestos which may pose a risk to human health or the environment.
Domestic premises	<p>Means buildings that are provided as residential accommodation by the Northern Territory Government, used solely for residential purposes.</p> <p>Domestic premises include residences used exclusively for government employee housing as well as those residences owned by the Department of Families, Housing and Communities that provide housing for members of the community.</p> <p>Buildings which serve the dual purpose of workplace and residence (e.g. a combined police station/residence), are regarded as workplaces for the purposes of the Policy and are not domestic premises. As such, they are deemed as “workplaces” and will be covered under this Policy.</p>
Exposure standard	<p>For asbestos is a respirable fibre level of 0.1 fibres/ml of air measured in a person’s breathing zone and expressed as a time weighted average fibre concentration calculated over an eight-hour working day and measured over a minimum period of four hours in accordance with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Membrane Filter Method a method determined by the relevant regulator.
Friable asbestos	Means material that is in a powder form or that can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to a powder by hand pressure when dry, and contains asbestos.

Term	Definition
Government controlled buildings	<p>Means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buildings that are owned by the Northern Territory which are workplaces in respect of which the Northern Territory has a legal obligation to manage and control ACM; and • buildings that are leased to or from the Northern Territory which are workplaces where the Northern Territory has a legal obligation to manage and control ACM; and • any other building which is a workplace in respect of which the Northern Territory has a legal obligation to manage and control ACM; and d) includes buildings in respect of which the Northern Territory is the 'owner' of the building under the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act; and • includes domestic premises as defined in this Policy.
Independent Licensed Asbestos Assessor	<p>In accordance with NT WorkSafe definition: A licensed asbestos assessor or competent person who is not involved in the removal of asbestos for that specific job and is not involved in a business or undertaking involved in the removal of the asbestos for that specific job.</p>
In-situ asbestos	<p>Means asbestos or ACM fixed or installed in a structure, equipment or plant but does not include naturally occurring asbestos.</p>
Naturally occurring asbestos	<p>Means the natural geological occurrence of asbestos minerals found in association with geological deposits including rock, sediment or soil.</p>
Non-friable asbestos (also called "bonded asbestos")	<p>Means material containing asbestos that is not friable asbestos, including material containing asbestos fibres reinforced with a bonding compound (such as cement).</p>
Non building-related equipment	<p>Typically such items are, or form part of, business equipment as distinct from engineering services plant and equipment (e.g. ovens, fire blankets, portable hot plates).</p>
Person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)	<p>Has the meaning pursuant to s.5 of the <i>Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011</i>. In lay terms: a person conducts a business or undertaking is a business (including government) or has elements of organisation, systems such as not profit -making. A business or undertaking conducted by a person includes a business or undertaking conducted by a partnership or an unincorporated association. The Act states that a person conducts a business or undertaking whether it is conducted alone or together with others, and whether or not it is conducted for profit or gain.</p>
Respirable asbestos	<p>Means an asbestos fibre that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is less than 3 microns (µm) wide • is more than 5 microns (µm) long • has a length to width ratio of more than 3:1.
Worker	<p>Means a person who carries out work in any capacity for a person conducting a business or undertaking, including work as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an employee; or • a contractor or subcontractor; or

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an employee of a contractor or subcontractor; or • an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking; or • an outworker; or • an apprentice or trainee; or • a student gaining work experience; or • a volunteer; or • a person of a prescribed class (e.g. it is noted that there may be circumstances where, in a prescribed industry or in prescribed circumstances a person (the principal) contracts with another person (the contractor) for the performance by the contractor of work undertaken by the principal, the principal shall be deemed to be the employer of “workers” employed by the contractor.)
Workplace	<p>For the purpose of this Policy and Strategy, workplace includes any government controlled building which is used for work related activities. This includes both NTG owned and leased buildings.</p> <p>A domestic premise is a workplace when work is conducted there (i.e. maintenance, renovation, repair).</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>A Contractor classifies a domestic premise as their workplace if they have attended to carry out works at that premise. Buildings that serve the dual purpose of workplace and residence (e.g. a combined police station/residence), are regarded as workplaces for the purposes of the Policy and are not domestic premises. As such, they are deemed as “workplaces” and are covered under this Policy.</p>

Appendix B – Relevant legislation, codes and guidelines

Northern Territory Legislation:

- *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act and Regulations 2011*
- *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*
- *Environmental Offences and Penalties Act*
- *Public and Environmental Health Act*

Codes of Practice:

- Code of Practice – Management and Control of Asbestos in the Workplace
- Code of Practice – Safe Removal of Asbestos

Appendix C – Asbestos background information

The Australian community has particular sensitivities to the health risks associated with exposure to asbestos fibres. The high incidence of mesothelioma in Australia and significant media attention has served to reinforce a cautionary attitude towards asbestos containing material (ACM) in the public sphere.

In 2001 the Australian Government's National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) declared a prohibition on all uses of chrysotile asbestos from 31 December 2003, subject to a very limited range of exemptions, and confirmed earlier prohibitions of the use of amosite and crocidolite asbestos. The prohibition of chrysotile was adopted simultaneously under regulations in each Australian OHS jurisdiction, as well as Australian Customs, on 31 December 2003. The prohibition does not extend to ACM in situ at the time prohibition took effect and is subject to a very limited range of exemptions.

