



ACT
Government

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOOSE FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION ERADICATION SCHEME

1 JANUARY 2021 – 30 JUNE 2021

PRESENTED BY
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OVERVIEW

The Asbestos Response Taskforce (Taskforce) is responsible for the delivery and management of the ACT Government's Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (Scheme). The ACT Government provides regular reports on the activities of the Taskforce in delivering the Scheme and this report covers the period from 1 January – 30 June 2021. The reports are tabled in the Legislative Assembly to assist interested parties in understanding and monitoring the work of the Taskforce to eradicate loose fill asbestos insulation from the Canberra residential community.

Key achievements of the Taskforce during the January – June 2021 reporting period include:

- > continued support to homeowners of remaining privately-owned properties (both Scheme participants and those managing privately) to assist them in exploring all their options and identify individual pathways to eradication
- > the acquisition of an additional five affected properties, this includes one under a Transition Assistance arrangement
- > the progression of an additional three Transition Assistance applications to support homeowners with complex health or financial circumstances to assist with transition out of their affected property into safer living arrangements
- > planning for the delivery of upcoming demolitions of single residential dwellings owned by the Territory
- > continued property maintenance service to ensure the safe, efficient and effective management of properties both prior to demolition and post demolition/prior to sale
- > construction completed of the first unit complex rebuild package the Territory has delivered under the Scheme

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- > completed planning and initial design documentation of the upcoming demolition and rebuild package for the second rebuild package within another multi-unit complex
- > two First Right of Refusal (FROR) offers made to homeowners providing an opportunity to purchase their block following demolition and remediation
- > the direct sale to Housing ACT via asset transfer of seven remediated affected blocks; and
- > continuation of the Public Sales Program, with six contracts exchanged on remediated blocks and 20 sales settled
- > commenced development of an Assistance Disease Assistance Fund that will support people who suffer from an asbestos related disease as a result of exposure to loose fill asbestos from living in a Mr Fluffy property.

Key statistics as at 30 June 2021, for the 1046 properties identified as affected (1027) and impacted (19) by loose fill asbestos insulation, are provided below:

- > 983 properties surrendered to the Territory (967 affected and 16 impacted)
- > 1002 properties demolished (992 affected and 10 impacted):
 - 972 by the Taskforce (962 affected and 10 impacted)
 - 12 assisted private demolitions
 - 17 private demolitions
 - One surrendered to the Territory following demolition
- > 992 blocks deregistered
- > 647 First Right of Refusal (FROR) offers had been made
- > 888 remediated blocks had been offered for public sale
- > contracts for sale exchanged on 960 remediated blocks (870 Public Sale, 47 FROR and 43 direct to an ACT Government Agency)
- > sales settled on 954 blocks (864 Public sales, 47 FROR and 43 direct to an ACT Government Agency).

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION

The Taskforce remains part of the Development and Implementation Division and Urban Renewal Branch of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) where it continues its work in implementing a compassionate, safe, efficient and innovative program to realise the Government's objective of eradicating loose fill asbestos insulation from Canberra's streets and suburbs.

Under the Taskforce's governance framework, the Scheme is divided into four phases:

- > Assistance
- > Buyback
- > Demolition
- > Sales

Progress during the first half of 2021 is reported against each of these phases. The financial impact of delivery of the Scheme is also reported, as well as activities undertaken in relation to community information and engagement.

Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA, Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction, has ministerial responsibility for the Scheme.

SCHEME GOVERNANCE

The Eradication Scheme Steering Committee (ESSC) provides high level oversight of the Taskforce's activities with a particular focus on good governance through to the conclusion of the Scheme. ESSC continues to monitor the Scheme's key milestone progress and performance and provides a platform to monitor the effectiveness of risk controls.

The ESSC met twice during the reporting period and received out of session reports for the remainder of the months.

The Taskforce internal audit and assurance activities are also monitored by the EPSDD Audit and Risk Committee.

