

# Case Study: Asbestos Testing Program for Householders

**COUNCIL NAME**

North East Waste

**WEB ADDRESS**

[www.newaste.org.au](http://www.newaste.org.au)

## Overview

Safe disposal of asbestos in northern NSW has been improved through the distribution of DIY asbestos testing kits to residents. This was achieved through a multi-council project co-ordinated by NEWaste that provided residents with two free tests to identify asbestos in their homes. Over an eight month period, over 200 residents accessed the program and 150 samples have tested positive for asbestos.



Figure 1: Free Sampling Promotional Material

## Background

Across the six councils involved in the program 91 incidents of incorrect presentation of asbestos waste were recorded during 2015/16. At the time this was a 400 percent increase, and a safety risk for both residents and workers at the landfill sites. The most common reason that residents gave for this was that they were unaware that the materials contained asbestos. To combat this NEWaste explored the option of offering households free asbestos testing to improve asbestos awareness, and therefore improve disposal.

## Implementation

In order to implement the program the following activities were undertaken:

1. Securing a discounted rate with an asbestos testing company for bulk sampling.
2. Establishing the procedure of how the samples would be safely collected and tested.
3. Securing a courier to pick up asbestos samples.
4. Develop the sampling instructions.

5. Council approval and endorsement of the program procedure and supporting material.
6. Establishing the online databases for councils to register residents for the program.
7. Purchasing and packing the kits and distributing to councils.
8. Developing the promotional materials, including Facebook and web banners and print ads (see figure 1 above).
9. Managing the receipt and communication of the test results.
10. Development and distribution of the program information to each council area.

## Outcomes

To date, 263 samples have been tested, resulting in 151 positive test results. In addition, all residents who received a positive result for asbestos in the program have been informed about the DIY Household Asbestos Disposal Kits for the safe removal of small quantities of asbestos.

Promotion of the program and the associated health risks with removing, transporting and disposing of asbestos has reached over the targeted 5000 residents. Media coverage has been achieved through the local ABC radio, Council newsletters, local papers, Council websites and via waste transfer stations, with an estimated total reach of 25,000 residents.

Longer-term outcomes that have been identified for the program include the continuation of the program through a partial subsidy by the participating councils. There is also potential to link the results of this program with the planning section of Council to ensure development applications at addresses listed in the program are required to provide proof of safe removal and disposal of asbestos.

## Key Learnings

- Establishing an online database for registration works well and allows multiple users to update and access the information.
- Ensure councils register residents for the program when they pick up a kit. This way you can contact the residents if they do not return the kit after a set period of time.
- Charge for the kits, even if it is a small fee and council subsidises them. This avoids residents collecting a kit just because it is free.
- Allow for the cost of project co-ordination to be included up front to ensure there is a dedicated resource for the program.

## Contact

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**This project was the 2017 winner of the Asbestos Management Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards**