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Update – Asbestos in C and K Set Trains

A meeting was held on Wednesday with Sydney Trains about the ongoing issue of asbestos in C and K Set Trains and the broader management of asbestos within the Sydney Trains workplace.

Representatives from the RTBU, AWU, ETU, Sydney Trains management, HSRs and SafeWork NSW were all in attendance.

The Unions actively pursued concerns with current asbestos management practices, the profound absence of transparency in business practice and Sydney Trains' unacceptable lack of communication and consultation. The Unions were especially concerned about the misleading and possibly reckless correspondence issued by senior Sydney Trains management stating categorically that there was "No Risk" to any Member. We challenged the use of the words "No Risk" as we will never agree that there is "No Risk" when asbestos is involved.

Following formal correspondence from the RTBU we became aware that Sydney Trains engaged independent external Asbestos Hygienist WSP to work through the C and K Set fleet. SafeWork NSW's own Hygienist verified the testing process and methodology used by WSP and stated that this testing met all "legal requirements". Additionally it was agreed that Union Representatives and HSRs would inspect a random selection of trains with WSP to ensure the integrity of the process.

While the Unions support Sydney Trains taking these positive steps to ensure the safety of Members it is disappointing that it has taken SafeWork's involvement to compel them to this position.

Parties have agreed that necessary steps must be taken to ensure that asbestos in the workplace can be better managed in the future with the ultimate goal being the total removal of all asbestos containing material from the workplace.

An Asbestos Working Group has been established between the business, the Unions and HSRs to meet regularly from the 19/07/17 tasked with conducting a holistic review of asbestos management in the workplace with emphasis on ensuring that testing, review periods and control measures are of the highest possible standard.

The following items were also agreed:

- Any area containing asbestos within Crew Compartments to be clearly identified with warning labels and tagged and dated as having been "Certified Safe".

- An electronic register will be created for any employee to easily check the “Certified Safe” status and date of last inspection of any unit.
- Any Member who feels they may have been exposed to asbestos will have access to the Asbestos Register with any medical testing and monitoring required to be provided at the employer’s expense.

With the C and K Set fleet currently removed from service it was agreed that prior to the reintroduction of any unit into service the following must occur:

- All units to be inspected, tested, and certified safe by independent Hygienist WSP.
- A list of all cars that have been tested and “Certified Safe” to be provided to the Unions and displayed at all Sign On locations.
- Any units found to contain asbestos dust to be dynamically tested to ensure that secondary encapsulation controls are effective.
- All Crew Compartments to be fitted with Asbestos Warning Labels and “Certified Safe” status labels.
- Any units remaining untested will be tested jointly with Hygienists and Union/HSRs.

The Unions entered into the above agreements in good faith with Sydney Trains informing us that at the time of meeting 70% of the C and K Set fleet were compliant; having been tested and “Certified Safe” to re-enter service.

Yesterday HSRs and Union Reps attended Leppington Stabling Yard with Sydney Trains’ Hygienists to observe and validate the testing process. During this testing it was revealed that the number of Sets tested and “Certified Safe” were far fewer than Sydney Trains had claimed. Additionally it was revealed that Sydney Trains had only requested the testing of a portion of asbestos containing locations on the C and K Sets. At the insistence of HSRs and the Unions, Sydney Trains will now be testing all asbestos containing locations within the Crew Compartments. This is now the agreed standard and will be enforced by all parties.

In light of this new information your Unions are concerned by the previous statements made by Sydney Trains, leaving us no option but to question the validity of any testing prior to our involvement.

Your Unions insist that Sydney Trains honour all agreements and comply with all recommendations prior to the re-commissioning of any C or K Set unit into service.

Please distribute this bulletin throughout your workplace.

If you have any questions or require more information contact your union.



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