

2015

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**QUARTERLY REPORT: UPDATE ON THE ACT GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO
THE ISSUE OF 'MR FLUFFY' LOOSE FILL ASBESTOS
1 JULY 2015 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Presented by
Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

Taskforce Quarterly Report – 1 July 2015 - 30 September 2015

Overview

This is the fourth in a series of regular reports to the Legislative Assembly on implementation of the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (the Scheme). It covers a significant period of activity and achievement in implementing the Scheme during which the Asbestos Response Taskforce (the Taskforce):

- published the list of affected properties
- commenced the demolition of contaminated houses
- published the indicative demolition schedule for all affected houses
- continued to take possession of surrendered properties, and
- extended its communications and engagement efforts to neighbours and the broader community.

The reporting period commenced with a significant milestone in the history of Mr Fluffy in the ACT as the list of addresses affected by loose fill asbestos was published for the first time. A concerted community education and support strategy underpinned this information release to ensure the community was properly informed and supported as details of affected houses became public and potentially up to 30,000 current and former Canberrans found out they had lived in, worked in or on, or frequently visited a Mr Fluffy house. This work was led by the Taskforce and drew on support from across government as required.

Following closure of the Buyback Program on 30 June 2015, the Taskforce's focus shifted to include the safe demolition of affected properties, industry

engagement and broader community education and information surrounding demolition; while at the same time continuing support for affected owners as they transitioned through the Buyback Program.

The Pilot Demolition Program commenced on 6 July 2015 and five properties were safely removed as part of that program. This provided the Taskforce, industry, regulators and the Government the opportunity to test approaches to engagement with neighbouring residents, confirm on-site activities, and identify opportunities for greater efficiencies in demolition by working in partnership with industry and regulators. This culminated with a lessons learned workshop with industry on 11 August 2015. Demolition activity recommenced on 29 September 2015 and there is a target of 50 contaminated houses to be safely removed before the end of 2015. The Taskforce is on track to achieve this target.

During the reporting period ongoing and intensive support and engagement was provided to homeowners affected directly by Mr Fluffy as many continued their transition through the Buyback Program. Indicative demolition scheduling was provided to owners and community on 31 August 2015, which provided another piece of information for owners looking to return and rebuild on their blocks.

To support this wider focus, communication and engagement efforts broadened during this period to community education on the safety and logistics of the demolition program. This included community forums, educative videos, social media and web content as well as direct engagement. The Taskforce also worked in partnership with local media to provide information to the community about what will be a significant program of work in the coming years. Through the Scheme's Demolition Program,

contaminated houses will be demolished safely, quickly and efficiently with a focus on allowing rebuilding to occur as soon as possible, and removing Mr Fluffy from the community once and for all.

Acquisition of contaminated houses continued during the reporting period with an additional 133 houses transitioning to Territory ownership, bringing a total of 732 houses owned by the government at 30 September 2015.

Security and maintenance of these properties continues to be provided by the Taskforce to ensure they remain secure and disruption to neighbours and streetscapes is minimised prior to demolition. This includes immediate engagement with neighbours to ensure concerns are reported proactively and managed in a timely way. An online form on the Taskforce's website also allows for neighbours to report any concerns for fast response:

https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/forms/asbestos_community_feedback

An overview of key activity across multiple areas of work is outlined below.

Buyback Program

On 30 June 2015 the ACT Government's voluntary Buyback Program closed with 1014 of 1022 homeowners (99 per cent) agreeing to participate. As at 30 September, 16 owners had elected not to participate in the Buyback Program.

Significant efforts took place in the lead up to the Buyback Program closing to ensure homeowners had the information and support they needed to make an informed decision on whether to participate in the voluntary program. This included one on one support by the Taskforce's Personal Support Team (PST) who worked with affected owners in their individual circumstances. A key part of PST's role was to identify any barriers to owners making an informed choice

(including language, mental health or wellbeing) and to provide additional targeted support including by facilitating connections with service providers such as interpreters.

This provision of particular support continued an approach developed by the Communications and Personal Support teams and utilised when the Taskforce joined with WorkSafe ACT inspectors in late May 2015 to door knock a small number of addresses where the owners had had limited contact with the Taskforce to ensure they were aware of the Buyback Program and to further identify any issues which may impact their understanding around participation. These visits were successful and a number of owners subsequently sought Taskforce support and participated in the Buyback Program.

In keeping with the practice adopted in the lead up to 30 June, the Taskforce continues to write to owners around a month before their offer expires reminding them of the expiry date and the implications of that offer expiring. These letters are used to support continuing conversations with the PST so owners are aware of the key decision points and next key steps.

During the reporting period, the Taskforce also communicated to owners wanting to return to blocks by exercising of their first right of refusal, that some information would not be available to them before the expiry date on their offer – for example in relation to demolition date and resale price for the remediated block –and why this was the case. It also provided advice on how owners could, at their election, continue to reside in their affected house until that information did become available.

In meetings with affected owners, flexibility available through the Program, such as around settlement times, was also discussed. To date 24 homeowners

have indicated to the Taskforce they would like to stay in their homes to 2020 while 136 have asked for a settlement between now and 30 June 2020.

The final cost of the property acquisition phase of the Scheme will not be known until all offer processes have been completed and deeds exchanged (which is expected to be in early 2016). The aggregate financial impact of the Scheme will continue to be updated as part of the normal budget updates and reporting processes. At this stage, the estimated net cost of the Scheme continues to be \$400 million.

During this quarter 37 valuations occurred. To date 1016 have now been completed. In this period a small number (14) homeowners sought to have a Presidential Determination undertaken on their property if they had concerns around the valuations and therefore the offer. This brings owner-initiated presidential requests to 31. The Taskforce has initiated 27 presidential determinations in line with its policy position if the valuations came in at greater than 10 percent variance.

The average price paid for properties to date is \$720,000 and median is \$640,000. Offers range from \$361,000 (Charnwood) to \$3 million (Forrest). As at 30 October 2015 the total of offers made was \$682.5 million. Many owners have sought to exercise their stamp duty concession as they move to another property in the ACT with 501 concessions paid which is an additional assistance of \$11.9 million.

