

FACT SHEET: ASBESTOS IN THE WATER INDUSTRY

Asbestos water cement pipes

- Asbestos cement pipes are present in water networks throughout Australia and the world, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Europe.
- The effects of asbestos in the water supply have been studied extensively and results show that there is no elevated risk of asbestos-related diseases from drinking or using water delivered through asbestos cement pipes.
- WSAA members have developed good practice guidelines for management and disposal of asbestos cement pipe, particularly with regard to minimising health risks.

The community is understandably interested in how utilities manage asbestos cement pipes. Asbestos cement pipes were used in the water industry until the mid-1980's when they were banned from use.

The water industry ensures that asbestos cement pipes pose no health risk to the water supply and that maintenance, replacement and disposal of all pipes and infrastructure, which may contain asbestos, is carried out safely.

The effects of asbestos in the water supply have been studied extensively and results show that there is no elevated risk of asbestos-related diseases from drinking or using water that has been supplied through asbestos cement pipes.

This finding is consistent across the World Health Organisation (WHO), the National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) and the Department of Health in each State.

Risks associated with asbestos relate to airborne fibres. Fibres from pipes can become airborne when a pipe is undergoing works, decommissioning or is damaged.

However all relevant regulations are adhered to when handling asbestos cement pipes under these circumstances, to protect and ensure the health of employees and the public.

These regulations are in accordance with state legislation and national Codes of Practice and Guidance for the management of asbestos in the occupational environment.



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Over the past four years WSAA and our members have also been involved with research carried out in Canada and the US designed to ensure that guideline levels around asbestos cement pipes are appropriate. WSAA has developed good practice guidelines for assessing and managing the risk from asbestos cement pipes through maintenance, deterioration, renewal and disposal to protect health and safety of both workers and the public.

More information on asbestos and drinking water is available are available here:

[World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#)

[Australian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines \(ADWG\) Version 3.8, September 2022](#) - Fact sheet - Page 452

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