

'Fight the Dust' and 'Asbestos Answers'

COUNCIL NAME

Holroyd City Council

WEB ADDRESS

www.holroyd.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

40 square kilometres

POPULATION

108,889

Overview

Holroyd City Council began the 'Fight the Dust' campaign in 2014, adopting this mantra to inspire the community to get informed about asbestos. The campaign overarches all of Council's programs that seek to improve asbestos management and education within the community. The most recent initiative is the 'Asbestos Answers' website, designed by Council to answer asbestos-related questions specific to local government. A short engaging video translated into five languages was developed to improve access to asbestos information for the community. The Asbestos Answers website and the Fight the Dust messaging has been promoted via bus bays, media advertising, mailouts and other promotional items such as drink coasters at local pubs. The campaign includes information nights and ongoing small scale asbestos waste collections from local residents which commenced in June 2013.

Background

Holroyd City Council has had a strong policy framework for managing asbestos for some time now. In 2014, Council updated its previous asbestos policy by adopting a policy based on the *Model Asbestos Policy for NSW Councils*. Council's Asbestos Policy is supported by Council's Community Strategic Plan, which includes the following key outcome and strategy: '12.2.4.2 - Raise awareness of risks related to the removal of asbestos in the home or business'.

Council continues to offer a free asbestos collection service (which commenced in 2013) to meet the small scale disposal needs of the community and to deter illegal dumping or unlawful disposal of these small quantities of asbestos. In the 2014/15 financial year collection service was funded externally by the NSW Environment Protection Authority as part of our participation in the Western Sydney Regional Asbestos Disposal Scheme (WSRADS) with the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC).

Holroyd City Council is a culturally diverse area with well over 50 per cent of the population born overseas. This was an important consideration in the development of the Fight the Dust campaign. The main objectives of the campaign are to:

- Raise awareness about asbestos in the community and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- Provide a disposal option for small amounts of asbestos.
- Achieve a reduction in asbestos waste disposed of in Council's domestic waste bins and public places – both of which are illegal.



Implementation

The Fight the Dust campaign provides consistent messages to promote asbestos education and service opportunities to the Holroyd community. The campaign encourages residents to get the facts about asbestos before commencing renovation or home maintenance projects. Although there are several websites about asbestos available, many are content heavy, too technical and concentrate on particular asbestos issues (such as compensation or illness related information) which while very important, is not necessarily the information residents need. It proved difficult to find simple answers to the questions "Am I allowed to remove asbestos?", "Do I need approval to remove asbestos?" or "My neighbour is removing asbestos. Should they have told me first?". The Asbestos Answers website provides answers in a non-jargonistic way to the questions which Council staff are commonly asked by residents including in relation to: renovating; development approvals; disposal; illegal dumping; and activity by neighbours.

The Asbestos Answers website includes a fact sheet and short video in five languages: Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi and Tamil (as well as English). The website also features an interactive component for users to challenge their knowledge. The website was developed with generic branding (i.e. not branded as a Holroyd City Council website) to facilitate the provision of the information to a broader audience.

Council developed the Asbestos Answers website with allocated Waste and Sustainability Improvement Payment funds totaling \$30,000. Additional education initiatives were funded by Council. The website and additional services were developed in consultation with representatives from the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, Local Government NSW and the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia.

Outcomes

The Asbestos Answers website was launched in November 2014 as part of Council's commitment to participating in National Asbestos Awareness Month. By August 2014, the site had 7,074 page views and 4,589 sessions. Preliminary feedback was sought from tradespeople in Holroyd and the response was positive, confirming the information was useful and easy to access and understand.

Nine asbestos collections were conducted in 2014/15 resulting in the collection of 9.42 tonnes of asbestos waste from 109 properties. Since the introduction of this service in June 2013, 19.62 tonnes of asbestos waste has been collected from 266 households.

Additional awareness raising activities were organised throughout 2014/15 including:

- 12 'Fight the Dust' posters displayed in prominent bus bays throughout the council area
- 10,000 Fight the Dust coasters were distributed across 5 local pubs to target tradespeople
- A 'Fight the Dust' banner was added to Council's website promoting asbestosanswers.com.au
- Promotion in local media: The Parramatta Advertiser and Parramatta Sun have a circulation/readership of 81,064/83,000 and 52,967/43,600 respectively
- A targeted mailout to 1,841 residents registered with NSW Fair Trading as a licensed tradesperson
- 16 residents attended an asbestos information night on 20 November 2014.

Council developed a range promotional items featuring the Fight the Dust logo and Asbestos Answers website address. The items were distributed at Council events and were also compiled as a 'builders pack' to be sent to visitors to the Asbestos Answers website who complete the 'Bestville Challenge'. The items include notebooks, carpenters pencils, pens, magnets and a good quality builders tape measure to help people measure 10 square metres of non-friable (bonded) asbestos.

REFERENCES

asbestosanswers.com.au

Key Learnings

The multi-faceted asbestos management and disposal program, 'Fight the Dust' and Asbestos Answers website provide the community with the information and services that they had been seeking for some time. Council is committed to the continued enhancement of the website so that it remains relevant. Council has been approached by several other local councils interested in promoting the website to their communities. This is something Holroyd City Council encourages as it is the intention that the resource be shared and Council has actively promoted the website for example via conference presentations. Households participating in the free collection service benefit from no longer living with the burden of legacy asbestos on their properties. The ongoing challenge will be extending this service to cater to more people who need assistance with asbestos disposal.

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This project was the 2015 winner of the Asbestos Management Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards

