

# Newcastle East Public School

## Amendment to Frequently Asked Questions

**12 February 2020**

Dear Parents/Carers

On Wednesday 5 February 2020 you received a cover letter and FAQs following the parent and staff information session at Newcastle East Public School on Monday 3 February 2020.

It has come to our attention that there is some incorrect information in the FAQs and the clearance certificates. This cover letter summarises the amendments made as of 12 February 2020

### **Phone number and procedure for the National Asbestos Exposure Register**

The National Asbestos Exposure Register is managed by the Australian Government's Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency. The Australian Government created this register so that members of the community who think that they may have been exposed to asbestos can record the details of their exposure for their future reference. There is no minimum level of exposure required to add your details to the register.

If you think you may have been exposed to asbestos you can register your details. The best way to do so is from a desktop or laptop computer via the website <https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/national-asbestos-exposure-register>. You can also fill out the attached form (Appendix C) and send it to [enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au).

In addition, for any Department of Education employees, please use Internet Explorer as on Department computers the website is not compatible with Google Chrome.

It has come to our attention that the contact number provided for the National Asbestos Exposure Register was incorrect. We can confirm that the correct number is 1300 326 148 and that this number is for the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, who manages the exposure register. If you have any questions regarding the exposure register or would like to speak to someone at the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, please call 1300 326 148.

### **Addition of appendices**

We have added in three appendices:

- Appendix A is a layout of the school which reflects the location of fibres found in question 3 on pages 4-5.
- Appendix B is the timeline of events of the asbestos testing at Newcastle East Public School and relates to the answer in question 7 on page 5.
- Appendix C is a form to record your details on the National Asbestos Exposure Register.

### **Administrative error on clearance certificates**

It has come to our attention that there was an administrative error on five of the clearance certificates issued for the school. A licence number listed on these certificates was for a company not involved in the project. The certificate numbers are:

- 2736\_ASB\_020220\_Clearance Certificate – Asbestos Removal
- 2736\_ASB\_020220\_Clearance Certificate – Environmental Clean
- 2736\_ASB\_290120\_Clearance Certificate A – Asbestos Removal
- 2736\_ASB\_290120\_Clearance Certificate B – Asbestos Removal
- 2736\_ASB\_311020\_Clearance Certificate – Asbestos Removal

These have now been updated with the correct licence number and copies of the certificates have been updated on the website <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/about-us/workingwithus/schools-asbestos-register/schools-asbestos-register-n.html>.

## **Amendments to answers**

Amendments have been made to the following answers that relate to the new appendices, and to clarifications around the National Asbestos Exposure Register:

- Question 16 b, d, and e on page 2
- Question 22 on page 2
- Question 24 on page 2
- Question 25 on page 3
- Question 3 on page 4-5
- Question 7 on page 5

We regret that the information provided was incorrect and sincerely apologise if this has caused any undue stress.

The FAQs have been updated and an amended copy attached for your information. The FAQs on the Newcastle East Public School project website have also been updated.

## **For more information contact:**

School Infrastructure NSW  
Email: [schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au)  
Phone: 1300 482 651  
[www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au](http://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Parents,

Thank you for attending the parent and staff information session at Newcastle East Public School on Monday 3 February 2020.

At that meeting we listened to your feedback and the Department acknowledges the school community was distressed by the way holiday period asbestos remediation works were communicated to you as school returned.

Our intention was to focus on getting the works complete so that school students and teachers could return. We acknowledge that we have not met the school community expectations and in not communicating with you sooner, we have caused undue stress and concern, for this we apologise.

On the basis of your feedback the Department will implement immediate changes to the way we communicate with you during school holidays.

The safety of our students, your children, is paramount. We are confident that Newcastle East Public School is safe for students and staff and will continue to work hard to make sure you share in this confidence as well.

At the information session we undertook to respond to your concerns within 48 hours and provide copies of the clearance certificates. On the following pages we have responded to questions from parents, via the local MP, Mr Tim Crakanthorp, the School Infrastructure email and hotline and those raised at the community information session. We have grouped these questions together into common themes under the headings of 'Student and Staff Wellbeing', 'Onsite Works and Testing' and 'Communications'.

