Monday, 10 February 2014

Comprehensive testing shows no asbestos remaining in Port Kembla Copper stack

Some media organisations are continuing to incorrectly report that asbestos is located inside the Port Kembla Copper (PKC) stack – which is scheduled to be demolished on February 20.

Reports publicly available on the Department of Planning and Infrastructure’s website show the following tests have been undertaken – with results conclusively showing there is no asbestos remaining in the stack:

- **May 2011**: Inspection by Precision Demolition and analysis by Clearsafe Environmental Solutions identifies asbestos in “gaskets” (sealing materials), within the Port Kembla stack.
- **April – August, 2013**: Precision Demolition removes all of the gaskets from the stack – along with bricks surrounding the gaskets.
- **August, 2013**: Following removal of the gaskets, no asbestos detected by Airsafe in samples from the stack’s inside and outside concrete shell.
- **August, 2013**: Clearsafe Environmental Solutions issues an Asbestos Visual Clearance Certificate* following an inspection of the stack from top to bottom.
- **August, 2013**: No asbestos detected by Airsafe in samples from the stack’s brickwork.
- **September 2013**: No asbestos detected by WorkCover NSW in a range of samples taken between levels 1 and 3 of the stack.
- **September, 2013**: No asbestos detected in brick samples tested separately for PKC by Golder & Associates.
- **October 2013**: No asbestos detected by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in concrete, brick and mortar samples taken.

The results of the above testing regime are available on the department’s website and can be viewed here: http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=2702

Public safety has been the department’s paramount consideration during the assessment of the demolition plans.

Along with the comprehensive testing for asbestos, the EPA also tested bricks to determine whether elevated levels of Technologically Enhanced Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (TENORMs) were present in the stack’s inner wall.

No elevated levels of radioactivity were detected in the testing.

A range of other tests have also been undertaken – including testing for metals of concern within the stack’s brickwork. The test results showed that metal concentrations were very low.
A Working Group comprising experts from the department, EPA, WorkCover NSW, NSW Police and Wollongong City Council have carefully considered the demolition plans and found them to be comprehensive and appropriate.

As is expected for an event like this, a comprehensive noise, vibration and air monitoring will take place before, during and after the stack is felled.

To say testing is only taking place after demolition is clearly wrong.

Further information about the stack demolition is available at: http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/portkemblastack

**Media contact:** Mark Worley (02) 9228 6174

*Asbestos Visual Clearance Certificate was issued following airborne fibre monitoring, using the membrane filter method – developed to provide a consistent methodology for the sampling and analysis of airborne asbestos fibres in workplaces*