



## Media Statement

30 September 2018

### COUNCIL UNDERTAKES PROPER ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT OF SPRINGWOOD DEPOT

Following repeated, inaccurate reports on the Ray Hadley Morning Show on 18 and 26 September 2018 that Blue Mountains City Council had mismanaged the removal and remediation of unexpected finds of asbestos containing material (ACM) at the Mechanic's Workshop at its Springwood Depot, it is important to note the following information:

- Testing of the Mechanic's Workshop was undertaken last week by a licensed asbestos assessor engaged by Council due to suspected ACM dust identified in that building by staff. The dust was revealed as a result of removing gas bottles from a long standing wall fixture in the workshop.
- The testing of the Mechanic's Workshop for suspected ACM dust was not undertaken as a result of the quality of remediation work on a separate, unexpected find of bonded [non-friable] ACM in the workshop earlier in September. This work was done in accordance with all regulatory and industry standards and did not require Council to a) act within its licence to handle / remove non-friable ACM under 10m<sup>2</sup>, issued by SafeWork NSW or b) notify SafeWork NSW, however Council did so as a courtesy.
- However, this matter did lead staff to identify the presence of suspected ACM dust in other locations, in the vicinity of the original work, that were previously inaccessible before the gas bottles were moved.
- The presence of suspected ACM dust does not mean the response to the earlier find of bonded ACM was in any way inadequate or "botched", as stated by Ray Hadley on 18 September 2018.
- The testing of the Mechanic's Workshop for suspected ACM dust this week involved 54 samples in various locations within the building.
- Of those 54 samples, only 4 were identified as positive ACM.
- **None of the 4 samples of positive ACM were found to have any respirable asbestos fibres.**
- Council has responded to all SafeWork NSW requirements and acted in accordance with all SafeWork and industry codes of practice, as well as its own policy and procedures, in managing the recent unexpected asbestos finds at the Mechanic's Workshop at its Springwood Depot, as is expected of every worksite in NSW.
- Unexpected finds of ACM – bonded or friable – are a common occurrence in worksites across NSW, particularly in ageing buildings, of which there are thousands in NSW.
- Council and its staff have done the right thing in managing these unexpected finds of ACM at every point of the process - from depot staff notifying Council's

Asbestos Response Team; the conduct of the Asbestos Response Team activities; self-reporting the incident to SafeWork NSW; closing the Mechanic's Workshop in the interest of staff safety; and engaging licensed asbestos assessors – all in accordance with the regulatory requirements and in a way that proactively manages unexpected ACM finds.

- The Prohibition Notice issued by SafeWork NSW is a useful tool to assist Council's decision to temporarily close the Mechanic's Workshop, in order to restrict access while the necessary assessment and testing was undertaken.
- The site has been subject to numerous inspections and testing over the last 10 months by Council's Asbestos Response Team, Licenced Asbestos Assessors; and SafeWork NSW, including air monitoring. The location of the suspected ACM dust identified by staff had previously been inaccessible, and therefore were not subject to SafeWork NSW or inspection buy a licensed asbestos assessor.
- The Mechanic's Workshop will remain closed in the short term until appropriate consultation with staff and SafeWork NSW is undertaken on the future use of the building.
- It is hoped that all worksites managing asbestos appropriately are not subject to ongoing and unfounded criticism as has occurred with Blue Mountains City Council in relation to the recent unexpected finds of ACM at the Mechanic's Workshop at Springwood Depot.

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