Copies of the clearance certificates can be found on the School Infrastructure website at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/about-us/workingwithus/schools-asbestos-register/schools-asbestos-register-n.html>

Kind regards,



Mark Scott AO  
**SECRETARY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
5 February 2020



# Newcastle East Public School

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Student and Staff Wellbeing

The health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff is always our priority. We would never willingly expose our students or staff to any dangerous materials or practices in our schools.

We acknowledge that even the smallest traces of hazardous materials or substances can be an unsettling experience for our school communities. Our role is to be vigilant across all our schools and to understand how these events can affect people, while ensuring students, staff and parents have the information they need to make informed decisions and to feel safe at school.

We are confident that Newcastle East Public School is safe for students and staff and we will continue to work hard to make sure you share in this confidence as well.

Parent questions via the Local Member,  
Tim Crakanthorp (with original numbering)

**14. What support or guidance is being provided to teachers and parents on how to address this subject with primary school-aged children in a consistent manner? Has any counselling been provided for staff? Will counselling be provided to parents or children?**

We recognise that the presence of asbestos can be concerning for people. However it is important to understand the factors that make asbestos a risk to human health. The average person breathes in 5,500 fibres per day (assuming 20 hours/day indoors). Despite this, the general population does not contract asbestos related disease in significant numbers.

It is important to note that while the loose fibre bundles found in the samples cannot be seen with the naked eye, these bundles are still too large to be 'respirable' – this means they cannot travel deep into the lungs.

The Health and Safety Directorate of the Department of Education has advised staff were provided with onsite counselling support on Wednesday 29 January and ongoing support is in place for all staff. Students have school counsellors available. Ongoing information is being provided to parents and wellbeing focused awareness sessions are being arranged for parents and carers on how best they can support their children.

**15. What support is available for those outside of the current school community who are concerned that they have been exposed to asbestos?**

The Health and Safety Directorate of the Department of Education has advised anyone outside of the current school community who is concerned they have been exposed to asbestos should provide their details to the school.

The independent hygienist has advised low levels of asbestos fibres are present in the environment from the breakdown of asbestos products and from naturally occurring asbestos. Environmental weathering of asbestos-cement sheets in roofing and wall cladding, disturbance of asbestos from a variety of building materials like insulation, ceiling tiles, and floor tiles and asbestos release to air from clutches and brakes in cars and trucks results in asbestos fibres being widespread in the environment.

The typical environmental background in outdoor air is 0.0005 fibres/mL and 0.0002 fibres/mL in indoor air. The daily inhalation volume for an average adult is 22 m<sup>3</sup> or 22,000 litres<sup>2</sup>.

This means 5,500 fibres are breathed in per day by the average person (assuming 20 hours/day indoors). Despite this, the general population does not contract asbestos related disease in significant numbers.

(source: [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/asbestos.pdf](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/asbestos.pdf))

People can also be exposed to higher levels of asbestos at some times in their lives; for example in their workplace, community or home. Evidence of non-occupational exposure increasing risk of asbestos-related disease is very limited. A small increase in risk cannot be excluded, but a large increase in risk is unlikely. (SWNSW).

Information on asbestos exposure in the environment is available from Safe Work NSW, Safe Work Australia, NSW Health Department and the NSW EPA websites.

**16. Regarding future health management:**

**a. What is the impact on the health of people who have had an exposure to asbestos?**

Further advice concerning the health risks of asbestos can be obtained from your local public health unit on 1300 066 055.

# NSW Department of Education – School Infrastructure

- b. What is the official advice regarding any recommended testing and monitoring for our children and staff?

Individuals should consult with their GP regarding testing and monitoring and refer to the fact sheet available from NSW Health – [health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx](http://health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx) or contact the local public health unit on 1300 066 055.

- c. Who will pay for this?

Any concerns following consultation with your GP should be referred to the Department.

- d. What advice can be given to parents and carers about how to manage the health of our children after exposure to asbestos in the short and long term?

Parents and carers are advised to contact and consult with their local GP for any concerns they may have. Information is also available from NSW Health on their website at ([health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx](http://health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx)). You can also contact your local Public Health Unit for further information by calling 1300 066 055.

- e. What are the implications for following your advice with regard to health insurance or life insurance?

The Department has appropriate insurance arrangements in place for current or former staff and students.

If you are concerned about your health, we recommend you consult your doctor.

We would advise anyone with insurance questions to discuss these with your insurer directly.