Key Buyback Statistics – totals to (as at DATE)	
Offers made	1016
Offers accepted	950
Housed owned by Territory	759
Private demolitions approved (contract prior to 28 Oct 2014)	12

ACT Government Housing properties	5
'Go it Alone' applications (PAC Rec. 20) received	7
Range of offers made	\$361,000 - \$3 million
Total of offers accepted	\$678,863,543
Average price paid for properties	\$720,000
Median price paid for properties	\$640,000
Presidential Determinations	58

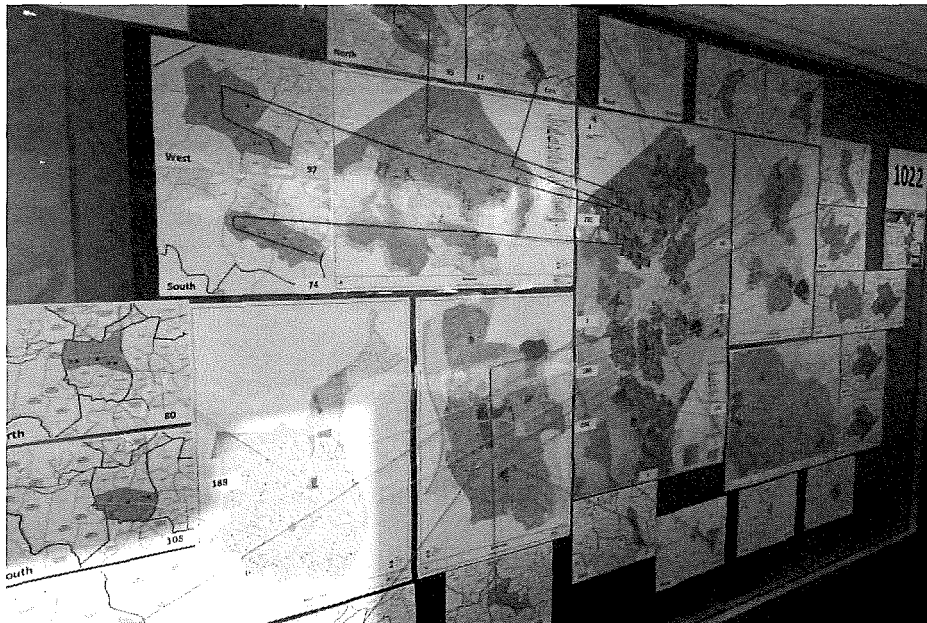
Demolition Program

Demolition Scheduling

On 31 August 2015 the government provided information to owners and the community on the indicative demolition scheduling for properties. The Schedule takes account of a number of factors to ensure this work can be undertaken safely, efficiently and effectively with community disruption minimised. This includes factors such as the number of houses surrendered and in Territory ownership at the time of scheduling which were incurring security and maintenance costs (671), number of houses in bushfire areas (276), potentially subject to a planning variation as located in Residential Zone 1 (743), owners who had indicated at least some interest in retaining a First Right of Refusal to return to the block (705), houses in cluster areas of two or more (133), on rural leases (4), blocks with heritage considerations (25) and those subject to unit title or shared wall (33).

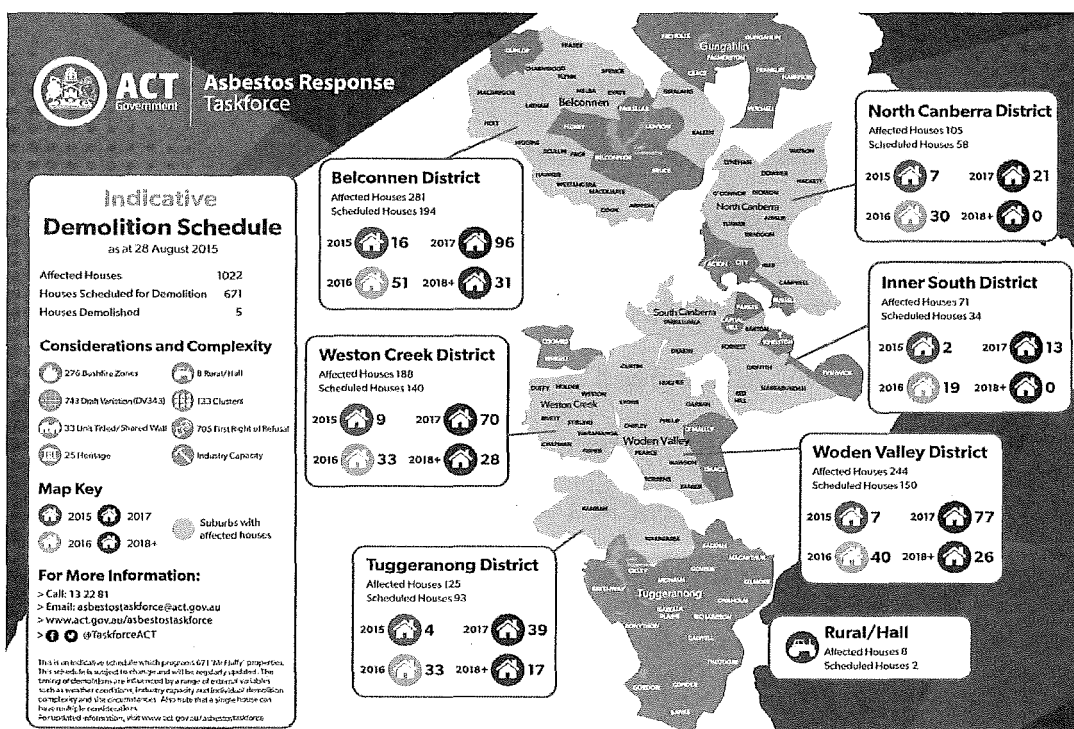
Scheduling also took account of industry capacity constraints (based on pre-tender consultation) as well as the need to disseminate demolition work across the Territory to ensure fairness for owners. Coordinating demolition so the resale of remediated blocks can occur in a way that ensures the market is not flooded by stock in particular suburbs or regions at once was also a factor. This was a large and complex piece of work the Taskforce undertook and they

continue to keep owners informed as the work progresses.



Indicative mapping work undertaken by the Taskforce in determining demolition scheduling.

Publically, the Taskforce published information about the number of scheduled houses for demolition by district and suburb in a given year. The Taskforce will update this information twice each year in February and August.



At the same time as this information was published, affected owners were informed of the six month window in which their particular property was to be demolished, noting that this timing could be impacted by a range of external variables such as weather conditions, industry capacity, individual demolition complexity and site circumstances. Houses that had not been surrendered at the time the schedules were settled were included as a block in 2018.

The Taskforce continues to discuss scheduling individually with owners including for those wanting to be present as their former house is demolished or to avoid the area during the time of anticipated work.

