

Typical questions asked about **Asbestos**, and their answers.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring silicate rock, which was mined in Australia until the early 1980's. It occurs in the rock as thin veins, and was mined and separated by processing plants at the mine sites.

Are there different types of Asbestos?

There are three main types of asbestos:

- Crocidolite (Blue Asbestos),
- Amosite (Brown Asbestos)
- Chrysotile (White Asbestos)

Why was Asbestos used?

Asbestos has unique properties. It was used to provide strength to cement products (asbestos cement sheeting and vinyl floor tiles), as a fire retardant on steel beams in buildings because of its heat resistance, and in some chemical processes because of its chemical resistance.

Is it a health hazard if used in our school?

Asbestos may be a health hazard if it is not properly controlled. Asbestos is a respiratory hazard, and fibres need to be breathed into the lungs for the material to be a hazard. Most of the asbestos-containing materials found in schools facilities are in a bonded form (asbestos cement sheeting, vinyl floor tiles) in which the asbestos fibre is bound into the material and is not able to be breathed into the lungs unless the sheeting or tile is drilled or cut.

While the asbestos material remains undisturbed, it is not a health risk.

What is a building Asbestos register?

If a survey by a competent person has identified asbestos in a school, an asbestos register will be available for that school. The register notes the location of the asbestos, its condition and the type of asbestos present.

What is Bonded Asbestos?

Bonded asbestos is asbestos, which is tightly held in cement, such as asbestos cement, or in some other cement such as in vinyl tiles. Most of the asbestos found in school's is bonded asbestos.

What is Friable Asbestos?

Friable asbestos is material, which is easily crushed, releasing fibres into the atmosphere.

What will happen if repairs are to be carried out in an area where Asbestos has been identified?

All Schools containing Asbestos will have procedures in place where a contractor has to sign in and view an asbestos register. If the work being carried out is in an asbestos area they need to sign the register indicating that all the necessary precautions have been met

What should I do if I have a concern about Asbestos?

Contact the principal of the school and they will implement the Catholic Education Office Hazardous Materials Management Plan.

LEAD PAINT

Some schools built prior to 1970 may have been painted with lead paint. Lead paint may pose a risk if it is sanded and enters the blood stream causing lead poisoning. In most cases it has been painted over and thus sealed in not posing a risk. The presence of lead paint will be determined during the inspection of the school by the environmental consultant and noted for any future works.

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYL (PCB)

PCB is an oil like substance used prior to 1972 in capacitors found in fluorescent lights. The oil has been found to be carcinogenic if exposed to it for an extended period of time. Exposure can only occur if the oil escapes due to the capacitor leaking. The risk is very low however the locations will be noted during our inspection and noted for future works or for any electricians working in the area.

COPPER CHROME ARSENATE (CCA) TREATED TIMBER

CCA is used to treat timber for the prevention of insect and fungal damage. It is commonly used in garden furniture, domestic decking and playground equipment. The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing Office of Chemical Safety conducted a health risk assessment in 2003 and concluded that "based on a consideration of the exposure to CCA treated timber products, in particular children's play equipment, there was no compelling evidence from the available data to conclude that there was likely to be an unacceptable risk to public health from exposure to arsenic from CCA treated timber or that replacement or removal of these existing structures is warranted"



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS IN SCHOOLS