



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Management of asbestos at Wedge and Grey Reserves

### Why has Parks and Wildlife organised an assessment of asbestos at Wedge and Grey reserves?

The human health effects from exposure to asbestos are well documented. Recycled asbestos materials have been used in the construction and repair of shacks and adjoining structures at Wedge and Grey since the 1950s.

As a land owner, the State of Western Australia, via the Department of Parks and Wildlife, has a duty of care to any person who enters public reserves such as Wedge and Grey. One of the Government's requirements for the redevelopment of shacks at Wedge and Grey requires buildings meet the Building Code of Australia and the *Building Act 2011*. Gaining a clear picture of the nature and extent of asbestos in and around buildings at Wedge and Grey is a first step to understanding the risks and requirements for the safe management or removal of asbestos materials, including those associated with building compliance.

### Who conducted the assessment?

There have been two assessments undertaken. The initial assessment and report undertaken by Aurora Environmental was a preliminary site assessment and management plan. Aurora made 17 recommendations including that a detailed site investigation be undertaken. A copy of the Aurora report can be downloaded from the Parks and Wildlife website: <http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/wedge-grey>

Senversa Pty Ltd was engaged to undertake the detailed site assessment which included detailed soil sampling around the perimeter of shacks and partial remediation of asbestos fragments in soil. A copy of this report will be made public when available.

### How did Aurora conduct the assessment?

Aurora externally inspected a total of 490 sites (shacks and associated buildings) of 496 possible sites. This included the collection and analysis of a number of samples from materials suspected of containing asbestos. Seventeen shacks were also inspected internally. An assessment of potential asbestos in soils was also undertaken, which included the collection and analysis of soil samples.

### What types of asbestos were identified?

By far the most common type of asbestos found was in the form of asbestos cement sheeting, flat or corrugated, as roofs, walls or fences. This contains 10-15% of asbestos by weight which is strongly bound in a cement matrix. This and other types of bound asbestos are termed non-friable, meaning that the asbestos fibre is not easily released and unlikely to present a health hazard by inhalation. However if bound asbestos is severely damaged or weathered it may start to become friable (crumble by hand) and more dangerous.

As well as asbestos cement sheeting other types of products that were identified at Wedge and Grey as containing asbestos or suspected of containing asbestos include bitumen adhesive, moulded support columns, boards, panels, insulation, vinyl floor

tiles, linoleum, gutters, gaskets, water pipes,, electrical mounting boards, soak wells, floor backing papers, sound dampener, glues and rope seals. Some of these materials were friable.

It is worth noting that terms “asbestos” and “asbestos containing materials (ACM)” are often used interchangeably, and both may be non-friable or friable, except in the context of soil contamination where ACM fragments are only defined to be non-friable.

Of the 490 shack sites that were inspected (externally), asbestos was identified or suspected at 259 sites (53 per cent). Over 850 products were confirmed or suspected of containing asbestos with 10 of these assessed as having high fibre release potential (i.e. friable). However, over 400 items containing asbestos were assessed as having a moderate fibre release potential. The total quantity of items confirmed or suspected of containing asbestos found externally, exceeds 7000m<sup>2</sup>.

Seventeen shacks were inspected internally, of which 11 were found to contain asbestos (65 per cent). Over 200 shack locations were found to have ACM debris containing asbestos in surrounding soils which indicates a potentially unacceptable health risk.

The Aurora report contains 17 recommendations for the management of asbestos on the two reserves.

#### **How do I know if my shack has asbestos?**

Aurora Environmental prepared an asbestos register that describes the location, type and condition of all known (externally) asbestos materials or materials suspected of containing asbestos identified at Wedge and Grey. The register can be found at <http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/wedge-grey>

#### **Do I need to inspect for asbestos inside my shack?**

The management and or removal of ACM from shacks are matters for shack owners to determine. Any future upgrade or demolition of shacks will require an asbestos inspection and possible removal of ACM in accordance with health and workplace safety regulations.

General information about identifying asbestos products in the home and on selecting an asbestos inspector may be found in the Department of Health [Guidance Note: Identification of Asbestos Containing Material](#)

#### **What should I do to manage asbestos on my property?**

Action to manage asbestos in and around shacks depends on the nature and extent of asbestos at each shack location. Parks and Wildlife recommends that shack owners obtain professional advice about the condition of any asbestos at their property and how to manage or remove it. If asbestos is to be removed this should be done by a person with a restricted or unrestricted asbestos removal licence issued by WorkSafe as per the following web address:

[www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/find-asbestos-licence-holder](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/find-asbestos-licence-holder)

Also, any asbestos removal is subject to safe and proper removal and disposal requirements as outlined in the Department of Health’s, Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992 and the Department of Environment Regulation’s Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations 2004. Asbestos is a controlled waste under the Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations. Penalties apply

for the unlawful disposal of controlled waste. A [Controlled Waste Fact Sheet on Asbestos](#) is available from the Department of Environment Regulation.

### **What is Parks and Wildlife doing to reduce the risk of public exposure to asbestos in the reserves?**

To date the following actions to address potential asbestos health risks have been undertaken by Parks and Wildlife:

- Worked closely with the Department of Health to ensure Parks and Wildlife's approach to management of asbestos meets the *Health Act 1911* and relevant regulations;
- Engaged Aurora Environmental to undertake a Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI) of asbestos in soil at Wedge and Grey;
- Implemented the majority of the recommendations in the Aurora PSI;
- Produced an Asbestos Register that continues to be built upon as new information is acquired;
- Conducted additional soil sampling and air monitoring for asbestos in soils and air at Wedge and Grey waste transfer stations;
- Prepared an Asbestos Management Plan for Wedge and Grey;
- Engaged Senversa to undertake a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) and partial remediation of both locations in regard to asbestos soil contamination. The remediation work involved raking soil and handpicking and removing asbestos fragments at high use sites (around shacks). Over 350 kg of ACM was collected and removed.
- Engaged an Environmental Auditor to oversee the DSI process;
- Convened an Interagency Asbestos Reference Group to provide advice on asbestos management issues; and
- Created a dedicated webpage to assist shack owners/occupiers to understand their responsibilities and make decisions about how to manage any asbestos in buildings and structures under their control.

### **Can I still use my shack?**

The continued use of shacks by shack owners and their guests is a matter for each shack owner to determine. This should be informed by an asbestos inspection.

### **Where can I find more information?**

Further updates will be provided on <http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/wedge-grey>

Asbestos and health related information can also be obtained from the WA Department of Health at [http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/1143/2/asbestos\\_in\\_the\\_home.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/1143/2/asbestos_in_the_home.pm)

The WA Department of Commerce (WorkSafe WA) also provides question and answer information on the management and removal of asbestos and can be found at <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/do-i-need-asbestos-removal-licence>.