Discussions were foreshadowed during that time and have now begun with owners who will be seeking to exercise their First Right of Refusal and return to their former blocks. Owners will receive the price of their blocks six months prior to demolition with valuations occurring through the Land Development Agency processes.

Demolition Pilot Program

In the reporting period six Mr Fluffy properties were demolished safely. Five of these properties were part of the Pilot Demolition Program.

Head contractors for the pilot program were Manteena Pty Ltd and Shaw Building Group. These firms were selected from the ACT Public Service's existing project manager's panel arrangement. The works were regulated by WorkSafe ACT and licensed asbestos assessors and removalists undertook the asbestos testing and removal work.

A lessons learned and improvement workshop for all agencies and industry involved in the pilot program as well as the New South Wales Government was held on 11 August 2015. The workshop covered areas such as demolition

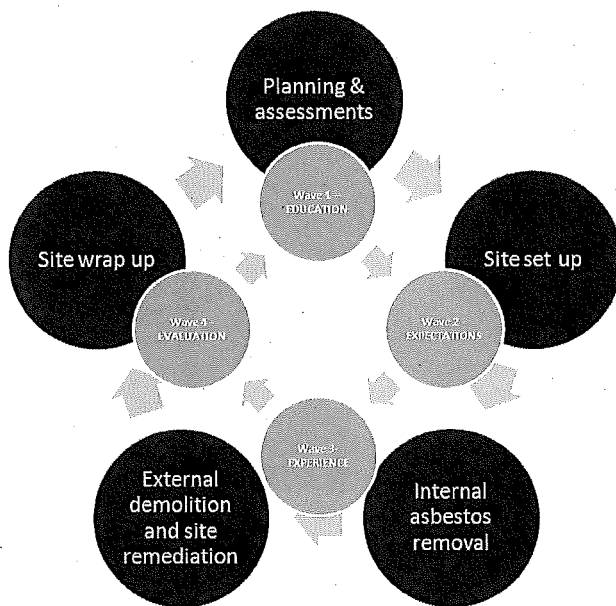
design and innovation, transport, disposal and waste management, program management and project scope and assessment. The aim was to reflect on experiences and highlight improvements and efficiencies. More than 80 people were in attendance. A copy of findings of this workshop is at Attachment A.



Cross agency, government and industry lessons learned workshop on 11 August 2015.

One of the key purposes of the pilot was to inform and refine how the Taskforce engages and communicates with the community around the demolition works.

The Taskforce door-knocked neighbours of the five pilot sites four times throughout the demolition process. This engagement was intensive with the aim to educate about the program and process, manage expectations and experience of the demolition works and, after the property was demolished, evaluate what worked and what could be improved around the level of information and engagement provided.



Thank you for providing feedback

Select the profile which best describes you:

- ☐ Affected homeowner, tenant or investor
- ☒ Live next to or near an affected property
- ☐ Member of a community council, community organisation or business
- ☐ Interested member of the broader community

How are you informed about the Buyback and Demolition Scheme?

- ☒ Media
- ☒ Word of mouth
- ☐ Official Taskforce Facebook or Twitter
- ☐ Taskforce website
- ☐ Other _____
- ☒ Taskforce letterbox drop or doorknock
- ☐ Taskforce public forum or presentation
- ☐ Access Canberra
- ☒ Contractors in my street

On a scale of 1 to 10, answer the following questions:

(1 being low/poor/strongly disagree and 10 being high/excellent/strongly agree)

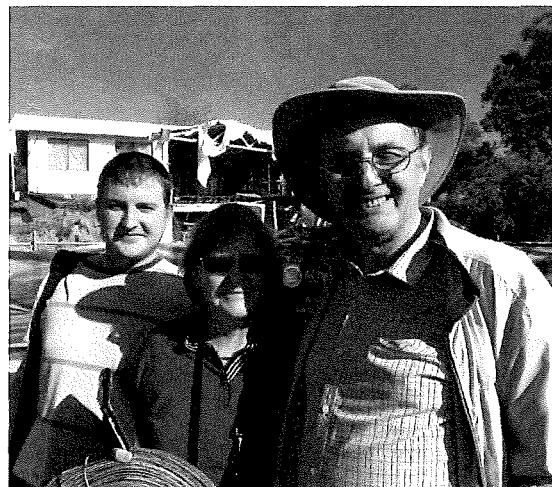
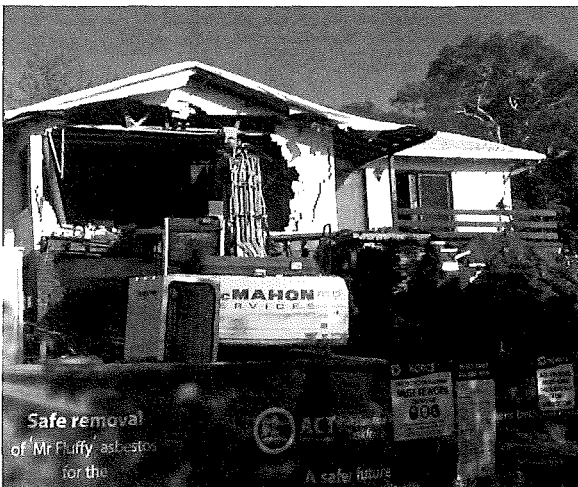
1. Did you feel you had enough information to understand the demolition program? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Was the information reliable and trustworthy? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Were your questions answered in a timely way? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. How accessible was the information? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Did you feel the engagement approach was right for you? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Did you have time to consider the information provided before demolition activity began? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Was your conversation or engagement with Contractors/Taskforce respectful? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Other comments: *We live at No. 70 Ruthbridge. No. 60 was demolished with the house behind in Sternberg. The work has not interrupted or inconvenienced us in any way. Progress has been quick and quiet.*

At each wave of engagement the Taskforce sought feedback and fed questions asked back into broader communications materials to support broader community understanding around the demolition. In total the Taskforce undertook 660 engagement actions through the pilot program with feedback broadly positive.

Demolition Program

Since the conclusion of this reporting period the demolition program has significantly ramped up with more than 20 houses now demolished. The Taskforce is on track to meet its target of 50 demolitions by the end of the 2015.



Recent demolition of 83 Doyle Crescent, Chapman. The former owners attended to watch the property be demolished with their neighbours.

