# Frequently Asked Questions – Narrabundah College

**School Modernisation - Narrabundah College**

Narrabundah College was built in 1961. Three double storey classroom buildings at Narrabundah College are contaminated with friable asbestos. The three buildings are Block B, C and D.

**What is friable crocidolite (‘blue’) asbestos?**

Friable asbestos is a form of asbestos which can be crumbled or reduced to a dust by hand pressure when dry.

If you had a handful of friable crocidolite asbestos and rubbed it between your hands it would result in a similar dust cloud as if you had a handful of talcum powder and rubbed the talcum powder between your hands. Both would generate high levels of respirable dust.

Therefore, friable asbestos can, when not dealt with appropriately, represent an exposure hazard.

If, however it is inaccessible and well-sealed, it can’t be disturbed during normal building use and therefore doesn’t present an exposure risk.

**Is this the same as the Mr Fluffy asbestos?**

No, this is not the same as the Mr Fluffy asbestos.

**How long have you known about this?**

As with most aged buildings in Canberra, the presence of asbestos is not uncommon, nor unknown. We have known about the presence of asbestos for many years, which is why the school community are informed about its presence and regularly updated.

**How has the ACT Government monitored asbestos at my school?**

The ACT Government has engaged Robson Environmental to undertake regular inspections to ensure the ongoing safety of students and staff.

**What action is the ACT Government taking?**

The affected buildings will be demolished as part of the ACT Government better schools for our kids’ program. Existing structures cannot be upgraded due to the presence of friable asbestos. Buildings will be safely demolished. This will offer the college community the opportunity to create learning spaces for the future.

**Why is the ACT Government taking this action now?**

Better schools for our kids is a key priority of the ACT Government. The Government is investing in initiatives to improve our schools and build state-of-the-art facilities.

The affected buildings are nearing sixty years of age and have reached the end of their useful life. Over time, the fabric of the buildings has altered, and walls are subject to cracking. Due to friable asbestos material being present, the existing buildings cannot be upgraded. These spaces will be safely demolished.

Robson Environmental have been undertaking regular inspections to ensure the ongoing safety of our students and staff. The air monitoring levels have continued to confirm there is no detection of asbestos in the air, but we decided to move students and staff in Term 3, 2018. The age and deterioration of buildings are such that it will become harder to control risks and maintain an air level that is acceptable. Now is the right time to begin the program of works.

**What will happen?**22 new transportable learning spaces have been located on the college oval to allow for the relocation of classes. Students and staff commenced teaching and learning in these contemporary classrooms at the start of Term 3, 2018.

**What are the timeframes for the demolition?**The three double storey classroom buildings have been closed and will be safely demolished by licenced asbestos operators. The removal of asbestos and the demolition works will be undertaken outside of school operational hours, including vacation periods and weekends.

Site remediation and landscaping will follow the demolition of each building and is expected to be completed during Term 1, 2019.

**How much dust and noise will be created because of this? Will the dust be contaminated with asbestos?**

The buildings will be wrapped, and the internal asbestos removal process involves creating a negative air environment to ensure that no fibres escape from the buildings.

During demolition, water is sprayed onto the structure and rubble to suppress dust. This spray can look like dust but is a misty cloud of fine water droplets.

The demolition of the buildings will be done safely through a company licensed to deal with asbestos demolition. The removal of asbestos and the demolition works will be undertaken outside of school operational hours, including vacation periods and weekends, and occur only between the hours of 7.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Saturday. Some minor works may occur on Sunday and Public Holidays and will comply with the noise standards required in residential areas of being no more than 45dB during the day.

**What happens if the construction causes unnecessary hazards that make the site unsafe?**

Work Health and Safety is a key focus on all building sites. All trades are required to adhere to strict Work Health and Safety regulations and this will be no different at our school. As is always the case, if you see something you are concerned about, this should always be reported to a supervisor or safety representative.

**What will happen to the student timetable during these works?**

There will be no disruption to the student timetable while these works occur. Students will continue with their usual timetable during the period of these works.

All learning packages will continue to be offered during these works. The choice of subjects will not be impacted.

The removal of asbestos and the demolition works will be undertaken outside of school operational hours, including vacation periods and weekends.

**Who will provide updated information to our school community?**

Your school principal will keep your school community informed as the modernisation project progresses through newsletters and meetings with students, staff and the school community.

**What is the Education Directorate’s obligation to inform people about the risks associated with asbestos at our school?**

The school community has been regularly informed about the presence of asbestos at our school. Lots of schools and older buildings across the Territory have asbestos present.

As the air monitoring has remained within the national accepted levels, we have not felt the need to inform people beyond the regular updates provided. A copy of the asbestos management plan for the College is also available from the front office.

**Have students and staff been exposed to asbestos fibres?**

Low levels of asbestos fibres are present in the environment all the time.

At Narrabundah College, levels have always been undetectable. Based on this, there is no evidence through our testing that students have had any increased exposure.

**I went to this school over 10 years ago, have I been exposed to asbestos?**

Asbestos has been present in these buildings since they were built. We have increased our monitoring and testing as the buildings have aged. More information about asbestos is available at <http://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/Fact%20sheets/Asbestos%20fact%20sheet%20%28October%202014%29.pdf>

**I’m concerned about my exposure; will you pay for me to visit my General Practitioner?**

We have worked very closely with Robson’s Environmental and ACT Health in relation to the asbestos management at the school. There is no evidence that there has been an increased level of exposure, outside of the acceptable levels of exposure that exist in the general community. If you have health concerns, it is best for you to discuss this with your General Practitioner. The ACT Government won’t at this stage pay for these visits, however if financial hardship is a concern – you should discuss this with your General Practitioner who may be able to bulk bill you.

**I wasn’t aware that the school had friable asbestos, why wasn’t this made clear?**

The asbestos management plan has been available in the front office of the school. Communication has been regular in terms of Robson’s management of the asbestos on site. Parents have been informed that all information is available for viewing.

**Where will student and staff park once these works commence?**

The school will ensure that parking arrangements are made to enable as much parking as possible on site.

**Useful Information**

Asbestos information is available including links to ACT Government agencies at <https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/asbestos-information>

Information about health and asbestos is also available at:

<http://www.health.act.gov.au/datapublications/fact-sheets/environmental-health#Asbestos>

The Australian Government has created a register to record the details of members of the community who think they may have been exposed to asbestos.

<https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/national-asbestos-exposure-register>

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