ASSISTANCE

HOMEOWNER SUPPORT

The Assistance phase work, undertaken primarily by the Taskforce's Personal Support Team (PST), continues with particular focus on:

- > providing information and support to homeowners and tenants who remain in their homes
- > contacting homeowners, tenants and landlords who have progressed through all phases of the Scheme to:
 - confirm their support and information needs are being met; and
 - assist them to connect to appropriate community services as needed
- > providing information and, if required, support for clients within the complex properties project; and
- > ensuring appropriate support remains accessible in the community for members of affected households that may require tailored support options.

Additionally, during the reporting period PST continued:

- > its tailored engagement work with remaining affected and impacted household members to assist them explore the best option for their individual circumstances, understand their options inside and outside of the Scheme, and remind them of their ongoing responsibilities while they choose to remain in an affected property
- > regular engagement with homeowners participating in the Scheme who have chosen a settlement date by the closure of the Buyback Program on 17 August 2021, or who require additional support. Personal support linkages continued to be provided to assist remaining homeowners in navigating the best options for their individual circumstances
- > to facilitate Taskforce Executive meetings enabling a shared exploration of individual homeowners' circumstances and to provide information about the Transition Assistance option. To end June 2021, since commencement of the Pathways Package work, 40 Executive meetings with remaining affected homeowners had taken place.

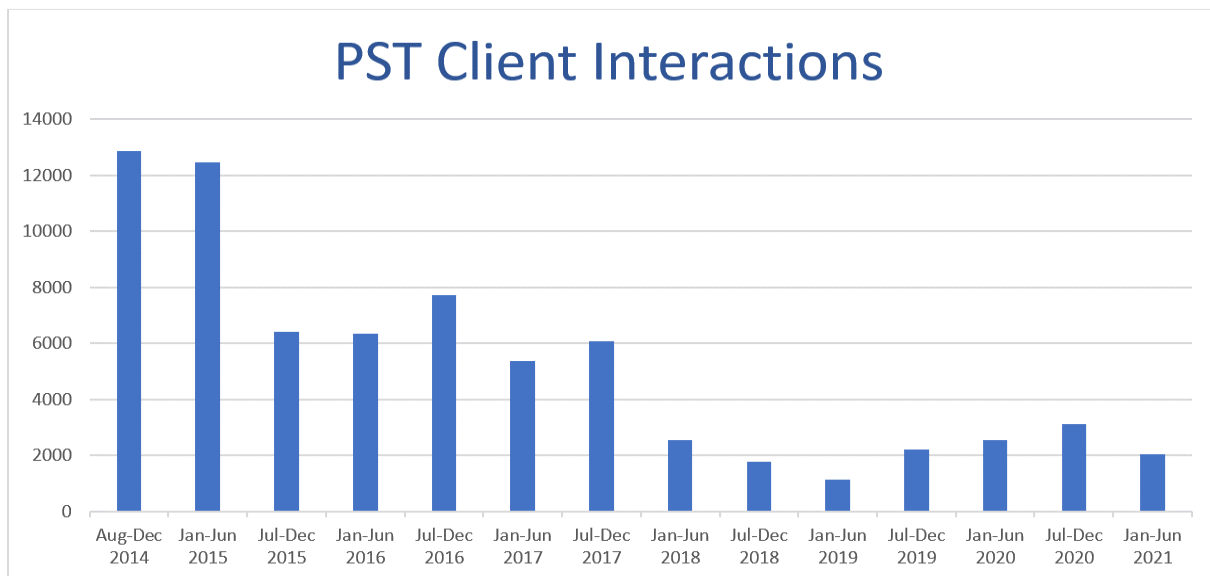
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Table 1 and Figure 1 reports the interactions by PST from commencement of the Scheme. The increase in interactions recorded during this time period reflects the ongoing Pathways Package engagement work, increased support contact and messaging regarding the 17 August 2021 property surrender deadline for the voluntary Buyback Program.