A national tender for a Panel of Head Contractors for the Scheme's Demolition Program was advertised on 7 August 2015 and closed on 1 September 2015. In total 27 responses were received and 10 companies including six from Canberra and Queanbeyan were selected to form the panel of head contractors. These are:

- Capcorp Constructions (ACT)
- Caylamax Demolitions (QLD)
- Enviropacific Services Pty Ltd (NSW)
- RMA Group (NSW)

- AGH Demolition (ACT/Queanbeyan)
- Beasy Pty Ltd (NSW)
- PBS Building Pty Ltd (ACT)
- IQON Pty Ltd (ACT)
- Manteena Pty Ltd (ACT)
- Shaw Building Group (ACT)

The tender followed a process of market soundings on an informal basis by Procurement and Capital Works (Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate) and an industry briefing attended by around 200 people from around Australia in July, which was one of five formal industry engagements in the reporting period.

One of the most visible engagements was on 14 August 2015 when 50 local and national contractors attended site visits to Mr Fluffy houses in the ACT to further inform them of the demolition work to take place over the next few years. The visit gave contractors a greater understanding of some of the complexities, challenges and opportunities associated with this major demolition program and supported them in determining whether to tender for this work.



Local and interstate contractors attending a site visit to a Mr Fluffy house and briefing in August 2015.



Key Demolition Statistics – totals to date	
Houses demolished	21
Targets for demolition	2015: 50 houses 2016: 200 houses 2017: 300 houses 2018: 300 houses
Number of Head Contractors Appointed	10
Number of properties scheduled for demolition	671
Number of doorknocks to date to inform community about the demolition program	380, 1220 individual contacts

Informing and engaging the community

During July to September 2015 the Taskforce continued its comprehensive communications and engagement activity to inform the Canberra community about Mr Fluffy and the ACT Government's response. Particular areas of focus during this period was the release of the list of affected addresses on 1 July 2015, the pilot demolition program which had commenced and the publishing of the indicative demolition scheduling on 31 August 2015.

The release of the list of known affected addresses had significant challenges with estimates suggesting up to 30,000 people may have lived in, worked in or

on, or frequently visited, these houses over the last 50 years, many of which would be informed of this when the list was released.

Through the Taskforce, and in partnership with ACT Health and other relevant agencies, clear information was provided in the lead up to, and coinciding with, the release of the list, which had been foreshadowed as part of the announcement of the Scheme in October 2014, and was timed to coincide with the closure of the Buyback Program.

As part of the response e-register was established allowing residents and tradespeople to record a historical connection to a property. This register provides the Taskforce with further information to target its education and engagement. For former residents who resided in these properties the e-form also allows them to indicate if they are interested in participating in the ANU Health Study. To date 539 people have completed this form.

The screenshot shows the 'Mr Fluffy' Record and Information Form on the Access Canberra website. The header includes the ACT Government logo, 'Access Canberra.' text, and a search bar. Navigation links for Home, Services, Payments, Information, Feedback, News, and Directory are present, along with a Login button. The breadcrumb trail indicates the path: Home > Mr Fluffy Registration and Information Form. The form title is 'Mr Fluffy' Record and Information Form. The introductory text explains the purpose of the form: to help the ACT Government understand the connection to properties affected by loose fill asbestos insulation. It states that by recording details, users will help inform future education requirements and additional communications. A note specifies that exact dates of installation are unknown but that 'Mr Fluffy' was installed between 1968 and 1979. It also mentions that users need to complete a new form for each property they have a connection to. A disclaimer states that the form is only to be completed if there are additional properties to be identified. A note at the bottom of the introductory text states that all fields marked with an asterisk are required. The form fields are: First Name *, Last Name *, Email Address *, Preferred Business Hours Contact Number *, What is your year of birth? (YYYY) (with a dropdown arrow), and Which State or Territory do you currently reside in? * (with a dropdown arrow).

Mr Fluffy e-Record and Information Form

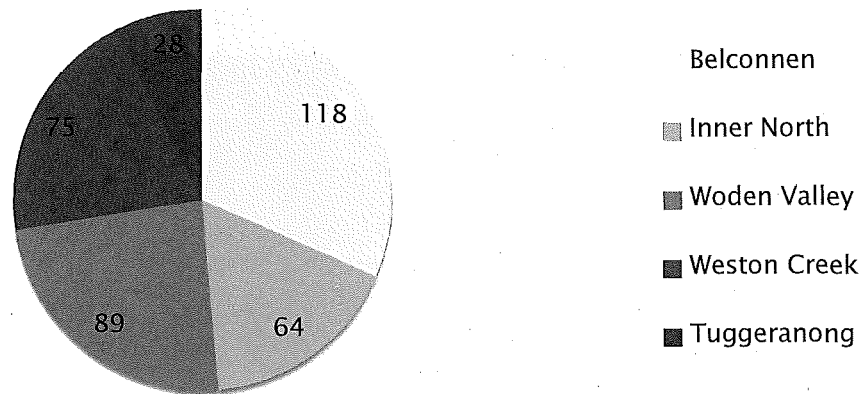
www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/forms/Mr_Fluffy_Record_and_Information_Form

Separately, during the reporting period (17 September 2015) the Commissioner for Public Administration and Head of the Taskforce informed affected owners that there had been an unauthorised public release of personal information relating to affected properties (and including owner details) in June 2015. The public disclosure was delayed on the advice of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) so as to not compromise the parallel investigations requested by the Head of the Taskforce from the Commissioner and the AFP as soon as the unauthorised release was brought to the Taskforce's attention. Those investigations remained underway at the end of the reporting period.

As outlined earlier in the report a coordinated engagement strategy was in place for the pilot demolitions with door knocking in phases to neighbours around these five properties. This allowed the Taskforce to refine its communications for broader community education around demolition. The Taskforce has continued its door knocking around the next 50 scheduled properties, to date having knocked on 380 doors and had in excess of 1200 contacts. In the reporting period 243 of these contacts occurred.

The purpose of this engagement activity is to provide information packs on the demolition program, answer questions and enable the Taskforce to continue to refine its community education processes.

374 neighbours door knocked, engagement by district - August-October 2015



The Taskforce continued its work in presenting at Community Council meetings with six attended in the reporting period. In total the Taskforce has attended 14 meetings and discussed the ACT Government's Response and its work to 295 attendees. The Taskforce will continue to engage with Councils as demolition work continues across 56 suburbs.

A key engagement activity in the reporting period was "Plant Retrieval Month" which ran between 18 June 2015 and 31 July 2015 and allowed owners to return to their former blocks to remove plants or trees in the dormant season free of charge. This initiative was implemented following requests from owners who chose to leave their affected home in the summer months and sought a more appropriate time to move plants.

As part of the initiative 87 permits to participate were issued to homeowners across 39 suburbs, giving access to blocks for 72 hour period windows. Owners could seek more than one permit if needed.

