

**POTENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS
ARISING FROM DEMOLITION OF THE BATEMANS BAY BOWLING
CLUB**

Address by Jonathan Mobbs

Good morning Councillors, my name is Jonathan Mobbs.

My address today, on behalf of Our Towns Our Say (OTOS), arises because there is a risk, that correct procedures surrounding detection, identification, disturbance and removal of asbestos material from the former Batemans Bay Bowling club may not have been followed and that further risks may remain in situ.

The need to seek appropriate assurances from Council has arisen due to recent utterances by Councillor Tait, namely that the former Club "**was full of asbestos**". That knowledge should have been a concern for all, not just Councillor Tait, although he seems to have been the only Councillor to mention it publicly.

On 4 February, OTOS emailed a letter on this subject to the Mayor, with information copies to all Councillors except Councillor Tait, who, it appeared, already had the inside running. Local media were not advised of OTOS concerns at that time. Those concerns were set out in the letter to the Mayor and questions were posed. In view of the potential seriousness of the matter and the risks involved, OTOS asked for a response from the Mayor within 7 days. To date, none has been received. One hopes that is not an indicator of indifference.

On 5 February, in an amazing and fantastic coincidence of timing, a post was published in the respected and well-read local online newspaper; The Beagle, relating to the same issues as set out in the OTOS letter. The content of that post appeared to have been sourced from an RMS spokesperson and it addressed some of the questions posed by OTOS. For those of you who claim not to read the Beagle, a copy of that post will be provided to the Secretary today, pasted into my address. Those of you who do read the Beagle will have found little of comfort, in public commentary, since the start of 2019.

Curiously, the Beagle post stated that work had commenced on site in November 2018, however, no dates were provided to indicate when asbestos material was actually removed, nor exactly where it had been subsequently dumped. It did mention a quantity of 50 tonnes – which is, maybe, ten 5-tonne trucks worth? Not hard to visualise - is it?

OTOS is unaware of any public awareness campaign to alert the community to the need to keep clear of the site or the disposal route during that hazardous removal process. Large numbers of people and vehicles were passing close to the site every day.

There have been many stormy days in the Bay since last November, so the potential for airborne and groundwater dispersal of asbestos fibres would have been high, if proper procedures were ignored.

In directing the reader's attention to how the on-site asbestos had been dealt with, the Beagle post mentioned Section 3.5 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development) 2008.

That is not a section of the Policy dealing with asbestos. It begs the question, therefore; did the RMS spokesperson not know his facts? Indeed, what is the relevant policy or code of conduct to which members of the community should turn for reference?

Councillors, you would be aware of the issues, if you've taken the time to read the letter sent to you by OTOS on 4 February.

Further to that letter, our questions for this chamber today are as follows:

Q1. Did Council, as owner of the Club, ensure that it was fully briefed by RMS, contractors, Safe Work NSW or any other authorised agency, such as the EPA, on the potential health risks of disturbing and removing asbestos from an exposed public site?

Q2. If Council did that, when did it occur and by whom?

Q3. Did Council consider the need for a public awareness campaign to assure the community that potential risks had been properly mitigated, considering that the site sits smack-bang in the middle of Batemans Bay, on a main highway, with sports, leisure and business activities taking place daily, adjacent to the site?

Q4. If not, why not?

Q5. With the old Bowling Club site now dominated by a large, old concrete slab, can Council advise who will be responsible for its destruction and removal, once RMS is finished there and can Council advise if there will be any asbestos risk from that process?

Q6. When may OTOS expect a response to its letter?

Thankyou for your attention today.

50 tonne of asbestos removed from old Batemans Bay Bowlo

February 5, 2019

Work started to build temporary site offices and community information centre for the Batemans Bay Bridge replacement on the site of the former bowling club in late November 2018.



Above: All asbestos-contaminated material has been disposed at licensed facilities in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency guidelines and legislation. Photo: RMS

A Roads and Maritime Services spokesperson told *the Beagle* "Due to the age of the building, asbestos was expected. It was planned for and managed, with suitable contractors and procedures in place."

"Around 50 tonnes of asbestos-contaminated material including sheeting, pipes and guttering has so far been removed from the building and former bowling greens."

"All asbestos-contaminated material has been disposed at licensed facilities in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency guidelines and legislation."

The RMS spokesperson said "Safe Work NSW approved the work being carried out and has visited the site multiple times with no concerns raised.

"Immediate neighbours were also notified about asbestos removal, in accordance with the requirements Section 3.5 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development) 2008.

"Roads and Maritime Services has conducted air monitoring on several occasions during the asbestos removal and demolition process with no positive results for airborne asbestos. Water carts and sprinklers were on site at all times and used as required to manage non-asbestos dust."

Work on the temporary site offices and community information centre, including the removal of asbestos materials, is expected to be complete in coming months.