Table 1: Client Relationship Management (CRM) System Interactions

	As at 31 December 2020	As at 30 June 2021	Interactions during the reporting period
CRM Interactions	70,577	72,617	2,040

Figure 1: Client relationship management system interactions



CASE CLOSURES

PST continues to work on closing contact for households who no longer require ongoing contact from the Taskforce and ensures all aspects of the Scheme are finalised. As at end of the reporting period, 1,245 cases had been concluded. This represents an increase of twenty-one case closures since 30 December 2020. PST remains available should any of these homeowners, tenants or landlords seek further support.

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PATHWAYS TO ERADICATION FOR REMAINING AFFECTED PROPERTIES

The Pathways to Eradication Package (Pathways Package) was implemented to support community safety and manage any affected properties remaining beyond 30 June 2020.

The Pathways Package includes a Transition Assistance (TA) initiative which allows eligible homeowners with complex financial and health circumstances to access the equity in their home, prior to surrender, for payment of expenses associated with moving to new living arrangements. Transition assistance arrangements are available for a six-month period following the exchange of contract for the surrender of the affected property. At the end of the six-month period homeowners will need to vacate the affected property and complete the surrender.

Since the announcement of the Pathways Package on 19 November 2019, five TA applications in total have been received and two properties have been surrendered to the Territory utilising a TA arrangement.

During the reporting period, the Taskforce supported five homeowners to finalise the surrender of their affected properties to the ACT Government. This included one family who utilised a TA arrangement and completed the surrender of their affected property following tailored support through PST.

PST continues to support the progression of an additional three TA applications with tailored support in place for homeowners expecting to surrender their affected properties to the Territory during November 2021.

PROPERTY SURRENDER DEADLINE FOR THE VOLUNTARY BUYBACK PROGRAM – 17 AUGUST 2021

The Half Yearly Report covering the July – December 2020 period reported that the deadline for Scheme participants to surrender their property under the Buyback Program was de-coupled from the COVID-19 Public Health State of Emergency and will remain at 17 August 2021.

The Taskforce continues to support homeowners working towards surrendering their properties to the Territory by the Buyback Program close date of 17 August 2021. The Taskforce remains operational until 30 June 2022 to progress the demolition of these properties.

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MANAGEMENT OF NEWLY IDENTIFIED AFFECTED PROPERTIES FROM 18 AUGUST 2021

The Scheme's voluntary buyback program has been running since 2014 and will close on 17 August 2021. Since commencement of the Scheme, five new properties have been identified as affected by loose fill asbestos insulation. It is expected that further undiscovered affected properties exist across Canberra suburbs, and will continue to present a potential health risk to the occupants and the wider community.

On 3 June 2021, the ACT Government announced a new voluntary Buyback Program and associated initiatives, to commence on 18 August 2021, upon conclusion of the Scheme's current Buyback Program. This offering will continue to support community safety through the identification of properties containing loose fill asbestos insulation, and effectively manage their removal from the community.

The new voluntary Buyback Program for affected and impacted properties, will be similar to the current Buyback Program, with adjusted timeframes to take into account the number of properties the ACT Government will likely manage at any one time going forward.

These initiatives will ensure that homeowners who discover loose fill asbestos insulation in their property after the end of the current Buyback Program will be supported by the ACT Government and will have options and assistance available to them, like homeowners whose properties were identified earlier.

REQUEST FOR ACQUISITION FOR DECEASED ESTATES

A Request for Acquisition option for deceased estates was announced during the reporting period. This is a new offering that will apply from 18 August 2021 for properties listed on the Affected Residential Premises Register prior to 17 August 2021, or 12 months after newly identified properties are listed on the Register post 17 August 2021, allowing the ACT Government, upon request, to acquire an affected property by agreement.

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THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT GROUP PROGRAM

The Half Yearly Report covering the July – December 2020 period reported the commencement of the Therapeutic Support Group Program (the Program) run by CatholicCare. The Program is a bi-monthly tailored support option facilitated by trained psychologists and available to all homeowners and residents of affected or impacted properties to connect, access support and information, and share experiences.

