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THE HON BILL SHORTEN MP

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation

MEDIA RELEASE

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HISTORIC BILL PASSES TO PROTECT AUSTRALIANS FROM ASBESTOS

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations Bill Shorten today welcomed the passing of the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency Bill 2013 through the Australian Parliament.

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency will begin operations from 1 July and will implement the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management.

It is a historic day for Australians because there will now be a national agency dedicated to working with jurisdictions and stakeholders to create a nationally consistent approach to the eradication, handling and awareness of asbestos.

Australia is the first nation to progress towards the ultimate elimination of asbestos-related diseases.

Australia was the most prolific user of asbestos containing material in the world. It is estimated that 1 in 3 homes built in Australia between the end of the Second World War and 1987 contain asbestos.

The national plan aims to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres in order to eliminate asbestos related disease in Australia. It will achieve this by:

- increasing public awareness of the dangers posed by working with or being exposed to asbestos;
- developing the implementation of a prioritised removal program across Australia;
- develop nationally consistent better practice in asbestos handling and management;
- coordinate national research to minimise the risk of exposure to asbestos for the Australian community; and
- play a leadership role in a global campaign for a worldwide asbestos ban.

Creating this independent agency and developing the National Strategic Plan is part of the Gillard Government's consistent track record of action to tackle the scourge of asbestos and the culmination of three years' work.

The Gillard Government set up the interim Office of Asbestos Safety in August 2012 to commence work with jurisdictions on the development of the new National Strategic Plan.

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency will take over this good work from 1 July, implement the Plan and maintain the new National Asbestos Exposure Register.

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