

# Media release



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## **Call for former workers at asbestos plant to join health study**

The first stage of a groundbreaking asbestos study by manufacturer Cement Australia and the Australian Workers Union has commenced in Tasmania.

Letters were sent yesterday to 500 former workers from the Railton plant that once manufactured asbestos cement products inviting them to participate in one of the broadest health screening projects in Australia.

Workers are being asked to register their interest in participating in the initiative designed to address the issue of asbestos in the workplace. Workers and ex-workers will be asked to take part in medical screenings for asbestos related disease and can ring a toll-free number (1800 355 231) to receive information about how they can participate in this phase of the project.

"Everyone who registers will be offered lung testing by independent and expert doctors in confidence. The overall results from this project may also be used as part of an independent medical study by Monash University designed to assess asbestos exposure and asbestos-related lung disease in those people who worked at the Goliath Cement Works in Railton" Paul McNay, General Manager Safety, Health and Environment for Cement Australia said.

"With a comprehensive lung health assessment process already in place for current employees, this study focuses on former and retired Goliath company employees who are invited to participate as the study gauges the number of people who have been affected over time" said Cement Australia Operations Manager, Steve Brass.

Tasmania's Railton cement plant housed a factory that produced asbestos cement products from 1947 to 1987 at the then Goliath Cement Company. Since taking over the plant, Cement Australia has undertaken a significant site rehabilitation program, spending over \$5 million to remove asbestos containing materials and improve awareness of where asbestos containing materials may have been located in the past.

“Since 2005 the company and the Union have progressed on a process of prioritised removal of any asbestos containing materials on the current site. In fact most of these materials have now been removed. We are encouraging a whole of government approach to management of asbestos materials in Tasmania.” the AWU’s National Director of OHS, Dr Yossi Berger said.

Paul McNay said “it’s good for people who have been exposed to asbestos in their careers to be aware of their lung health and we are focused on the wellbeing of the workforce over time. “

The Minister Lisa Singh will address an asbestos forum on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> of March in Hobart. Cement Australia will outline the project at the Forum.

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For more information please contact Chloe Bryce on 0400 600 833 or 07 3335 3084.