Three sessions were held during the reporting period, focussing on the following topics:

- > 8 February 2021 – The body and stress: using meditation to calm the mind
- > 12 April 2021 – Healing invisible wounds: the benefits of art therapy
- > 14 June 2021 – Healthy body, healthy mind

Therapeutic Support Group sessions are planned to occur bi-monthly through to the middle of 2022.

ASBESTOS DISEASE ASSISTANCE FUND

During the reporting period, the ACT Government and Federal Government committed to contribute \$16 million (\$8 million each) to establish a fund to support people who suffer from an asbestos related disease as a result of exposure to loose fill asbestos from living in a Mr Fluffy property. The fund will be administered by the ACT Government, and the structure of the fund is under consideration.

PST continues to remain available to provide guidance and support access to health services to assist current and former residents of Mr Fluffy properties who have been diagnosed with an asbestos related disease.

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FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

GRANTS AND CONCESSIONS

A range of financial assistance allowances, including grants and concessions, are available to assist homeowners with relocation expenses.

Table 2 shows the progress on the number and value of relocation assistance grants and stamp duty concessions processed during the reporting period.

Table 2: Relocation Assistance Grants and Stamp Duty Concessions

	As at 31 December 2020		As at 30 June 2021		Activity during the reporting period	
	Number	Value	Number	Value	Number	Value
Relocation Assistance Grants	1,111	\$12.50m	1,115	\$12.53	4	\$0.03
Stamp Duty Concessions	702	\$17.43m	703	17.45	1	\$0.02

Notes:

1. The number of relocation assistance grants relates to packages paid in full. The value relates to grants paid in full and/or part.
2. The number and value of stamp duty concessions includes both affected and impacted properties.

LAND RENT

The Government extended the Land Rent Scheme in February 2016 to allow former owners, who meet the Scheme criteria, to use this option to assist them to return to their former block and neighbourhood.

Table 3 shows the total number of Land Rent applications lodged, approved and issued as at 30 June 2021 with there being no activity during the reporting period.

Table 3: Land Rent applications and leases

	As at 31 December 2020	As at 30 June 2021	Activity during the reporting period
Land Rent Applications Lodged	5	5	0
Land Rent Applications Approved	5	5	0
Land Rent Leases Issued	3*	3*	0

Note: Two of the five Land Rent Lease applications lodged and approved did not proceed to settlement.

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BUYBACK

As highlighted earlier in this report, the property surrender deadline for the voluntary Buyback Program is set at 17 August 2021.

For the Buyback phase of the Scheme, earlier reports focused on statistics in relation to the work already completed. With the Buyback Program now well-advanced (992 affected and 10 impacted properties removed from Canberra streets and suburbs by the end of the reporting period), reporting on this phase of the Scheme has shifted to focus on remaining affected and impacted properties.

As at 30 June 2021, 44 properties remain (35 affected and nine impacted).

Table 4 shows participation status, for affected and impacted properties remaining between the December 2020 – June 2021 reporting periods.

Table 4: Remaining Affected and Impacted Properties

	As at 31 December 2020			As at 30 June 2021		
	Affected	Impacted	Total	Affected	Impacted	Total
Total Number of remaining properties	35	9	44	35	9	44
- Territory-owned	6	6	12	11	6	17
- Privately-owned	29	3	32	24	3	27
Participating in the Scheme	26	6	32	24	6	30
Not Participating in the Scheme	9	2	11	10¹	1²	11
Participation TBC³	0	1	1	1	2	3

Notes:

1. Includes one property that has been privately sold; therefore, the new owner is not eligible to participate in the Scheme and the property is subject to Occupancy Prohibition.
2. This property was deemed an 'eligible impacted' property; however, is not required to support the safe and effective demolition of an associated affected property.
3. Indicates homeowner still considering a live buyback offer.

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VOLUNTARY BUYBACK PROGRAM

Table 5 reports contract exchanges and settlements for remaining affected and impacted properties. During the reporting period, five affected properties were surrendered to the Territory under the Buyback Program, and a homeowner of one affected property exchanged on a Deed of Recission to no longer participate in the Scheme to proceed with a private sale.