The prohibition on using asbestos (or more accurately ACM), came into place from 31 December 2003, or as is often stated in respect of assets built, after 1 January 2004. The Australian Government established the Asbestos Management Review in 2010. The Asbestos Management Review Report of June 2012 contained several recommendations, including:

- developing a national strategic plan to improve asbestos awareness and management;
- improving asbestos identification and management;
- evaluating and improving transport, storage and disposal of asbestos;
- a campaign to improve public awareness of asbestos issues;
- improving data capture and information sharing;
- creating a national body to administer the National Strategic Plan, etc.

On 1 July 2013, the Australian Government established the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency. The Agency was established to provide a national focus on asbestos issues, which go beyond workplace safety to encompass environmental and public health issues. The Agency seeks to ensure asbestos issues receive the attention and focus needed to drive change across all levels of government.

Although caution is warranted, evidence suggests that not all ACM present a high risk to the community. Many asbestos products can be successfully and safely managed in situ until replacement occurs. An appropriate balance must therefore be struck between reconciling the demonstrated health risks of asbestos with cost-effective and achievable strategies for ensuring sound asbestos management and safe work practices while it remains in situ in government assets.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the term used for a group of six number of naturally occurring mineral fibres belonging to two groups:

- Serpentine Group – Chrysotile (white asbestos)
- Amphibole Group – Anthophyllite, Amosite (brown asbestos or grey asbestos), Crocidolite (blue asbestos), Tremolite, and Actinolite.

Asbestos was long viewed as one of the most versatile minerals due to its flexibility, tensile strength, insulation from heat and electricity, chemical inertness and affordability. The versatility of asbestos made it

attractive to many industries and it is thought to have more than 3,000 applications worldwide. Up until the mid-1980s, Australia was one of the highest users per capita in the world. Approximately one third of all homes built in Australia contain asbestos products.

ACM, fall into two broad categories that describe the matrix of which binds the asbestos

- **Friable** asbestos: which, when dry, is or may become crumbled, pulverized or reduced to powder by hand pressure. Friable asbestos materials can contain high percentages of asbestos fibres and are more likely to release these fibres into the airborne environment when disturbed. As such, they pose a greater risk to health.
- **Non-friable (or bonded)**: which refers to asbestos-containing materials in which the asbestos is mixed with a bonding compound (such as cement). These materials are unlikely to release measurable levels of asbestos fibre into the airborne environment if they are left undisturbed. Generally non-friable asbestos poses a lower risk to health.

When is asbestos hazardous to health?

Asbestos is not always an immediate hazard. Research suggests that it does not present a risk to health when it is stable, encapsulated and contained in a bonded form. It is only when ACM is disturbed, or damaged in a manner likely to cause the release of respirable asbestos fibres, that any potential health risk exists. Inhaling airborne asbestos fibres may cause significant health problems.

Asbestos-related diseases include asbestosis, pleuritis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease which make it difficult for patients to breathe, as well as malignant diseases such as lung cancer, pleural mesothelioma and peritoneal mesothelioma.

High levels of exposure to airborne fibres over a prolonged period of time increases the risk of asbestos related diseases.

Further information about asbestos

Australian Government – Links to additional information

- [Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency](#)
- [National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2014 –18](#)
- [National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness 2016-17 Progress Report](#)
- [SafeWork Australia – Asbestos](#)
- [Department of Health – Asbestos 'A guide for householders and the general public'](#)

Northern Territory Government – Links to additional information

- [Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics – Asbestos Management in the Northern Territory](#)
- [NT WorkSafe – Asbestos](#)
- [NT Environment Protection Authority – Asbestos Disposal in the Northern Territory](#)
- [Department of Education – Asbestos in Schools](#)

- [Department of Housing and Community Development – Asbestos inspections of urban public housing properties](#)
- [NT Government – Asbestos and building \(including asbestos in soil\)](#)

The Department of Attorney-General and Justice – NT WorkSafe

NT WorkSafe is a division under the Department of Attorney-General and Justice responsible for assisting businesses and workers understand their obligations under work health and safety, dangerous goods, electrical safety, and rehabilitation and workers compensation in the Northern Territory.

NT WorkSafe provide for the licensing for asbestos removalists and asbestos assessors. It also requires NT WorkSafe to be notified of asbestos work prior to any work being commenced.

The inspectors have a key role in implementing NT WorkSafe compliance strategies and can:

- advise employers and employee of their responsibilities and rights under workplace health and safety legislation;
- provide practical guidance material on hazard identification and risk management, and
- promote consultation and representation of employees in workplace health and safety matters.

Department of Health – Environmental Health

The Department of Health - Environmental Health Branch provides a mainly advisory role with a controlling role where major asbestos complaints are received.

Where ACM cause a risk to the general public it may be considered to be a public health nuisance under the *Public and Environmental Health Act (Act)*. Under the public health nuisance provisions of the Act the onus is on the owner or occupier to rectify the issue.

In relation to asbestos-related issues, Environmental Health acts in an advisory capacity by:

- providing information and technical advice on managing health risks associated with public asbestos exposure;
- providing advice for homeowners/occupiers on ways to safely maintain or remove asbestos in the home;
- providing advice on the provisions of the Public and Environmental Health Act and subordinate legislation for a potential asbestos nuisance situation. Under these provisions, the owner of a property or person causing a nuisance must take all reasonable steps to eliminate the nuisance. In this context, a 'nuisance' could be the spread of dust or fragments potentially containing asbestos;
- assisting the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority with public health advice on asbestos-related issues (as requested); and
- advising the public on the potential health risks associated with asbestos in the home.