The Taskforce was supported in this initiative by Rodney's Plants Plus in Pialligo and local landscapers who provided free workshops for homeowners regarding transplanting trees and plants as well as other gardening advice and tips.



Workshop held for Mr Fluffy owners as part of Plant Retrieval Month at Rodney's Plants Plus at Pialligo on 13 June 2015.

To support the release of the demolition scheduling the Taskforce held a number of forums as well as weekend drop-in sessions across Canberra's north and south to provide further information to homeowners as well as the broader community.



Drop-in information session about demolition scheduling in Dickson on 19 September 2015.

In total in the reporting period four public forums were held, two information drop-in sessions and one seniors' morning tea. The Taskforce is currently attending the local Parties at the Shops engagement events, further providing information to the community. To date those attended have been at Erindale, Hall, Kaleen and Watson.

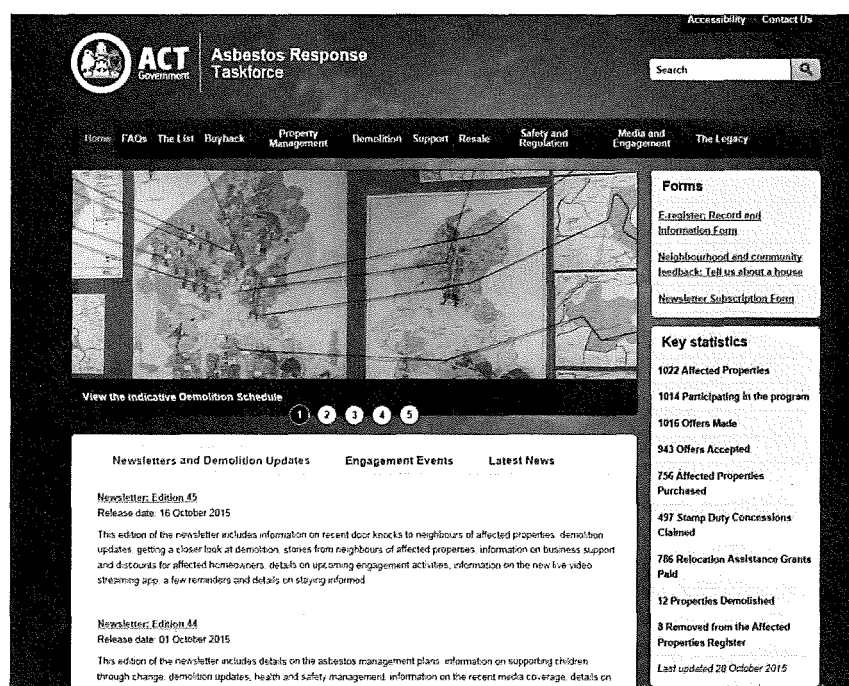


Taskforce presence at Kaleen Parties at the Shops, 17 October 2015.

In the reporting period the Taskforce undertook targeted mail outs to owners and to neighbours in cluster areas sending a total of 7259 letters. In the same period 13 editions of the e-newsletter was sent to 2600 subscribers each week, the majority of which are affected homeowners. This brings 46 total e-newsletters the Taskforce has sent with a total readership in excess of 47,000.

The Taskforce's web presence also continued to grow with 118,165 page views from 22,583 users in the reporting period. From 2 March 2015 when the site was re-launched there have been a total of 214,924 page views from 32,312 users.

The Taskforce continues to monitor activity on the website including information accessed by users allowing improvements and updates to be made in real time and ensuring it continues to provide high quality and comprehensive information to the community. The page will continue to be a key part of the broader community education on the demolition program, providing details on scheduling and activity as well as links to educational videos and resources.



Taskforce's website as at 10 November 2015.

The Taskforce's social media presence including Facebook also saw an increase in users this reporting period following inclusion of more video content and live demolition updates. There was an increase of 249 likes with a reach of 99,846 users. In total the page has 948 likes and a total reach of 245,493 users.

The Taskforce is using the social medium to engage and directly respond to homeowner questions as well as share homeowner stories about their experiences through the Scheme, allowing an opportunity for owners to

respond and reflect on their own journey. Other online platforms to enable greater sharing of experience and content are being explored by the Taskforce.

A key focus of the Taskforce's communications and engagement approach as the demolition program continues will be around those 167 'cluster' areas being two or more houses in close proximity to each other. These are found across 45 suburbs. There are a total of 3500 neighbours in these areas.

As well as supporting information and education provision on the process the Taskforce will also be working with those communities around change management noting there will be a change to the streetscape after demolition and in the rebuilding process.

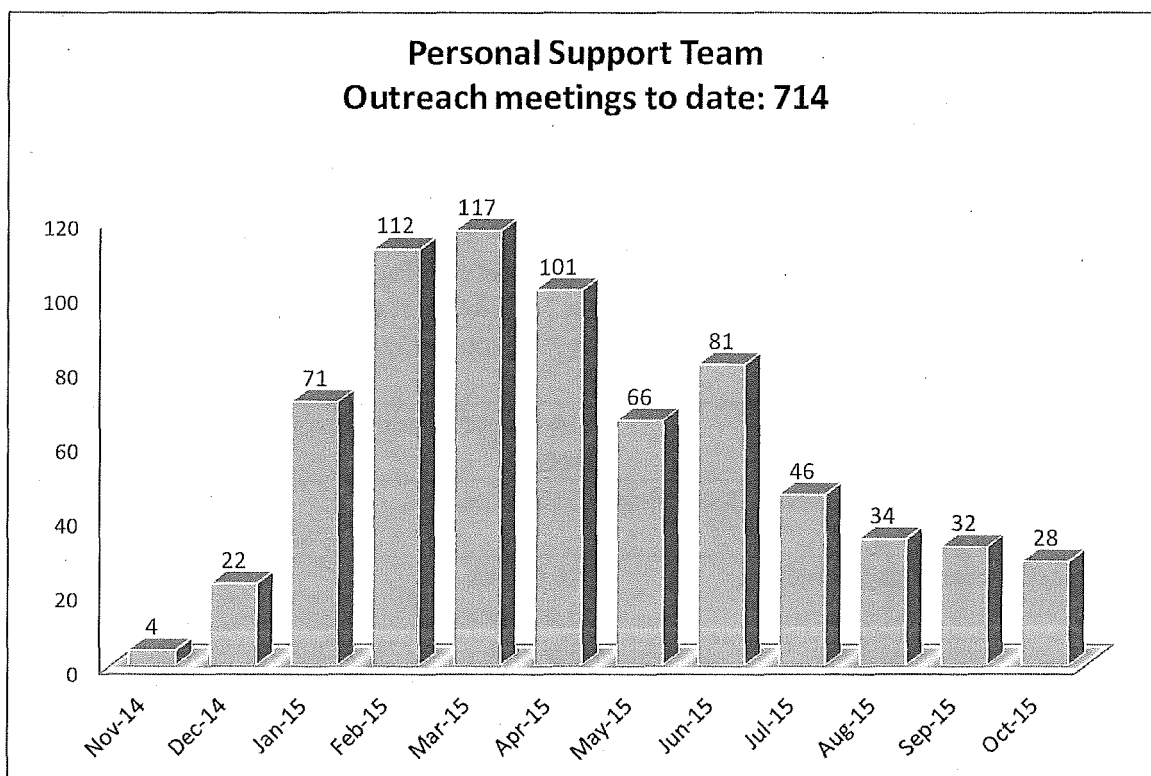
Key communications and engagement statistics - totals to date	
Website	211,782 page views
Information Sheets	24 published
Educational videos	16, 2138 views on YouTube
Doorknocking	380 houses for pilot and first schedule = 1220 contacts
Newsletter	50 editions 1155 = average readership 47,534 total readership
Letterbox drops and mail outs	More than 24 mail outs to owners and cluster areas = 13,600 total letters
Social media	382 posts on Facebook and 948 followers = 242,554 total reach
Public Forums/ Drop In Sessions/ Engagement Activities	17 = 1800 people engaged
Community Council Meetings	14 attended and presented = 295 audience total
e-register of historical exposure (following release of list)	539 responses
Business/partnerships/ banks	16 banks 5 businesses 3 utilities Ongoing partnerships
Senior Morning Teas	8 for elderly homeowners = 300 attendees
Media mentions of Mr Fluffy	16,000 (print and broadcast with syndication)

