



# IMPORTING ASBESTOS INTO AUSTRALIA

The importation of asbestos or goods containing asbestos into Australia is generally prohibited under the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956* (Customs PI Regulations).

## WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring and hazardous mineral fibre with carcinogenic properties. It is highly toxic and known to cause a range of lung diseases that are slow to develop but are in many cases deadly.

Asbestos has been used in a wide number of products due to several characteristics including its strength, durability, and resistance to fire and water.

There are six forms of asbestos: chrysotile (white), amosite (brown), crocidolite (blue), anthophyllite, actinolite and tremolite. Chrysotile is a form of serpentine asbestos. Amosite, crocidolite, anthophyllite, actinolite and tremolite are types of amphibole asbestos.

## CAN ASBESTOS BE USED IN AUSTRALIA?

An Australia-wide ban on the importation, manufacture and use of all forms of asbestos and asbestos containing products took effect from 31 December 2003. To complement this ban, the import prohibition on asbestos under the Customs PI Regulations was also introduced.

## WHEN CAN ASBESTOS BE IMPORTED?

Importing asbestos into Australia is allowed under very limited circumstances.

**For chrysotile asbestos**, importation is NOT prohibited under the Customs PI Regulations if:

- the goods are raw materials that contain naturally occurring traces of chrysotile; or
- the chrysotile or goods are 'hazardous waste' as defined in the *Hazardous Waste (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1989*; or
- confirmation is provided by an Australian State or Territory authority that its use is in accordance with the occupational

health and safety law in that State or Territory (for a purpose mentioned in Schedule 3B to the Customs PI Regulations, or for research, analysis or display); or

- exemptions are granted and confirmed in accordance with relevant Commonwealth of Australia law in respect to occupational health and safety, (for a purpose mentioned in Schedule 3B to the Customs PI Regulations, or for research, analysis or display); or
- the importation is from the Australian Antarctic Territory.

**For amphibole asbestos**, importation is NOT prohibited under the Customs PI Regulations if:

- the goods are raw materials that contain naturally occurring traces of amphibole;
- the goods are 'hazardous waste' as defined in the *Hazardous Waste (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1989*;
- ministerial permission is granted under Commonwealth of Australia occupational health and safety law.

## WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF GOODS THAT MAY CONTAIN ASBESTOS?

Some of the more common goods that may contain asbestos include:

- friction materials (brake pads and clutch assemblies)
- lagging and jointing materials
- gaskets and seals
- electric winches
- fire gloves and fire blankets
- cement materials (pipes, tubes or fittings)
- electrical panel partitioning
- electrical tapes
- compressed sheeting.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For information on any Customs matter, contact the Customs Information and Support Centre on 1300 363 263 or email [information@customs.gov.au](mailto:information@customs.gov.au) or browse the website [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)