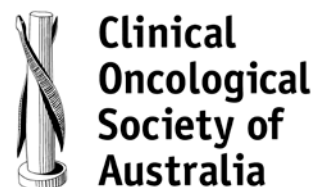


Media Release

Tuesday, 15 November 2011



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Climate change adds urgency to asbestos removal

PERTH: Australia may no longer be able to consider 'bonded asbestos' safe due to the increase in natural disasters causing asbestos fibres to be released, a scientific conference of cancer experts in Perth will be told today (15/11).

According to submissions to the Asbestos Management Review, bushfires, cyclones, earthquakes and floods are putting Australians at risk of asbestos-related disease, with destruction of materials built from 1945 to 1980 likely to release dangerous fibres into the environment.

Chairman of the Review, Geoff Fary, will tell the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia's Annual Scientific Meeting that many of the submissions claimed asbestos still posed a serious health risk through natural disasters and home renovations.

"The Asbestos Management Review is an initiative by the Australian Government in response to calls for Australia to be asbestos-free by 2030," Mr Fary said. "We have consulted and had input from more than 60 stakeholders representing employment, health and research organisations, federal, state and local government, unions and asbestos disease sufferers and support groups.

"There was widespread consensus on the need to improve removal facilities, creating a consistent approach to removal and increasing public awareness."

Mr Fary said many submissions were concerned a predicted rise in natural disasters would result in many Australians being unwittingly exposed to asbestos, which could add to the already increasing rates of mesothelioma and lung cancer.

"Home renovations are another major issue. An option for the Review is to recommend anyone planning a renovation where asbestos is present to use a licensed asbestos remover."

Clinical Oncological Society of Australia President, Professor Bogda Koczwara, said more than 600 Australians died of mesothelioma each year and rates were increasing.

"This is a highly lethal cancer with very poor survival," Professor Koczwara said. "Yet many people don't realise they are exposing themselves to asbestos when they pull up their lino floors or recover relics from their flooded home.

"We need to be doing more to raise awareness and to remove asbestos, especially from areas prone to natural disasters like flooding, earthquake and bushfire."

[Mr Fary will present his address at 11:25am today \(15 Nov\) at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting, Riverside Theatre, Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.](#)

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