Table 5: Voluntary Buyback Program Contract Exchanges and Settlements for Remaining Affected and Impacted Properties

	As at 31 December 2020			As at 30 June 2021			Activity during the reporting period		
	Affected	Impacted	Total	Affected	Impacted	Total	Affected	Impacted	Total
Total Number of remaining affected and impacted properties	35	9	44	35	9	44	0	0	0
In contract	20	0	20	14	0	14	-1	0	-1
Settlements	3	1	4	5	0	5	5	0	5

As at 30 June 2021:

- > the owners of 14 affected properties remained in the Buyback phase of the Scheme:
 - one with a planned settlement date by 1 August 2021
 - nine with a planned settlement date by the Buyback Program close date of 17 August 2021
 - three with planned settlement dates during November 2021 under Transition Assistance arrangements
- > the owner of one affected property was still considering their buyback offer; and
- > the owners of two impacted properties were still considering their buyback offer.

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DEMOLITION

The Taskforce continues to undertake the demolition of standard single dwellings as they become available, as well as progressing complex property demolitions. Where possible, these properties are grouped together in order to gain demolition efficiencies and better engage with the industry.

There were no standard standalone single dwelling or complex property demolitions undertaken during the reporting period. The next demolition package including four stand-alone single dwellings were awarded to a suitable demolition contractor in this reporting period after a public tender procurement process. The Taskforce continues to work closely with relevant stakeholders and regulators to ensure the safe, effective and efficient implementation of the Scheme.

Table 6 shows the total number of demolitions and deregistrations undertaken as at 30 June 2021. 97% of affected properties had been removed from the Register.

Table 6: Demolition and Deregistration Activity

	As at 31 December 2020			As at 30 June 2021			Activity during the reporting period		
	Affected	Impacted	Total	Affected	Impacted	Total	Affected	Impacted	Total
Demolished	992	10	1002	992	10	1002	0	0	0
>Taskforce	962	10	972	962	10	972	0	0	0
>Assisted Private	12	*	12	12	*	12	0	*	0
>Self-funded	17	*	17	17	*	17	0	*	0
>Surrendered following demolition	1	*	1	1	*	1	0	*	0
Deregistered	992	*	992	992	*	992	0	*	0
>Taskforce	962	*	962	962	*	962	0	*	0
>Assisted Private	12	*	12	12	*	12	0	*	0
>Self-funded	17	*	17	17	*	17	0	*	0
>Surrendered following demolition	1	*	1	1	*	1	0	*	0

Notes:

- * indicates not relevant for Impacted Properties.

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COMPLEX PROPERTIES

There were no complex property demolitions completed during the reporting period; however, the Taskforce continued to work with a range of stakeholders to develop a tailored solution and process for remaining complex properties in brownfield environment. This included intensive consultation, engagement and investigation work to progress design, authorisation and approvals required for demolition and subsequent rebuild.

In addition, demolition planning and due diligence commenced for a duplex containing one affected and one impacted property, the affected property was already owned by the Territory and the impacted property was surrendered to the Territory during the reporting period.

Of the 16 complex properties remaining:

- > Two (one affected and one impacted) are Duplex properties and are both owned by the Territory with demolition planning underway.
- > Two (one affected and one impacted) are DOUT properties:
 - the affected property is owned by the Territory; and
 - the impacted property is awaiting confirmation of participation in the Scheme
- > Three (one affected and two impacted) are String properties:
 - the two impacted properties are owned by the Territory; and
 - the affected property has an anticipated surrender date of 15 November 2021 under a Transition Assistance arrangement
- > Nine (four affected and five impacted) are properties within Unit Complexes:
 - seven (four affected and three impacted) are owned by the Territory;
 - one impacted property is awaiting confirmation of participation in the Scheme; and
 - the remaining impacted property is not participating in the Scheme, this property was deemed eligible impacted to support the efficient demolition of associated affected properties but is not required to complete the works.

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Table 7 shows the progress of demolitions undertaken on complex properties, with there being no activity during the reporting period.

