

## ***Go slow – Asbestos is a NO go!***

November is National Asbestos Awareness Month and Ballina Shire Council is urging renovators, tradies and property owners to take the warnings about asbestos seriously when renovating or maintaining properties.

In 2020, more than 4,000 Australians will die from asbestos-related diseases caused from exposure to asbestos fibres.

Asbestos related diseases include pleural disease, asbestosis, lung cancer and malignant mesothelioma which can develop from 20 to 50 years after asbestos fibres are inhaled. There is no cure for mesothelioma and the survival time following diagnosis can be as little as 10 to 12 months.

Ms Kristy Bell, Environmental Health Officer with Ballina Shire Council, explained the most effective way of preventing asbestos-related illness is to avoid inhalation of asbestos fibres by wearing protective equipment and following safe asbestos management practices.

“Australia is among the highest consumers of asbestos in the world, with wide-spread use of asbestos in home construction and renovation prior to 1987 and in commercial structures prior to December 2003” stated Ms Bell.

“There are thousands of asbestos products including fibro, brick, weatherboard and home cladding products that have been used to build cost effective out-buildings, fences and farm sheds in regional areas like the Northern Rivers,” said Ms Bell.

If undisturbed, well maintained, and in a stable, sealed condition, asbestos is unlikely to pose health risks. However there is a real risk of inhaling asbestos fibres during maintenance and renovation works particularly if asbestos is sanded, water blasted, broken, cut or drilled. The use of hand and power tools can release a high concentration of fibres which is dangerous for anyone nearby.

Visit **[asbestosawareness.com.au](https://asbestosawareness.com.au)** for user-friendly information including ‘Asbestos in Your Home – The Ultimate Renovators Guide’ video and the ‘20 Point Safety Check’.

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**Image:** Asbestos awareness is vital to saving lives