



Case Study: Holroyd gives Asbestos Answers

An interactive community education campaign

Introduction

Holroyd City Council wanted to provide a simple and practical resource for all community members seeking information on asbestos and its safe disposal.

Background

Located in the heart of Western Sydney, Holroyd City Council is part of what is referred to as Sydney's 'fibro belt'; an area that saw rapid development during the 1960s and 70s when asbestos-containing products were heavily used in home construction.

Due to the high percentage of asbestos-containing, and fibro-clad homes, educating residents about the dangers of asbestos has long been a key priority for Holroyd City Council.

Holroyd City Council has offered a free asbestos collection service since 2013 to meet the small scale disposal needs of the community, deter illegal dumping and unlawful disposal.

In 2014, Holroyd updated its asbestos policy to comply with state government best practice resulting in a renewed focus on asbestos awareness and education.

Holroyd is a culturally diverse area with well over 50 per cent of its population born overseas. Community consultation had identified that some residents, particularly from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, had very low or no awareness of asbestos and its dangers.

As a result, CALD accessibility was identified as a key objective when developing new asbestos-related education materials.

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The program

In 2014, Holroyd City Council launched its 'Fight the Dust' campaign to encourage residents to get the facts about asbestos before commencing renovation or home maintenance projects.

Central to the campaign was the development of the [Asbestos Answers website](#); an online resource for residents seeking information on asbestos.

While there were pre-existing online resources dedicated to asbestos, many focused on key issues such as compensation or asbestos-related illness.

Council officers identified a lack of online resources offering straight-forward information about renovating, development approvals, safe disposal, illegal dumping, and activity by neighbours.

As the name suggests, Asbestos Answers was developed to answer the types of questions councils



are asked on a day-to-day basis - a quick, succinct reference for residents.

The Asbestos Answers website gives answers to common questions such as:

- **What is asbestos?**
- **What is the safest way to remove asbestos?**
- **Do I need approval to remove a small amount of asbestos from my home?**
- **My neighbour is removing asbestos. Should they have told me first?**
- **Is there anything I should do to protect myself during asbestos removal next door?**

Asbestos Answers was developed to answer the types of questions councils are asked on a day-to-day basis – a quick, simple reference for residents.

Holroyd worked in consultation with representatives from the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, Local Government NSW and the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia to answer these questions and ensure the website content was both accurate and easy to understand.

Generic branding and wider relevance

When designing the Asbestos Answers website, Council intentionally chose generic branding to ensure the information was relevant to the broadest possible audience. This is apparent in the design of the site, but also in its content.

The information provided on Asbestos Answers is general in nature and advises readers to contact their local council for more information relating to their local area.

CALD engagement

Due to the diverse make-up of the Holroyd community, ensuring the Asbestos Answers content was accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse audiences was a key objective of the website's development.

This was achieved through the creation of a short, engaging video translated into five languages including Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi and Tamil. These videos were complemented by a series of translated factsheets offering further information.

The Bestville Challenge

In addition to basic information, the Asbestos Answers website offers users the chance to quiz themselves on their asbestos knowledge through a virtual world called 'Bestville'.

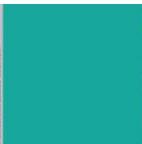
The Bestville Challenge takes users through a number of common asbestos-related scenarios and asks how they would address potential dangers via a multiple-choice style quiz.



Links to other programs

The Asbestos Answers website was supported by a number of council-funded initiatives including a media campaign, advertising promotions, resident information sessions, as well as the *Fight the Dust* free household asbestos disposal service for residents.

Free disposal for small amounts of asbestos sheeting is a service that Holroyd City Council continues to offer as a way of making asbestos disposal more affordable for residents and deterring incorrect disposal.



Feedback

The Asbestos Answers website was launched in November 2014 as part of Holroyd City Council's commitment to National Asbestos Awareness Month.

Preliminary feedback was sought from tradespeople working in the Holroyd local government area to ascertain whether they thought the website content was easy to understand, and a useful resource for their clients.

Responses were gathered after a mail-out to almost 2,000 licensed tradespeople working in the Holroyd local government area who were registered with NSW Fair Trading.

The response was positive, indicating the information was useful, and easy for themselves and their clients to access and understand.

By March 2016 the site had over 11,000 page views and 8092 sessions.

Holroyd City Council has also received a number of awards following the introduction of its free collection service and development of the Asbestos Answers website:

1. Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards, Asbestos Management Award – Winner 2012/2013
2. Local Government Management Excellence Awards, Excellence in Environmental Leadership and Sustainability – Winner 2013
3. Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards, Asbestos Management Award – Winner 2013/2014
4. Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards, Asbestos Management Award – Winner 2014/2015.

Learnings from the project

Holroyd City Council offers the following advice to others wishing to develop a similar issue specific resources.

Campaign websites require a lot of resources

The commissioning and development of a campaign website requires a lot of staff resources. Even when engaging an external consultant to conduct the work, there is still a high level of staff engagement needed to ensure the website is delivering the desired messaging and outcomes both initially and into the future.

However, Holroyd City Council resolves that once completed, a great educational resource can be worth the money and time invested.

Consider your branding

The Asbestos Answers website intentionally limited the amount of council branding used to ensure it would not deter out-of-area community members from using and sharing the resource.

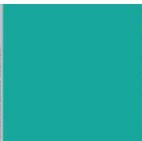
Asbestos and issues resulting from poor management of the material are not unique to the Holroyd LGA, so to brand the site according to Holroyd's standard style guide would only serve to limit the number of families that can be assisted by the content.

Because the website's branding was relatively subtle, the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) was able to use the translated video resource in its 2015 Asbestos Awareness Month campaign.

This targeted social media campaign resulted in the translated videos receiving over 8,000 views from CALD community members right across Greater Western Sydney.

Other councils have also requested to share Asbestos Answers materials since the website was launched in November 2014.

The Asbestos Answers website was developed thanks to funding from the NSW EPA Waste and Sustainability Improvement Payment. Additional education initiatives have been funded internally by Holroyd City Council.



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The Western Sydney Regional Waste Strategy project is managed by Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd (WSROC) on behalf of ten Western Sydney councils. This program is supported by the NSW Environment Protection Authority with funding from the waste levy.