Table 7: Complex Properties Progress

	Number of Properties			Demolished as at 31 December 2020			Demolished as at 30 June 2021			Activity during the reporting period		
	Affected	Impacted	Total	Affected	Impacted	Total	Affected	Impacted	Total	Affected	Impacted	Total
Duplex	7	2	9	6	1	7	6	1	7	0	0	0
Dual Occupancy Not Unit Titled Shared Garages	3	0	3	3	0	3	3	0	3	0	0	0
DOUT	9	2	11	8	1	9	8	1	9	0	0	0
Strings	7	8	15	6	6	12	6	6	12	0	0	0
Unit Complexes	5	7	12	1	2	3	1	2	3	0	0	0
TOTAL	39	19	58	32	10	42	32	10	42	0	0	0

REBUILD OF AFFECTED AND IMPACTED PROPERTIES IN A UNIT COMPLEX

During the January – June 2021 reporting period, the Taskforce completed construction of the first rebuild package the Territory has delivered under the Scheme, comprising of three townhouses within a unit complex in Higgins. The rebuild was completed in collaboration with government stakeholders and the construction contractor after a public tender procurement process.

The marketing and sale of the three townhouses via a public auction event is expected to be completed during the second half of 2021.

Additionally, demolition and rebuild planning continued for the second rebuild package, comprising five townhouses within a unit complex in Hackett. The Taskforce obtained planning approvals during the reporting period, with demolition preparation, consultation, and tender preparation for the rebuild program currently underway.

SALES

The Taskforce continues to deliver the Sales Program that triggers the rebuild of affected communities and assists in minimising the overall cost of the Scheme with the aim of achieving cost neutrality. As at the end of the reporting period, 960 contracts for sale had been exchanged and 954 settlements completed, including 47 First Right of Refusal (FROR) sales and 43 direct sale to Housing ACT via asset transfer.

During the January – June 2021 reporting period, Housing ACT purchased an additional seven blocks, as part of the August 2020 commitment to expand the *Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program*, and to deliver an additional 60 homes for Canberrans most in need, including those with a disability. By purchasing this land, more public housing will be developed in both new and existing suburbs and co-located with transport, schools and services.

As at 30 June 2021:

- > 647 offers had been made to homeowners holding a FROR, with two offers being made during the reporting period. The FROR take up rate remains at just under 9%. The FROR continues to provide an opportunity for former owners to repurchase their block in an off-market transaction in order to return to their former community; and
- > 888 blocks had been taken to market for public sale, and no blocks were available for sale over the counter. During the reporting period, seven blocks were sold via three separate auction events held by the contracted Sales Agent, Civium.

With the bulk of the Sales Program now completed, sales activity continues to be rolled out on a much smaller scale as blocks become available. Additional auctions may be held during the second half of 2021 dependent on block availability.

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Table 8: First Right of Refusal and Public Sales

	As at 31 December 2020	As at 30 June 2021	Activity during the reporting period
Sales - FROR			
>Offers sent	645 ¹	647	2
>Offers accepted	94	95	1
>Acceptances withdrawn	37	37	0
>Offers declined	263	263	0
>Offers forfeited	285	288	3
>Sold (exchanged)	47	47	0
>Sold (settled)	47	47	0
Sales – Public Sale			
>Offered for Sale	882	888	6 ²
>Sold (exchanged)	864	870	6
>Sold (settled)	844	864	20
Sales – Government			
>Contracts exchanged	36	43	7
>Contracts settled	36	43	7

Note: At any given time, a number of FROR offers may still be under consideration by former homeowners. For this reason, the offer status figures shown in Table 8 do not always total the number of offers sent.

1. A review of the FROR Sales data identified that the Offers sent figure was incorrectly reported as 648 in the June – December 2020 report. The correct figure as at 30 December 2020 is 645.
2. Seven blocks were offered for Public Sale via auction during January – June 2021. This figure does not include one block that was previously sold (exchanged) via auction and was re-released due to a rescission of the contract.

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FINANCIAL IMPACT

The estimated net cash cost of the Scheme as at the end of June 2021 is \$272 million¹. This estimate will continue to be revised through the program based on progress of buyback, demolition, and sale of properties.

