

Asbestos Awareness Report

Following feedback from industry stakeholders regarding concerns with the lack of awareness by apprentices, pre-apprentices and VET in School (VETiS) students of the dangers of asbestos in the workplace, a meeting was held between the Construction Training Fund (CTF) and the Reflections Through Reality Foundation (Reflections), www.reflections.org.au. The Foundation is a not for profit organisation with one of its objectives being '*to increase awareness of the inherent risks of asbestos in our community*'. 'Reflections' has the support of key industry stakeholders including Dale Alcock from the Alcock Brown-Neaves Group (ABN Group) and Michael McLean from the Master Builders Association (MBA) who are both Ambassadors for the Foundation and John Gelavis, from the Housing Industry Association (HIA).

The Foundation was seeking support for a review of the training delivery resources used by RTOs that raise awareness of the dangers of asbestos and the importance of its identification by apprentices, pre apprentices and VET in School students.

Reflections became aware of school students in one school, who were participating in the Certificate II Building and Construction (Trades), had potentially been exposed to asbestos whilst on an overseas work experience trip. The students had a lack of asbestos awareness although undertaking onsite work experience both locally and overseas where asbestos is still used in construction.

Asbestos Awareness is a component of the construction training package Occupational Safety and Health unit CPCWHSS2001A and is part of all training for VETiS students, pre-apprentices and apprentices.

Desktop research undertaken by the Construction Training Fund identified:

- Resources used to deliver asbestos awareness training at a number of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) were inconsistent and not all school students undertaking the Certificate II VET in Schools (Construction) pathway were being provided with adequate asbestos awareness training.
- The ACT Government mandated asbestos awareness training from June 2014 for workers who an employer reasonably believes will work with asbestos while at work.
- A recent one day Asbestos Awareness course offered by the HIA in Western Australia to both members and non-members had to be cancelled due to insufficient enrolment numbers. The HIA have difficulty attracting enrolments for the course given its 6 hour duration and cost.

This highlights the need for a broader approach to training that guarantees that all workers who intend to work on construction sites receive an appropriate amount of asbestos awareness education.

WORKSHOP

The CTF hosted a workshop in mid-August for RTOs and key industry stakeholders as part of its Training Delivery Group meeting. A number of guest presenters attended, including Dale Alcock from the ABN Group, Joanne Morris from Reflections and Dr Peter Franklin (Researcher) from UWA.

The focus of the workshop was to;

- Increase awareness of the ongoing risks of asbestos in the construction industry and the relevance to VETiS students, pre-apprentices and apprentices.
- Discuss with workshop participants the idea of creating a standardised resource that can be used by RTOs who deliver the unit CPCWHS2001A '*Apply OHS requirements, policies and procedures in the construction industry specifically the unit element 2.4 Asbestos-containing materials are identified on a work site and reported to designated personnel.*

The minutes and action items from the meeting were circulated and supported by attendees¹.

The workshop highlighted industry's keenness to adopt a consistent approach to training in asbestos awareness in Western Australia. In the longer term, industry would like to see training embedded into the White Card unit of competency *CPCCWHS1001*. This would ensure all workers would receive the basic asbestos awareness training prior to entering a work site.

Workshop participants were also emailed a consultation survey form from Artibus Innovation (Skills Service Organisation) relating to the unit of competency – '*Prepare to work safely in the construction industry*' (White Card). Participants were provided the opportunity to give feedback relating to the inclusion of Asbestos Awareness and/or other comments relating to the white card. The feedback provided will offer a platform for discussion when the Industry Reference Committee (IRC) meet to review the white card later this year.

Minutes of the workshop were forwarded to both the State Training Board (STB) and the Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD).

OUTCOMES

Feedback from the Asbestos Awareness workshop has seen interest across the industry intensify with;

- The *Sunday Times*² newspaper and the *Perth Now* websites running articles highlighting industry's drive to have asbestos awareness training embedded in the White Card.
- A media release issued by the *CFMEU*³ calling for mandatory national training on asbestos safety for all tradespeople.
- A media company contacting the CTF to donate a free interactive training program tailored around asbestos awareness.
- A communications company providing details of a tradies section on their Asbestos Awareness campaign site www.asbestosawareness.com.au/tradies .

CTF representatives have since met with CELL Media to view their interactive/animated training resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Construction Training Fund:

- **Further consult with CELL Media and other media companies, who have contacted the Fund, to discuss the development of a consistent interactive training resource for RTOs.**
- **The Fund to discuss the development of a consistent training resource to compliment the interactive resource with the involvement of the STB and DTWD and RTOs.**
- **Discuss the funding implications of writing additional training resources with the STB and DTWD.**
- **Provide Artibus Innovation (SSO) with the Consultation form responses relating to the White Card unit '*Prepare to work safely in the construction industry*'.**
- **Provide the SSO with a copy of the recommendations made by the BCIT Board.**
- **Recommend to the STB and DTWD the inclusion of a newly created asbestos awareness training resource into the delivery of the unit *CPCWHS2001A* for all**

¹ *Minutes and Action items attached*

² *Sunday Times article*

³ *CFMEU media release*

trade apprentices commencing in 2018.

- **Commence a longitudinal research project commencing with a survey of all first year apprentices commencing training at RTOs in 2018 to determine their current knowledge of the dangers of asbestos.**
- **A follow up survey at the end of 2018 with the same cohort of apprentices to establish the benefits received from the asbestos awareness training.**
- **Recommend to the STB and DTWD that asbestos awareness training be repeated at the beginning and end of each apprenticeship (as per the recent forum recommendations from industry stakeholders).**
- **Provide the STB and DTWD with the endorsed recommendations from the Board**