Supporting affected homeowners

A key part of the Taskforce's support for homeowners has been an intensive one on one engagement through the PST. Homeowners are assigned officers based on geographical areas and in most cases have had the continuity of the one officer throughout their experience with the Taskforce.

Members of the Personal Support Team are co-located several days each week at Woden Community Services, Northside Community Services at Dickson, Kippax Health Centre and Tuggeranong Community Health Centre providing supported greater connectivity and seamless referral to community based services for owners as needed.

In total since the community-based locations came online there have been 714 meetings held at these sites. In the reporting period there were 112 meetings. This does not include meetings in central office with members of the Executive Team.

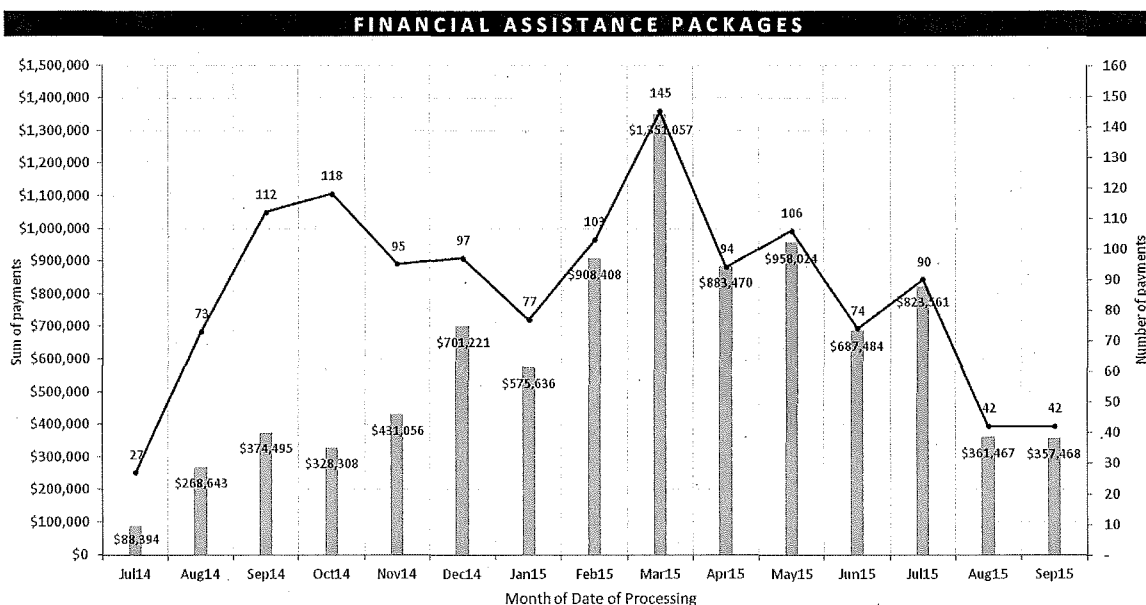


In the reporting period there were 3367 interactions with homeowners recorded by the Taskforce in its client management database bringing a total of 29,000 interactions overall since the Taskforce was created.

The Taskforce keeps data on the nature of the contacts and key issues or questions raised and has used this to further inform its communications and support to other homeowners.

As well as information support, the Taskforce has administered financial assistance to homeowners through emergency funding or payment of Relocation Assistance Grants to assist homeowners move to safer accommodation. This is \$10,000 per household and an additional \$2000 per dependent who resided at the property, minus any previous assistance. Landlord assistance is also provided at \$5000.

Between July and September 2015 \$1.5 million in support was provided and 175 Relocation Assistance Grants paid. In total \$9.4 million has been funded to date and 786 Relocation Grants processed.



Support provided by the Government and Taskforce does not end when a property has been acquired. The Taskforce continues to remain in contact with owners seeking additional support and advice as they settle into new communities or seeking to exercise their first right of refusal and return to their blocks. At present there are 693 owners who have indicated they would still like to reserve this right, however this number is expected to decrease as more owners purchase other property or determine returning to their former blocks is no longer feasible in their circumstances. Detail on exercising a first right of refusal was provided to owners on 10 September 2015 by email and hard copy post. Details of these documents are available on the Taskforce's website at: www.asbestostaskforce.act.gov.au

The Taskforce is also tracking owners as they move through the program in areas they have relocated to determine what additional support may be required as they settle into new communities.