Table 9: Buyback Program Expenditure (based on settlement for affected and eligible impacted properties)

	As at 30 December 2020			As at 30 June 2021		
	No	Total Cost	Average	No	Total Cost	Average
Properties Settled	978	\$701,317,101	\$717,093	983	\$706,140,601	\$718,353

Table 10: Demolition Expenditure (based on demolitions contracted, including contract variations)

	As at 30 December 2020			As at 30 June 2021		
	No	Total Cost	Average	No	Total Cost	Average
Properties demolished or under contract for demolition	973	\$87,978,276	\$90,420	973	\$87,984,276	\$90,426

Notes:

- Demolition expenditure includes Asbestos Removal and Demolition costs only. These figures exclude the costs incurred by government in disposing of affected properties, undertaking pre-demolition asbestos assessments and post demolition soil validations.
- The cost of individual demolitions is influenced by several variables including the property's location, construction type, size (including the size of footings), number of additional structures, block access, slope of the block, and amount and spread of asbestos present. Individual demolition costs can vary significantly from the average.

Table 11: Sales Program Revenue (based on exchanged contracts)

	As at 31 December 2020		As at 30 June 2021		Activity during the reporting period	
	Number	Value	Number	Value	Number	Value
FROR	47	\$37,396,700	47	\$37,396,700	0	\$0
Public Sale	864	\$569,301,751	870	\$576,785,751	6	\$7,484,000
>Auction	371	\$274,555,750	377	\$282,039,750	6	\$7,484,000
>By negotiation	43	\$25,232,300	43	\$25,232,300	0	\$0
>Over the counter	450	\$269,513,701	450	\$269,513,701	0	\$0
Sale to Government	36	\$23,004,700	43	\$29,024,700	7	\$6,020,000

¹ Finance figures are based on Financial Management System reports available as at 07/07/2021

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT

PATHWAYS TO ERADICATION – SUPPORTING COMMUNITY SAFETY

From 1 July 2020, Asbestos Management Plan compliance status for affected properties remaining on the Affected Residential Premises Register are published on the Taskforce website at www.asbestostaskforce.act.gov.au/affected-properties/register. As at 30 June 2021, of the 24 properties required to have an AMP in place, 17 were compliant.

WorkSafe ACT continues to monitor compliance and liaise with affected property owners around the additional compliance measures aimed at supporting community safety.

The Taskforce also continues to keep the community informed of planned works in their neighbourhood, with letters delivered to neighbours when a contract is awarded for demolition and when a property is deregistered.

Table 12 below shows the progress of activity during the reporting period. No properties were demolished or deregistered during the reporting period; however, contracts were awarded for four properties for upcoming demolition, and contract award letters were delivered during this reporting period.

Table 12: Correspondence with neighbours

	As at 31 December 2021	As at 30 June 2021	Activity during the reporting period
Contract award letters	8,324	8,381	57
Deregistration letters	9,454	9,454	0

Notes:

1. Figures reflect Demolition Communications Process commenced in March 2016.
2. Contract Award and Deregistration Letters represent the two communications sent directly by the Taskforce. The full Communications Process with neighbours also includes a letter issued by ACT Property Group upon acquisition of the affected or impacted property, and demolition timing letters issued by the head contractor.

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COMMUNITY AND EXPERT REFERENCE GROUP

The Community and Expert Reference Group (CERG) is an information and reference group to the Asbestos Response Taskforce (the Taskforce).

CERG continues to support the Taskforce as an independent source of expertise, information and advice on community and stakeholder sentiment and policy, delivery and emerging issues.

As the Taskforce enters the final phases of the Scheme delivery, CERG has prioritised engaging and supporting the Canberra community to recognise, learn from and build upon the legacy of Mr Fluffy.

The Government continues to implement its response to the Mr Fluffy Legacy Project: Consultation Outcomes and Recommendations Report (the Legacy Report), prepared by CERG in 2019. The Mr Fluffy Legacy Project considers how the legacies of more than 50 years of Mr Fluffy in Canberra homes may be acknowledged and responds to community interest in recognising the impact of Mr Fluffy and its legacy for the Canberra community.

