**Report of Investigation into Potential Asbestos-Related Incidents in**

**2012 and 2013 at Wales Street**

**Primary School**

*Supplementary information for helpers who visited the effected classroom at the time of the incident*

**Prepared by the Victorian School Building Authority and Coffey Environments Australia Pty Ltd**

Date: 21 September 2018

### Background

In late 2017 an asbestos related incident from 2012 at Wales Street Primary School was brought to the attention of the Department. An independent investigation was conducted and concluded that based on the information available, the risk of developing an asbestos-related disease as a result of the incident was low. Information regarding the incident has been provided to affected families and workers.

It has since come to the attention of the Department that helpers (such as parents and carers) spent time in the room during the incident in 2012.

The incident is in relation to the installation of air conditioners in a classroom in Block C. Around the time of the installation of the air conditioning units, a hole located adjacent to the electrical switchboard in the internal wall of the classroom was discovered. The hole was located in a wall that contained asbestos, and the investigation shows that it is clear that the hole was first observed late in January 2012 and was not repaired until after 9May 2012. More detail on this incident is in the executive summary to the investigation,available on the [Department’s website](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/hazardousbuildmaterials.aspx).

### Assessment

A second independent assessment has also been conducted. The assessment was on the risk of developing an asbestos related disease for helpers, with the duration of time spent in the room assumed to be a maximum of one day per week. This assessment was undertaken by Coffey Environments Australia Pty Ltd and the results are provided in the table below. In summary, the assessed health risk is very low to low for helpers working in Block C 64 Library in 2012, and very low for helpers working in Block C 64 Library in subsequent years.

**Note: This assessment should be read in conjunction with the results of the initial independent investigation. The findings are discussed in an executive summary which is available on the** [**Department’s website**](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/hazardousbuildmaterials.aspx)**.**

**Table 1. Risk Assessment of North Wall/Switchboard Event**

| Potentially exposed group | Estimated level of exposure | Estimated duration and frequency of exposure above background | Assessed health risk |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Helpers working in 64 Library in 2012** | **Low - 10-100’s times greater than background*** Disturbance of cement sheet when hole was cut would have resulted in some initial fibre release into the air. This release would have been brief and airborne levels would have been above background for a brief period only.
* Ongoing potential for disturbance of the damaged wall and associated debris while the hole was uncovered, which may have released fibres into the air. These releases are likely to have been intermittent.
* There is potential for adjacent surfaces, including carpet, to have been contaminated with AC dust and debris at the time the hole was made. These surfaces are likely to have been cleaned soon after.
* AC dust can adhere to carpet, even after repeated cleaning. However, this dust is difficult to dislodge and is therefore unlikely to have been released in significant quantities.
* Air monitoring undertaken following a similar event in the same room did not detect asbestos fibres above background levels.
 | **Rare to Occasional*** The amount of time the damaged cement sheet and debris was exposed is uncertain, but is unlikely to have exceeded 4 months (late January to mid-May).
* Presence of visible debris in the photo taken on 8 May shows it is unlikely that major ongoing disturbance of the debris occurred.
* Unless directly disturbed, residual debris is unlikely to have been a significant ongoing source of airborne asbestos fibres.
* Contaminated carpet is unlikely to have been a significant ongoing source of airborne asbestos fibres.
* Parent helpers are assumed to have worked in the room for a maximum of 1 day per week.
 | **Very Low to Low** |
| **Helpers working in 64 Library in subsequent years** | **Very Low - background*** The hole was almost certainly covered in May 2012, fully encapsulating the cement sheet wall and any associated debris.
* Carpet below the switchboard is the only likely source of ongoing contamination. Airborne fibre release from contaminated carpet is unlikely to have been significant.
* All carpet was removed from the room in April 2014.
 | **Rare*** Some asbestos fibres may have been disturbed during initial carpet cleaning, but it is highly unlikely that this would have resulted in airborne levels regularly exceeding background.
 | **Very Low** |

### Recommendation

It is recommended that helpers who are concerned about possible exposure to asbestos after working in Block C, 64 Library in 2012 or subsequent years, should complete an eduSafe form and return it to Wales Street Primary School. This will create a permanent record of your involvement. The form can be accessed on the [**Department’s website**](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/hazardousbuildmaterials.aspx).