

Asbestos Collection and Education Program – Holroyd City Council

COUNCIL NAME

Holroyd City Council

WEB ADDRESS

holroyd.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

40 square kilometres

POPULATION

108,889

Overview

In June 2013, Holroyd City Council trialed a free asbestos collection, the first of its kind in NSW for small amounts of non-friable asbestos laying dormant and unused on residential properties within the Council area. To date, the service has removed 11.72 tonnes of asbestos waste from 180 properties in the Holroyd City Council area. Council has also held three asbestos information nights, giving residents the opportunity to receive practical advice and assistance in relation to asbestos identification, removal and disposal.



Photo: Council asbestos training

Background

Holroyd City Council is situated in the colloquial “fibro belt” of Sydney, a group of Western Sydney suburbs built in the 1950s and 1960s containing whole streets of houses built from fibro cement. Council estimates that in the Holroyd area, most houses built prior to 1990 have asbestos products used in their construction. With many residents undertaking renovations to their properties, asbestos removal and disposal is a major issue within the community.

Council viewed the expansion of the asbestos collection service as the best way to continue to offer a lawful, convenient disposal solution for these small quantities of bonded asbestos. Council also held three asbestos information nights where participants received an asbestos removal kit to prepare them with the necessary knowledge and equipment, should they choose to remove small quantities of non-friable asbestos themselves.

The main objectives of Council's asbestos collection and education program are to:

- Raise awareness about asbestos removal and disposal requirements;
- Achieve a reduction in the amount of non-friable asbestos within the community; and
- Achieve a reduction in the amount of asbestos being illegally dumped in waste bins and public places.

Implementation

Prior to the initial trial in June 2013, Council staff liaised with relevant stakeholders in the asbestos industry including representatives of the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia (ADFA), Workcover NSW and Local Government NSW. The collection model (preferred over a drop off model) proved highly effective in our relatively compact metropolitan environment, with the added benefit of minimising residents' contact with asbestos.

The following conditions were imposed for residents wishing to participate in the collection program:

- The service was for non-friable asbestos only;
- Only material that was already previously removed from a structure and was laying dormant on the property would be collected;
- 9sqm of material would be collected as a maximum; and
- The material would only be removed if it was able to be easily accessed by the contractor.

In the week following each collection, all participating households were sent an evaluation form, providing Council with valuable feedback to help guide the future direction of this initiative. Based on the evaluation forms returned, the cost of disposal and not knowing how to properly dispose of the asbestos material were cited as the major barriers to lawful disposal for participating households.

Outcomes

The program has resulted in the removal of 11.42 tonnes of non-friable asbestos containing products from 180 properties in the Holroyd Council area. That is 180 families that are free of the burden of having pieces of non-friable asbestos stored on their properties.

Illegal dumping of asbestos within the Holroyd community has dropped from 8.9 tonnes (from 1 July 2013 – 31 December 2013) to 5.14 tonnes (from 1 January 2014 – 30 June 2014). Council considers that this downward trend, in part, can be attributed to the introduction of the collection service as the community becomes more aware of the program.

The success of the program has resulted in funding being allocated to six other western Sydney councils (as part of the NSW EPA's Householders' Asbestos Disposal Scheme) to conduct similar collections within their municipalities, taking its benefits to a regional audience.

Key Learnings

The biggest challenge facing Council is maintaining the provision of this service that is in high demand within the community. Feedback received from evaluation forms distributed to all participants indicated an overall willingness to pay a small amount (between \$50-\$75) for

such a service, which at this stage offers a possible solution (by way of a subsidy) for making the service financially sustainable once allocated funding is exhausted.

We see that there is still a great opportunity to further engage with the community on this issue, and within the coming years will explore further ways to do this - our Asbestos Answers website (which will be launched shortly) will be the start of an enhanced education campaign in this area.

Contact

Name: Brooke Littman

Position: Environmental Health & Waste Education Officer

Phone: 02 9840 9715

Email: brooke.littman@holroyd.nsw.gov.au

This project was the 2014 winner of the Asbestos Management Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.