The Government is responding to all 13 recommendations made by CERG in the Legacy Report, with close engagement with CERG, in a way that is sensitive to the broad and diverse community experience with Mr Fluffy. Activities being progressed include:

- > commissioning further research to build upon the ACT experience of Mr Fluffy loose fill asbestos insulation through the Community Impact PhD Research Scholarship Program administered by the ANU Population Health Exchange
- > working with health professionals in the ACT region to connect families who have, or have had, loose fill asbestos insulation exposure risks with the appropriate services when they need them, this includes the delivery of the Therapeutic Support Group Program through CatholicCare; and
- > processes that will support the early release of records relating to the management of loose fill asbestos insulation between 2000 and 2011. This will support independent research and community access to these records.

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COMMUNITY IMPACT RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Half Yearly Report covering the July – December 2020 period reported the development of the Community Impact Research Scholarship Program (Scholarship) by the Taskforce, Australian National University (ANU) and CERG. The Scholarship is designed to promote independent research that builds on the ACT community's experience with loose fill asbestos insulation.

During the reporting period, the ANU Population Health Xchange, who manages the Scholarship, opened a further round of applications for:

- a. the Scholarship (\$38,000 per annum stipend over three years and up to \$5,000 in total for research expenses); and
- b. an additional Research Award (\$10,000 per annum stipend over three years and up to \$5,000 in total for research expenses).

Successful higher degree research applicants will join the recipient of an Award granted following the closure of the first round of applications in November 2020.

LOOSE FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION DOCUMENTS RELEASE PROJECT

During the reporting period, the Taskforce continued to deliver activities that will support the Asbestos Documents Release Project (the Project). This includes digitisation and review of documentation about the management of asbestos in the ACT, intended to support independent research and community access to information about asbestos management in the ACT. The Project will support subsequent document releases of administrative records from the period 2000 to 2011 in the second half of 2021.

CONCLUSION

The slowing down of activity in the Buyback and Demolition phases of the Scheme has made way for the Taskforce to remain focussed on assisting homeowners as they consider their best option for managing their affected property and supporting community safety.

The intensive engagement support provided by PST to this cohort has assisted homeowners of remaining affected properties with provision of information and connections to community and industry around options suited to their individual circumstances, both within the Scheme and privately.

The second half of 2021 is expected to see:

- > intensive engagement in the leadup to the Buyback Program close on 17 August 2021 with homeowners of remaining properties (both Scheme participants and those managing privately), to assist them in understanding what this means for them post closure of the Buyback Program, and continued support to identify individual pathways to eradication
- > work progressed on addressing the challenges associated with demolition of affected and impacted properties within unit complexes, including the commencement of the rebuild of units in a second multi-unit complex in Hackett
- > continued roll out of a safe Demolition Program as properties become available
- > continued progress of the final phase of the Scheme through the FROR and Public Sales processes
- > commencement of marketing and a public auction event for the sale of the three rebuilt townhouses within a unit complex in Higgins
- > continued provision of individual case management, targeted communications, personalised support and assistance to ensure those impacted by the Mr Fluffy legacy can access the support they need
- > consistent communication and engagement with neighbours of affected properties

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- > research and assessment on current or required community partnerships to support the needs and circumstances of remaining residents of affected properties
- > the upkeep of engagement and information sharing with community partners, industry peak bodies and other key stakeholders to support the community safety initiatives under the Pathways Package
- > provision of continued engagement and support to CERG to deliver on projects identified in the Government Response to the Mr Fluffy Legacy Project
- > the continuation of free bimonthly therapeutic support services for residents and homeowners
- > document releases resulting from the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Documents Release Project intended to support independent research and community access to information about loose fill asbestos insulation in the ACT
- > continued development of the structure of the Asbestos Disease Assistance Fund
- > commencement of activities in the lead up to the conclusion of the Taskforce on 30 June 2022.