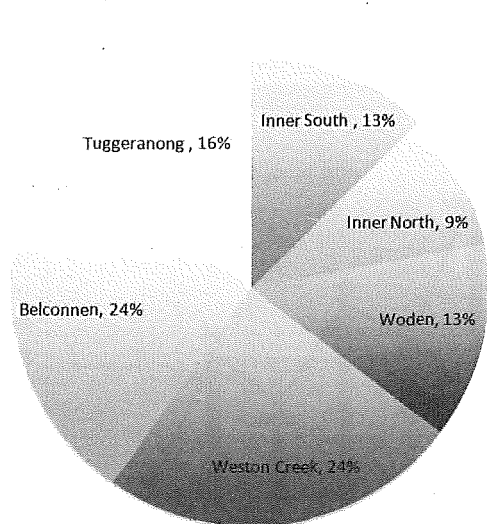


Chart 1: location of respondents' affected houses

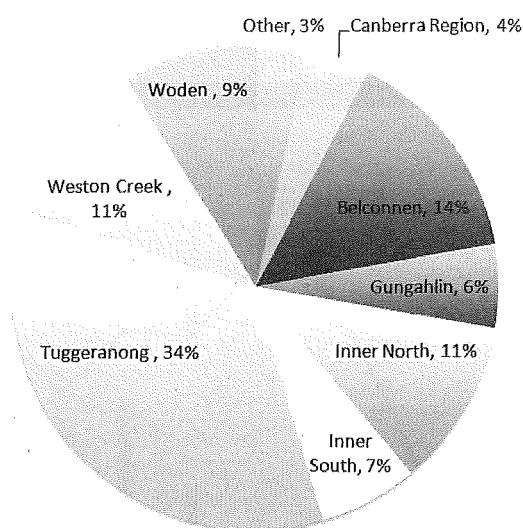


Chart 2: where respondents have relocated

Moving Forward Survey: Owners and Tenants Results of the Moving Forward Survey will be available on the Taskforce's website at: www.asbestostaskforce.act.gov.au

This includes the Taskforce seeking to facilitating connections with community organisations and forming partnerships with existing service providers in those areas to support owners as they transition to new suburbs and regions.

Support for homeowners – totals to date	
Homeowner meetings at Outreach Locations	714
Relocation Assistance Grants processed	786
Financial support provided	\$9.4 million
Individual engagements with homeowners and community	29,000
Calls taken by the Access Canberra Call Team	12,000
Senior Morning Teas	8 for elderly homeowners = 300 attendees
Business/partnerships/ banks	16 banks 5 businesses 3 utilities Ongoing partnerships
Examples of agencies and services homeowners have been referred to by the Taskforce for wrap around support	GPs Capital Health Network (Medicare Local) Relationships Australia Partners in Recovery Council of the Aging Supportive Tenancy Service Woden, Belconnen, Northside and Tuggeranong Community Services Carers ACT Redkite (Schools Support) Housing ACT CARE Financial Public Trustee Men's Shed Child and Family Centres Communities@Work ACT Health Mental Health ACT

ANU Health Study

Work is progressing around the Australian National University's Health Study which is supported by the government, with the first two phases now completed.

The purpose of the ACT Asbestos Health Study is to gain additional understanding regarding the risk of developing mesothelioma from living in a house containing loose fill asbestos.

The first part of the study, an analysis of mesothelioma rates and distribution in the ACT was released on 14 September 2015. The descriptive analysis found the rate of mesothelioma cases in the ACT between 1994 and 2011 rose at a slightly greater rate than the rest of Australia – however, it is unknown whether or not this is connected with living in a Mr Fluffy house. It is also important to note the statistical uncertainty in these results. This part of the study was a descriptive analysis which looked at all the cases over time which had been registered in the ACT. The study then describes the trends and compares them to other jurisdictions. The information gathered in this part of the study will feed into the next three parts. Details can be found here:

<http://nceph.anu.edu.au/research/projects/act-asbestos-health-study>

As part of the second phase, focus groups were held in July 2015 with current and recent residents of Mr Fluffy houses to discuss their health-related concerns. A total of 80 homeowners were randomly selected to attend by the ANU. Nineteen former occupants attended; 12 on the south side and 7 on the north side of Canberra. Findings from the focus groups have been used to shape the health survey scheduled to be available in late 2015.

The final two phases include:

- a study and survey looking at the likely exposure levels of current and recent residents in terms of years lived in an affected house and activities such as renovating.

- a study linking a number of data sets to estimate the risk of developing mesothelioma in current and former residents of affected houses compared with the general population.

Final results will not be available until after the conclusion of the study in 2017. Owners continue to be kept informed of progress through the e-newsletter.

Key policy and regulation

In the reporting period guidelines were provided to homeowners on Exercising a First Right of Refusal to return to remediated blocks. First Right of Refusal allows owners to repurchase the remediated block after remediation without having to compete with other interested parties in a public auction.

The *Exercising Your First Right of Refusal: Guidelines* released on 9 September 2015 provides practical information to owners including FAQs and process timelines to further understanding. Officers of the Personal Support Team are having individual conversations with homeowners around their individual blocks, with discussions expected to occur six months prior to blocks being ready for repurchase.

It is important to note that the Taskforce will not be clearing blocks through its demolition activity. The Taskforce's mandate is to eradicate loose fill asbestos from the community and will therefore be removing those structures affected by Mr Fluffy. In most circumstances this will be just the house and any attached structures such as garages or pergolas.

A key piece of Legislation introduced by government this quarter was the Building (Loose-fill Asbestos Eradication) Bill 2015 on 24 September 2015. The Bill sought to ensure the Territory could quickly, safely and efficiently demolish

the loose-fill asbestos affected dwellings that it had acquired and the blocks remediated and resold as quickly as possible to provide community renewal. The Bill which was passed on 27 October 2015 amended seven pieces of legislation in order to:

- provide for affected properties to be demolished by the Territory under demolition order rather than a building approval where demolition is relatively straightforward
- streamline approvals for demolition of affected heritage properties
- enable land rent to be granted to former affected homeowners who return to their original block, where they meet the eligibility criteria
- clarify that the Building and Construction Industry Training Levy will be paid for demolitions conducted under demolition orders, and states how the levy value will be calculated (thereby expressing the ACT Government's commitment to a safe and well trained building and construction industry) and
- clarify that oversight of asbestos removal is the responsibility of the asbestos removal company rather than the individual asbestos removal worker

Proposed Variation to the Territory Plan (DV343)

During this quarter Draft Variation 343 to the Territory Plan which relates to residential blocks surrendered under the eradication scheme in Residential Zone 1 (RZ1) areas was referred by Planning Minister Mr Mick Gentleman MLA to the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services (21 July 2015).

Prior to referral DV343 was open for public comment between 13 April 2015 and 25 May 2015 with 124 submissions received.

