

31 December 2013

Asbestos inaction is a killer

Unions are concerned that ten years after asbestos was banned in Australia importation continues.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick said the goal of making Australia asbestos free by 2030 was unlikely at this rate.

“Today is the tenth year anniversary of a ban on asbestos following clear and irrefutable evidence that the deadly dust particles cause cancer.”

“The goal of an asbestos free Australia by 2030 cannot be reached if an ineffectual Ban allows more asbestos containing material into the country.”

Mr Borowick said it is illegal to import, export, use, re-use, supply or manufacture asbestos containing products or materials and yet it continues.

“Importers have been duty bound since December 2003 to not import anything containing asbestos yet it is still happening and to make matters worse, the regulator isn’t doing its job and enforcing the ban.

“It is well established that imports from China, particularly freight trains and motor vehicles contain asbestos components.

“Tragically, asbestos has been discovered only after workers had been exposed during an engine repair.

“Last year, despite around 25,000 motor vehicles found to contain asbestos being imported from China by Ateco, no prosecutions took place.

“These are complete failures by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service who should have identified the asbestos before the vehicles and trains were allowed into Australia.

“There are a growing number of unacceptable breaches of the asbestos ban occurring under the watch of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, and something needs to be done.

“If nothing is done, more workers and members of the community will needlessly be put at risk.

“The Government must urgently provide greater resources to the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service to ensure they are equipped to enforce the ban.’

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