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Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) Asbestos Householders Guide Information Meeting

Outcomes
15:00 (AEDT) 23 January 2013

1. Opening Remarks (Chair)

- The Chair welcomed Chief Health Officer (CHO) members of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and noted the aim of the teleconference was for information and discussion only.
- Professor Chris Baggoley, Chief Medical Officer and AHPPC Chair, made opening remarks about the need to balance the scientific evidence with the best way to communicate risk of exposure to asbestos fibres.
- enHealth Chair, Mr Jim Dodds, led discussion on the changes made to the Guide, and provided CHOs an opportunity to ask questions about its development.
- The Asbestos Working Group have met regularly since October to decide what, if any, changes should be made to *Asbestos – a guide for householders and the general public* (the Guide).
- enHealth endorsed a new iteration of the Guide, which incorporates stakeholder feedback, on 18 January 2013.

2. Discussion

- Mr Dodds introduced the Guide and the history of its development. He noted feedback received from asbestos diseases support groups. He noted the difficulty in conveying the risk management message of the Guide.
- The Asbestos Working Group has made a number of changes, including the presentation of risk in an infographic, additional information on family exposure and removal of the dandelion motif used throughout the Guide.
- As part of a two-pronged approach to addressing concerns, a review of current scientific literature on asbestos will be conducted. enHealth is currently canvassing appropriately experienced individuals to undertake this project.
- Each jurisdiction expressed their views on the Guide, thanking Mr Dodds and the working group for the work that had been completed. General support for the new iteration of the Guide was indicated.
- Victoria noted that there had been ongoing discussions with their Health Minister regarding the Guide and the amount of attention it had received in their jurisdiction. Victoria requested the inclusion of a legal disclaimer, and acknowledgement that asbestos exposure can cause death on page 4 in the first dot point.
- In light of the request from Victoria above, Tasmania requested the first dot point on page 4 be changed from “asbestos exposure can cause asbestos-related disease and death” to “asbestos exposure may cause asbestos-related disease and death.”

3. Next steps

- A new draft of the Guide incorporating Victoria’s comments will be distributed to AHPPC and enHealth members.
 - AHPPC members will provide further comment and/or endorsement to AHPPC Secretariat by 1 February 2013.
 - The Commonwealth will develop a plan for how best to communicate the release of the Guide. AHPPC members to consider appropriate briefing for their Ministers.
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