

26 July 2016

## Statement from ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick: ACTU welcomes call for enforcement of asbestos ban

The ACTU joins Senator Nick Xenophon in calling for the federal government to enforce the ban on asbestos importation – in place since 2003 – by ensuring that companies and individuals who breach the ban face serious consequences, up to and including jail time.

Asbestos is extremely dangerous to the exploited workers in our region who are forced to manufacture it, and poses a deadly risk to workers here in Australia, who risk being exposed to it in construction.

Beyond construction, the presence of asbestos in public buildings, such as the children's hospital in Perth, creates a grave public health risk which should be of significant concern to any federal government.

The ban does nothing to address the huge number of existing building that still contain asbestos and posing a risk to construction and demolition workers as well as renovators. But it is a step in the right direction and is intended to ensure that no more buildings are constructed that will pose a risk to workers in the future.

The government must stand by workers, both in Australia and overseas and equally importantly uphold the rule of law by enforcing a ban that is already legislated.

We ask that the government ensure that measures put in place to protect the health of workers are taken seriously, and that those who flaunt them face serious consequences.

ENDS

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