



## PLANNING SYSTEM

Regulation Amendment

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# Loose-fill asbestos insulation notations on section 149 planning certificates

The purpose of this circular is to provide councils with guidance on section 149 planning certificate notations relating to loose-fill asbestos ceiling insulation in residential dwellings.

## Introduction

The NSW Government has recently introduced a regulatory framework in relation to residential properties that have loose-fill asbestos used as ceiling insulation material. This includes the mandatory notification of properties that are known to contain loose-fill asbestos insulation on planning certificates issued under s149(2) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)* (EP&A Act).

Potential home purchasers rely on the information provided in s149 planning certificates as part of making an informed purchase. Providing information regarding loose-fill asbestos insulation on planning certificates is a key mechanism for increasing awareness of this important public health issue.

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation) Regulation 2016* will commence on 20 June 2016.

## Loose-fill asbestos ceiling insulation definition

In this circular, 'loose-fill asbestos ceiling insulation' means loose-fill amosite or crocidolite asbestos that placed in residential dwellings for the purposes of ceiling insulation. Amosite ('brown asbestos') and crocidolite ('blue asbestos') are known to have been used as ceiling insulation.

The definition does not include other asbestos containing materials that may be present in residential dwellings. Commercial and industrial properties are also excluded from this definition because they are regulated by workplace legislation, including the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

## Section 149 planning certificates

Planning certificates are a means of disclosing information about a parcel of land. There are two types

of information in planning certificates: information under section 149(2) and information under section 149(5). The 'sections' refer to sections of the EP&A Act.

A planning certificate under section 149(2) will disclose matters relating to the land, including whether or not the land is affected by a policy that restricts the development of land. Those policies can be based on identified risks (*Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*, schedule 4, clause 7), and whether development on the land is subject to flood related development controls (EP&A Regulation, schedule 4, clause 7A).

A planning certificate may also include information under section 149(5). This allows a council to provide advice on other relevant matters affecting land. This can include past, current or future issues.

Inclusion of a planning certificate containing information prescribed under section 149(2) is a mandatory part of the property conveyancing process in NSW. The conveyancing process does not mandate the inclusion of information under section 149(5), but any purchaser may request that information.

Planning certificates may be purchased from a council by anyone, at any time and for any purpose. Planning certificates disclose the relevant information, policies and land-use controls that apply at the time of issue.

## Identification of affected properties

NSW Fair Trading has made available a free ceiling insulation testing service to residents of pre-1980 dwellings located in specified local government areas. The *Home Building Act 1989* requires the Secretary of NSW Fair Trading to maintain a register of residential

properties that have been tested and verified as containing loose-fill asbestos insulation.

NSW Fair Trading is responsible for informing local councils of any identified properties located within their boundaries. NSW Fair Trading will provide local councils with written confirmation of an affected property immediately after it is added to the Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation Public Register, including the property address. When a premises is demolished and the land on which the premises were erected has been remediated, NSW Fair Trading will remove the property from the Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation Register and provide written confirmation to the relevant council that a property in their local government area has been removed from the Register.

Additionally, the Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation Register may be viewed online at the NSW Fair Trading website, and will specify the local government area that an identified property falls within, enabling council to identify all properties relevant to their local government area.

### **Planning Certificates: Information under Section 149(2)**

The information to be included in a planning certificate under section 149(2) is outlined in the EP&A Regulation. It includes the mandatory disclosure of matters relating to the land, which are listed in Schedule 4 of the Regulation. A statement about whether a property is listed on the loose-fill asbestos insulation register maintained by the Secretary of NSW Fair Trading is now required to be included on a section 149(2) certificate.

#### **Suggested wording**

It is suggested that councils include a notation on the section 149(2) planning certificates issued for properties listed on the register in the following form:

*'A residential dwelling erected on this land has been identified in the Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation Register as containing loose-fill asbestos ceiling insulation. Contact NSW Fair Trading for more information.'*

### **Planning Certificates: Information under Section 149(5)**

Section 149(5) provides the means for a council to disclose information about other relevant matters affecting the land.

Councils need to take reasonable care when disclosing information to ensure that the information is accurate and relevant. Councils should also be aware of the 'good faith' liability protections afforded to them by section 149(6) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, and section 733 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Research undertaken by the Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation Taskforce has determined that there is

potential for loose-fill asbestos insulation to be found in residential dwellings constructed prior to 1980 in 28 local government areas, listed below. Providing information under section 149(5) is at the discretion of council, but it is recommended that the identified 28 councils provide a general alert regarding the potential for loose-fill asbestos insulation in properties that are not listed on the Register.

Conveyancing legislation mandates only a section 149(2) certificate be attached to a contract of sale. However, council can provide this information on a section 149(2) certificate, even if a section 149(5) certificate has not been applied for or the additional fee paid. Care should be taken to ensure that the information provided under section 149(5) is differentiated from the mandatory information included in a section 149(2) certificate.

#### **Suggested wording**

It is suggested that councils in the areas where loose-fill asbestos ceiling insulation has been identified include a notation on all section 149(5) planning certificates issued for properties not listed on the Register, in the following form:

#### ***'Information regarding loose-fill asbestos insulation***

*Some residential homes located in the [insert LGA] have been identified as containing loose-fill asbestos insulation, for example in the roof space. NSW Fair Trading maintains a Register of homes that are affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation.*

*You should make your own enquiries as to the age of the buildings on the land to which this certificate relates and, if it contains a building constructed prior to 1980, the council strongly recommends that any potential purchaser obtain advice from a licensed asbestos assessor to determine whether loose-fill asbestos is present in any building on the land and, if so, the health risks (if any) this may pose for the building's occupants.*

*Contact NSW Fair Trading for further information.*

*This information has been provided pursuant to section 149(5) of the EP&A Act but does not constitute a full section 149(5) planning certificate.'*

## Identified Councils

At the time of this circular, the NSW Government has identified local government areas where loose-fill asbestos insulation is more likely to be found in residential dwellings, based on historical records and testing results. These local government areas currently identified are listed below.

Albury City Council  
Bega Valley Shire Council  
Berrigan Shire Council  
Canterbury-Bankstown Council  
Eurobodalla Shire Council  
Goulburn Mulwaree Council  
Greater Hume Shire Council  
Hilltops Council  
Hornsby Shire Council  
Ku-ring-gai Shire Council  
Lithgow City Council  
Narrandera Shire Council  
North Sydney Council  
Orange City Council  
Parramatta City Council  
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council  
Snowy Monaro Regional Council  
Snowy Valleys Council  
The Hills Shire Council  
Upper Lachlan Shire Council  
Wagga Wagga City Council  
Yass Valley Shire Council

## Further Information

For further information regarding the loose-fill asbestos insulation register, please contact [NSW Fair Trading](#).

For further information regarding the amendments to the EP&A Act please contact the Department of Planning and Environment's information centre on 1300 305 695.

Department of Planning and Environment circulars are available from <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/circulars>

### Authorised by:

**Simon Officer**  
**Acting Secretary**

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**Important note:** This circular does not constitute legal advice. Users are advised to seek professional advice and refer to the relevant legislation, as necessary, before taking action in relation to any matters covered by this circular.

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