



Media Release

Darwin City Council

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Council Managing Asbestos Legacy

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For immediate release

Darwin City Council's inherited legacy of a former dump containing a quantity of asbestos poses no immediate risk according to a report which will be tabled at September's Second Ordinary Council Meeting.

Asbestos dumped on the Nightcliff foreshore around the time of World War II and Cyclone Tracey has been located within the site and Council has been investigating and developing a management plan to deal with this issue.

An independent air monitor has revealed that the concentration of airborne asbestiform fibres are well below the detection limit and the risk level is low if not negligible provided the asbestos is not disturbed.

According to Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Helen Galton, this issue is a complex matter.

"As the report being tabled next week indicates, we are currently considering a range of options available to Council. We understand that there is a sense of urgency to obtain detailed analysis so that we can develop the appropriate actions," Alderman Galton said.

Alderman Galton said that Council had reviewed the history of the site which revealed that the area along the Nightcliff Foreshore was a former quarry pit. This later became a land fill site for demolition waste of a World War Two Defense Facility comprising a naval outpost, an air force camp and American medical facilities.

"The research indicates that before World War Two, the Nightcliff area was considered beyond Darwin's suburbs."

According to Alderman Galton, the dump originally extended well onto the beach and was visible even at high tide, but clean up operations in the late 1950's and through to the 1960's reduced the size of the dump. The discarded materials are now only visible at low tide, or where the cliff face has eroded*.

The report outlines that;

“the cliff face contains various asbestos materials ranging from flat asbestos cement (a/c) wall sheeting, corrugated a/c roof sheeting and a/c water pipes. The materials appear to have been dumped in a random manner, that is, not stacked and wrapped, or compacted.

It appears that the landfill also includes debris from buildings destroyed by Cyclone Tracy. More building material was dumped in several locations in the vicinity. Some of the dumped material included asbestos cement building products.”

A review of a 2008 study identified a low risk to negligible risk. Following that review, Council decided that it should;

- Conduct further testing of asbestos material samples and air monitoring for asbestos airborne fibres in the proximity of the site.
- Carry out a further investigation by an environmental scientist specialising in asbestos to determine the impact on public health and environmental risks.
- Undertake a study on the history and land use, with emphasis of the dumped materials, to determine ownership of the debris.
- Prepare a monitoring and management plan of the contamination along the top of the cliff and the cliff face and the beach.
- Undertake investigation as to the possible assistance regarding the matter.

Council will consider advice received and reports which indicate that the “owner” of the asbestos should take responsibility to either remove the material or make it safe.

“Its unclear as to who would have ultimate ownership of the materials, especially if you look at the circumstances by which the asbestos arrived at the site,” Alderman Galton said.

Alderman Galton said that Council officers are investigating ownership and responsibility for the dumped materials.

“Staff are discussing the issue with Northern Territory Government and Australian Government to try to obtain assistance and financial support from these agencies for the management of the materials.”

*(*Source: Register of National Estate, Australian Heritage Places Inventory, Nightcliff Cliffs World War 2 Dump)*

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