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Community Bulletin

New asbestos laws improve waste management in the IOTs

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Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our communities and staff on Christmas Island (CI) and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI) working together with the Australian Government and a range of stakeholders, new laws have been established to allow asbestos to be removed from our territories for disposal on mainland Australia.

This achievement is in line with the *Our Christmas Island 2030 Strategic Plan* and the *Our Cocos (Keeling) 2030 Islands Strategic Plan*, and our vision that the Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs) are established as a world leader in waste management for remote Islands by 2030. Specifically the Strategic Plan for CKI set an action for us to investigate innovative ways of removing asbestos waste and to implement these measures. I am pleased to announce that we have now achieved this for our IOTs. Our Strategic Plans commit us to preparing, within three-years, a best practice waste strategy for the IOTs to achieve excellence in waste avoidance, reduction, and recycling, and waste management initiatives that will have positive impacts globally.

We have worked closely with the Department of Jobs and Small Business, and the Department of Home Affairs to get policy approval for, and make relevant changes to, the regulations. Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956 have been amended to enable all categories of asbestos and goods containing asbestos to be exported from an external Territory and imported to a State or Territory for disposal. Further information is available in notices published on the Department of Home Affairs website at:

<https://www.abf.gov.au/importing-exporting-and-manufacturing/prohibited-goods/categories/asbestos>

<https://www.abf.gov.au/help-and-support-subsite/CustomsNotices/2019-12.pdf>

<https://www.abf.gov.au/help-and-support-subsite/CustomsNotices/2019-11.pdf>

Asbestos intended to be shipped from CI or CKI to the mainland requires an export permission for it to leave the external territory, as well as an import permit for the mainland. The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency is responsible for administering the permission scheme for the export and import of asbestos on behalf of the Minister administering the Work, Health and Safety Act 2011. As part of the Agency's review of applications, it looks at the case presented by potential importers and exporters, including the intended site of disposal on the mainland, whether the action complies with relevant State and Territory jurisdictional requirements, and whether disposal will be at a licensed facility. More information is available at <https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/>

Thank you to all involved. Our Strategic Plans establish a clear way forward and are available at <https://regional.gov.au/territories/publications/index.aspx> I am excited about the prospect that the IOTs could be leading the way in waste management by 2030.

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