

## Submission to the Public Accounts Committee of the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the Government's proposed Loose Fill Asbestos Remediation Program

We welcome the opportunity to make our concerns known to the inquiry. This brief submission is based upon the situation faced by a couple aged in their late 70s who have lived in their own home for 35 years. The home was subject to the ACT Government's loose fill asbestos remediation program of the early 1990s and it was later assessed in November 2014 as having no detectable macroscopic and no detectable trace respirable asbestos fibres in the living areas. We continue to live happily in our home and had planned to do so until, if ever, health issues force us to relocate elsewhere.

At the outset, we must express our sympathy for the families that have been forced out of their homes, some having to leave many of their possessions behind, because of the discovery of large quantities of asbestos fibres in their living areas.

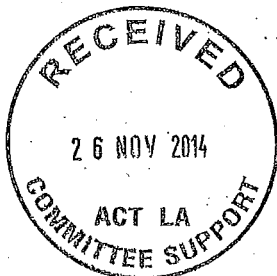
Although we are satisfied, generally speaking, with the ACT Government's overall approach to dealing with this problem we are greatly disappointed about the Commonwealth Government's refusal to accept any liability because it wrongly approved in, we think the 1960s, the use of loose fill asbestos insulation in ACT houses despite having been advised then by experts that this substance was dangerous to health. To not do so is unfair, an imposition on the people of the ACT and makes us vulnerable to public negativity surrounding the effect of the buy-back scheme on the ACT's budget.

There are two matters that particularly concern us:

- Our home, being in the non-urgent category, will probably be bought back by the ACT Government later rather than sooner but, having been valued at 28 October 2014 prices, the buy-back price will be unlikely to reflect the already noticeable boom in housing prices caused by the influx of "Mr Fluffy" buyers already coming onto the market and during 2015. Consequently, there might be a need to draw on our retirement assets, already being eroded year-by-year by inflation, to top-up the buy-back sum in order to purchase a new home. Further, banks and other lending institutions are reluctant to approve a mortgage for retired people whose only income is from superannuation or pensions. This is of great concern at our stage of life having worked productively in our chosen professions to provide for our retirement without seeking government pensions and now contributing to the community's well being through our voluntary work. We are unwilling to accept a downgrading of our living standards through no fault of our own and, arguably, the Commonwealth Government's disregard for our well-being.
- We have been advised that homes that continue to be occupied beyond the short term will have downlights and other points of possible ingress of asbestos fibres sealed and sliding doors fastened open with the cavities they slide into sealed off. This is unacceptable in a home such as ours that has been assessed as being completely clear of asbestos fibres internally.

**Recommendation.** That a process be introduced for the indexation of the buy-back valuation every quarter or half-yearly based on an independently assessed increase in average property values since October 2014.

25 November 2014



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