

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Agency - Asbestos Safety & Eradication Agency

Department of Employment Question No. EM0832_15

Senator Cameron asked on 2 June 2014 on proof Hansard page 53

Question

ASEA - increasing public awareness

Senator CAMERON: Thanks. Mr Tighe, can you outline to me what your immediate priorities are and maybe some of your longer term priorities for increasing public awareness? Can you outline how you have moved towards developing a prioritised removal program? How are you developing national best practice? How are you coordinating research to minimise the risk of asbestos exposure? What role are you playing, if you have moved to that role yet, in a global campaign for a worldwide asbestos ban? I am not sure, Minister, whether that is government policy or not. I really do not know. That is the national strategic plan. The plan includes playing a leadership role in a global campaign for a worldwide asbestos ban. I am not sure what role Mr Tighe can play in that, if you have a different policy position, or if you have considered policy on that. Senator Abetz: If I may, I will take that on notice. We do not have any plans to send Mr Tighe overseas at this stage. Anything I dare say we can reasonably do—sharing information, providing information and, that terrible word, 'learnings' that we might have in this space—I am sure that we would be more than happy to share with any other country. Senator CAMERON: I think it was a bit further than that. We have had incidents of manufactured engineering equipment coming in with asbestos from Korea. Senator Abetz: And China, with the gaskets on the Great Wall vehicles, which were asbestos. Senator CAMERON: So these are important issues. Senator Abetz: They are. Senator CAMERON: Maybe you could take it on notice and let me know.

Answer

The priorities of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency are derived from the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness under the *Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Act, 2013*. ASEA is currently revising the plan in line with feedback from state and territory governments and stakeholders.

ASEA's immediate priority to increase public awareness is to ensure clear and practical information regarding the risks of asbestos is available and accessible. This is being supported by building the ASEA website to be a 'one stop shop' for people sourcing information available in different formats and languages on asbestos.

ASEA's longer term priority is to increase community awareness, understanding and behavioral change in relation to the risks posed by asbestos containing materials (ACM) in the built environment.

Steps taken towards developing a prioritised removal program

ASEA is currently undertaking extensive consultation with states and territories to determine the most appropriate strategy to work towards the long term removal of asbestos in the built environment.

Development of best practice

To identify and develop best practice, ASEA is collaborating across all levels of government to identify immediate priorities and emerging issues.

Coordination of research

ASEA's research strategy is to coordinate and identify evidence of practical ways to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres and prevent asbestos related disease. This includes commencing work to assess levels of non-occupational asbestos exposure in the Australian community. ASEA also has responsibility for the National Asbestos Exposure Register. This information will be used to inform future policy responses to reduce risk of exposure to asbestos fibres.

Role in the global campaign for a worldwide asbestos ban

ASEA's strategy to support Australian international leadership includes monitoring the work being undertaken by foreign countries to reduce asbestos risks and to cultivate relationships to enable sharing information, evidence and experience regarding the management and eradication of asbestos.