Changes proposed by the variation are modest and are intended to assist in defraying some of the cost of the Government's response to the 'Mr Fluffy' issue and included:

- reducing the minimum size for dual occupancy development to 700m². Currently this is permitted on any RZ1 block that is 800m² or larger
- allowing unit titling for dual occupancy. At the moment, if two houses are built on the same block, they must be sold as a single item. This will remain the case for dual occupancy in the RZ1 zone, except for the surrendered residential blocks
- applying the plot ratios permitted in the RZ2 suburban core zone to surrendered blocks. This is a 50% plot ratio or a sliding scale plot ratio, dependant on whether both dwellings face the street
- applying a single storey restriction for both dwellings in a dual occupancy if one dwelling is located behind the other. Currently in this situation the front dwelling is permitted to be two storey
- introducing a design criterion for the redevelopment of the surrendered blocks to maintain and support amenity of existing areas.

The Standing Committee was briefed by representatives of the Asbestos Response Taskforce and Environment and Planning Directorate on 26 August 2015 and by the Planning Minister on 30 September 2015.

On 27 October 2015 the Committee provided its report to the government which included four recommendations. The Government will provide its response to the Committee's report in the November sittings of the Legislative Assembly.

It is important to note that the Taskforce is unable to sell any remediated blocks to which DV 343 may apply until the final variation has been approved by the Legislative Assembly, which is expected to occur in February 2016.

Assisted Private Demolition Program

A total of 17 applications have been received and assessed relating to homeowners seeking support for assisted private demolition (i.e. where a binding contract for demolition was in place prior to 28 October 2014). In total 12 applications were approved, four were refused, and one was withdrawn.

During the current reporting period, six of the 12 properties approved for assistance provided the required clearances and were deregistered from the Register of Affected Residential Premises that is kept in accordance with the *Dangerous Substances Act 2004*. Demolition costs of those properties have also been reimbursed and they have exited the Assisted Private Demolition Program.

Governance

The Eradication Scheme Steering Committee (ESSC) which is an internal cross-government governance group which provides high level monitoring and direction to the Taskforce Head on policy and program delivery continued to meet. In the reporting period they met three times and in total there have been eight meetings. The Committee provided critical input and support to the Taskforce's approach and rationale to demolition scheduling and provides ongoing monitoring of the rollout of the buyback and demolition programs including financial, logistical and support provision.

The Community and Expert Reference Group (CERG) met with the Taskforce three times this quarter. In total the CERG have met 19 times with minutes of the meetings available publicly on the Taskforce website at:

<http://www.asbestostaskforce.act.gov.au/media-and-engagement/community-and-expert-reference-group>

CERG produced its first e-newsletter on 19 August 2015 which the Taskforce helped to disseminate through its website and e-newsletter. A copy is available here:

http://www.asbestostaskforce.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/760750/CERG-Newsletter-Edition-1.pdf

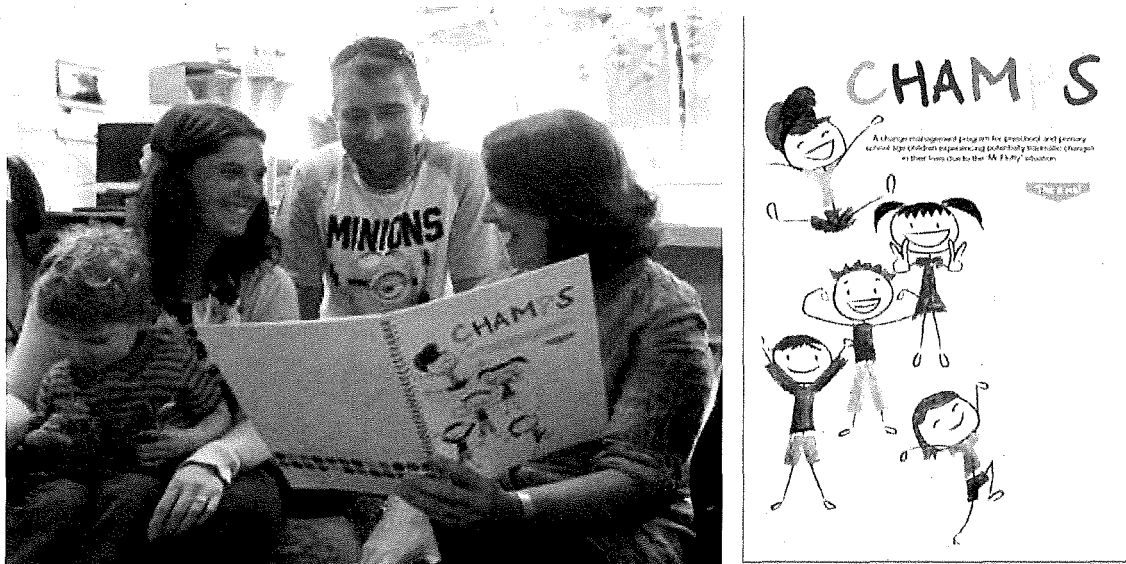
On 14 September 2015 CERG joined with the Taskforce to support the launch of CHAMPS - a change management resource for preschool and primary school age children affected by Mr Fluffy.

The booklet was developed by Ms Wendy Hegarty who is a Canberra teacher, early childhood leader and an affected Mr Fluffy homeowner. The resource provides a series of activities that adults and children can work through to discuss change resulting from Mr Fluffy after they have moved from their affected property.

The booklet was designed in partnership with Early Childhood Australia and was funded and distributed to owners by the Taskforce. It was launched by Dr Sue Packer, Chair of the CERG and Pediatrician at Woden Community Services and a number of affected homeowners and their children were in attendance.

Following the launch a meeting for parents was held that evening with Dr Packer and Ms Hegarty to discuss the book further and the Taskforce proactively distributed 180 copies to owners who had children aged 12 years

or younger and provided to Family and Child Centres across the ACT. Copies are also available from the Taskforce have been promoted on social media, through the Taskforce's weekly e-newsletter, written correspondence to affected owners and the website.



Launch of CHAMPS at Woden Community Services on 14 September 2015. Author, Early Childhood leader and affected homeowner Wendy Hegarty pictured with the Rohrlach family.

Conclusion

As the Scheme moves into its next phase of demolition and sale of remediated blocks and physical and psychological rebuilding process gathers pace the Taskforce will continue its work in engaging with homeowners, stakeholders, industry and the community to provide a coordinated and compassionate response to eradicating this legacy issue from Canberra.