



**SENATOR THE HON LISA SINGH  
SHADOW PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE  
SHADOW ATTORNEY GENERAL  
LABOR SENATOR FOR TASMANIA**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**ABETZ MUST HONOUR COMMITMENT TO ASBESTOS COUNCIL**

Last week's recommendation by the Commission of Audit that the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council be abolished and its Agency consolidated will have deadly ramifications for thousands of Australians, said Labor Senator Lisa Singh.

"Only last year, Senator Abetz, when supporting the creation of the Council, acknowledged that Australia has the highest reported per capita incidence of asbestos related disease in the world. Yet now the Coalition is considering abolishing the very organisation that seeks to prevent asbestos-related disease," said Senator Lisa Singh.

"Even the suggestion that the Government might entertain the Audit recommendations is horrifying," she said.

Since 1980, nearly 34,000 people have died from asbestos-related illnesses. Tens of thousands more may lose their lives to the deadly dust in the next twenty years.

"This is why Labor established the national Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council and the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency in 2013," said Senator Singh.

"Together these bodies have been implementing a highly coordinated national approach to awareness raising and asbestos eradication in Australia. Dismantling them will see us going back to a patchwork approach.

"Other countries have looked up to Australia's recent approach to asbestos management as best practice.

"A national agency provides a national solution to dealing with the deadly effects of asbestos. That's why it is so important that it remains.

"The government must understand: This isn't a matter of saving money – this is matter of saving people's lives. Senator Abetz must stand by his previous

commitment to reduce the burden of asbestos-related illness on the community and reject the Audit recommendation.”

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Council is one of 42 government bodies that the Commission of Audit has earmarked for abolition as part of their cost-saving recommendations.

The Audit also recommended that the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, which coordinates the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management, be consolidated into the Department of Employment.

**TUESDAY, 6 MAY 2014**

**MEDIA CONTACT: CATHY WILLIAMS 0429 455 224**