PROHIBITION (BAN) OF CHRYSOTILE ASBESTOS
A national ban on the importation, manufacture and use of all products containing chrysotile (white) asbestos came into effect by 31 December 2003. Chrysotile is the main form of asbestos still used in Australia.

The manufacture, supply, storage, transport, sale, use and re-use, installation and replacement of products and materials containing chrysotile and other forms of asbestos will be prohibited in the ACT. Similar regulations will be put in place in other Australian states and the Northern Territory. At the same time, the Commonwealth will implement a ban on the import of asbestos and asbestos-containing materials.

CHRYSOTILE ASBESTOS AND ITS HEALTH RISKS?
Chrysotile is a naturally occurring fibrous silicate mineral. Exposure to chrysotile, like other forms of asbestos, can cause mesothelioma (a malignant form of lung cancer) and asbestosis (scarring of the lungs making breathing difficult) in humans and animals.

WHICH PRODUCTS CONTAIN ASBESTOS?
Asbestos was once a popular building material and was used, for example, in roofing materials, asbestos-cement (fibro) sheeting and pipes. Chrysotile, amosite and crocidolite were all used in the asbestos cement industry and for insulation and lagging. Over the years, these uses have been phased out and removal programs put in place but a considerable amount of asbestos-containing material remains in the built environment.

Products that may contain asbestos include:

- Asbestos cement materials
- Corrugated sheets
- Flat sheeting panels
- Shingles or tiles (external or ceiling)
- Pipes, tubes or fittings
- Compressed asbestos sheeting (eg. millboard)
- Floor coverings (eg. vinyl asbestos tiles)
- Textured paints and coatings
- Asbestos bitumen products used to damp-proof
- Compressed asbestos fibre gaskets and seals
- Rubberised or polymerised asbestos gaskets and seals
- Asbestos tape / rope
- Lagging and jointing materials
- Heat resistant sealing and caulking compounds
- Mastics, sealants, putties and adhesives
- Electrical panel partitioning
- Electrical cloths and tapes
- Friction materials (eg. brake linings or blocks and clutch linings)
- Fire gloves, blankets and curtains
ARE ASBESTOS FREE PRODUCTS AVAILABLE?

The decision to ban chrysotile asbestos has occurred through national consultation over the past two years. During this time, manufacturers, retailers and users of chrysotile products in Australia have been getting ready for the ban, including developing and marketing new asbestos-free products and materials. A number of substitutes for asbestos products are currently available to meet the increase in demand.

The ban will not apply to asbestos products and materials that are already in place (“in situ”). However, when they require replacement, an alternative which does not contain asbestos must be used. Stockpiles of asbestos products will require disposal.

WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES FOR REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL?

Under ACT legislation, removal and disposal of asbestos products in buildings and structures, must be carried out by a licence holder, and the removal must be approved.

In addition, safe work procedures must be developed and applied to remove and dispose of asbestos products not used in buildings and structures. This affects businesses such as the vehicle maintenance industry.

CAN AN EXEMPTION BE GRANTED?

In specific circumstances exemptions may be granted, however, this will only be a very small number of strictly regulated exemptions agreed to by the Safe Work Australia. Exemptions to the chrysotile ban will expire between 2004 and 2007.

WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT OTHER FORMS OF ASBESTOS?

Under the National Model Regulations for the Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances, the existing prohibition on crocidolite (blue) and amosite (brown) asbestos will be incorporated into the instrument prohibiting the use of chrysotile asbestos.

Safe Work Australia is considering prohibition of three other forms of asbestos: actinolite, anthophyllite and tremolite. A discussion document regarding these types of asbestos is available for public comment. At this point in time, these forms of asbestos have no known use in Australia.