Detailed site investigation outcomes summary

January 2023

In April 2021, Randwick City Council engaged expert consultants, RMA Group and Trinitas Group, to undertake a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) of Little Bay Beach to better understand the source of asbestos containing material being found at the beach since 2020.

WHAT IS A DETAILED SITE INVESTIGATION (DSI)?

A DSI is a more intensive analysis of a site to determine the presence of asbestos-containing material. In the case of Little Bay Beach, it involved historic research, comparison of historic aerial photographs, interviews with local residents and onsite works to sample 45 test pits. It was undertaken by our expert consultants, RMA Group and Trinitas Group and the beach area was fenced and closed to public access while the works were occurring.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS OF THE DETAILED SITE INVESTIGATION WORKS?

The beach was divided into three areas for testing. The DSI found 15 out of the 45 test pits contained asbestos –confirmed to be bonded, non-friable asbestos. No friable or trace asbestos was identified at any of the test pits.The asbestos was mostly found near the gullies where stormwater flows to the beach.

The investigation noted that: “Due to the nature of site contamination by bonded asbestos fragments in soil and on sand surfaces, it is the opinion of Trinitas that asbestos contamination at the Site poses a potentially low health risk to site users.”

NORTHERN BEACH AREA

- 12% positive test pits
- Hot spot area located near stormwater creek

MIDDLE BEACH AREA

- 78% positive test pits
- Hot spot area located near central gully

SOUTHERN BEACH AREA

- 25% positive test pits
- Hot spot area located near stormwater creek

WHAT DO THE RESULTS MEAN?

The DSI confirms that building material containing asbestos remains present at the beach and is concentrated around the three gullies on the beach. These gully areas are mostly located on land managed by other organisations. The gullies were found to also contain other building material such as old bricks, concrete and tiles which suggests that building waste has been filled in the gullies in the past. Stormwater and tidal movements are gradually moving this material onto the beach area.

WHERE DID THE ASBESTOS COME FROM?

Prior to the knowledge about the dangers of asbestos, it was common practice to bury building waste material – often in gully areas to reduce costs. The area around Little Bay Beach was previously used as the Prince Henry Hospital and a number of buildings were located near to the beach. Many of these buildings were demolished over the years. Also between 1965 and 1970 large-scale levelling of the golf course was undertaken and at this stage fill material was likely introduced as well.

WHAT IS COUNCIL DOING ABOUT THE ASBESTOS?

The DSI recommends a range of actions.

Short term (actions complete/ongoing):

- ✓ Continuing to undertake twice weekly air monitoring and emu picking by a competent licensed asbestos assessor. Following heavy rain and/or storms this will be undertaken as soon as practical.
- ✓ Issuing the Detailed Site Investigation Report to relevant stakeholders including Landcom, Department of Planning Industry and Environment, NSW Environmental Protection Authority, Crown Land and the Coast Golf Club.
- ✓ Installing warning signs at the entrance to the beach.
- ✓ Continuing to notify beach users and local residents via direct mail and through our website.

Medium term actions (not yet undertaken):

- Installing a sediment control barrier on the middle gully to reduce fragments entering the sand area.
- Considering a diving investigation to assess any underwater contamination.
- Advising adjacent land owners to conduct their own due diligence as a means to limit further asbestos containing material eroding onto the beach area.

Longer terms actions (not yet undertaken):

- Undertake remediation of the affected areas. Note these works are potentially extensive, disruptive and costly. As the affected areas are likely to involve multiple land managers this is seen as long-term option.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CLEAN-UP?

Generally the land owner is responsible for managing any contamination found onsite. While Randwick Council manages the beach area, the surrounding Crown land is managed by other organisations. This means any clean-up and long-term management needs to be a collaborative approach.

WHY CAN'T YOU JUST REMOVE ALL THE MATERIAL?

Managing historic asbestos contamination is very challenging. On some sites, containing and capping contaminated soil is sometimes an appropriate remediation strategy. However at Little Bay Beach, the natural environment is causing those contaminants to move.

Mass excavation of the fill material is expensive and challenging to conduct and also not a guarantee that all material will be removed.

IS IT STILL SAFE TO GO TO THE BEACH?

Yes. The expert advice we have received is that the beach remains safe for use for general recreation.

HOW CAN I KEEP MYSELF AND MY FAMILY SAFE?

Do not collect, touch or remove any items from the beach. Often the asbestos containing material can be weathered so it may be difficult to differentiate it from shell or ceramic material.

CAN I SEE THE FULL REPORT?

Yes. Council is committed to keeping the community informed about this important issue. You can access the full Detailed Site Investigation Report as well as various other reports including the results of the regular emu picking and air monitoring on our website: **randwick.nsw.gov.au/littlebayworks**

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ASBESTOS?

The NSW Government's asbestos website is a good resource for anybody looking to understand more about asbestos or to manage asbestos in their home. Visit: **asbestos.nsw.gov.au**.

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