## 22. How will you manage the concerns of former students?

The Health and Safety Directorate of the Department of Education has advised anyone outside of the current school community who is concerned they have been exposed to asbestos should provide their details to the school.

## 23. How does DoE plan to specifically support staff and former staff?

Support is available to all staff through the Departments Employee Assistance Program. Staff have also been advised to contact the Departments Health and Safety Directorate if they have any concerns about possible exposure.

## 24. What level of asbestos exposure requires staff and/or students to be registered on the dust diseases register?

The establishment of a National Dust Disease Registry is a recommendation of the National Dust Diseases Taskforce aimed at addressing issues related to the re-emergence of silicosis. It is yet to be developed and implemented.

The National Asbestos Exposure Register is where to register asbestos exposures. This is managed by the Australian Government's Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency. The Australian Government created this register so that members of the community who think that they may have been exposed to asbestos, can record the details of their exposure for their future reference. There is no minimum level of exposure required to add your details to the register.

If you think that you may have been exposed to asbestos you can register your details. The best way to do so is from a desktop or laptop computer via the website <https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/national-asbestos-exposure-register>. You can also fill out the attached form (Appendix C) and send it to [enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au).

If you have any questions regarding the exposure register or would like to speak to someone at the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency please call 1300 326 148.

## 25. Based on the testing undertaken to date, is it possible that staff (current and former) and students (current and former):

- may have been exposed to this level of asbestos
- will need to be registered on the dust diseases register?

Individuals should consult with their GP and refer to the fact sheet available from NSW Health – [health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx](http://health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx).

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If you think that you may have been exposed to asbestos you can register your details. The best way to do so is from a desktop or laptop computer via the website <https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/national-asbestos-exposure-register>. You can also fill out the attached form (Appendix C) and send it to [enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au).

If you have any questions regarding the exposure register or would like to speak to someone at the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency please call 1300 326 148.

## Further (different) questions received from school, parents and community

### How can parents or children manage the impact of stress or psychological harm from this event?

The Health and Safety Directorate of the Department of Education has advised ongoing support is in place for all staff. Students have school counsellors available. Ongoing information is being provided to parents.

Wellbeing focused awareness sessions are being arranged for parents and carers on how best they can support their children.

### What is the nature of the diseases caused by asbestos? What is the testing for the disease?

- a. Are children more vulnerable to the disease?
- b. Do we have to wait 20 years to find out if our health has been affected?

Parents and carers are advised to contact and consult with their local GP for any concerns they may have. Information is also available from NSW Health on their website at ([www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx)). You can also contact your local Public Health Unit for further information by calling 1300 066 055.

## Communications

The Department is required to follow all asbestos management plans and will continue to take the advice of the independent hygienist and SafeWork NSW. We undertake to notify the school, parents and local community immediately about any further discovery of asbestos containing material, even if this takes place during the school holidays.

In addition to this, we will continue to provide further information to the school and the local community through the Skoolbag app, project updates, works notifications and the School Infrastructure NSW website.

## Parent questions via the Local Member, Tim Crakanthorp (with original numbering)

### 21. Regarding the communication of the contamination:

- a. What is the reason you chose to communicate to the school community on the first day back at school?
- b. Why have you not communicated sooner?
- c. Why did you not give enough notice to the school community to be able to attend the briefing at the assembly?
- d. When were staff informed?
- e. Have former students' parents/carers and staff been notified of the contamination?
- f. How are volunteers, such as grandparents who support reading groups, being informed about the friable asbestos discovered?
- g. What materials have been made available for non-English speaking parents?

Work to replace the roof occurred during the holidays and the clearance certificate was issued before students returned to school. The school was open on Day 1 Term 1 2020 because the independent hygienist had confirmed the school was safe for students and staff to return as normal.

Community information sessions were held for the school community on 15 and 28 October and 13 December 2019. Notifications were distributed to the school community and neighbours on 20 November, 5 and 10 December 2019 providing updates on the status of works and scheduled removal of asbestos.

The Newcastle East Public School community is predominantly English speaking. However an interpreting service is available for parents by calling the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 540.

## Onsite Works and Testing

Planning to replace the heritage roof at Newcastle East Public School has been underway since 2017. In September 2019, School Infrastructure commenced consultation with the school community and a number of information sessions were held to inform parents, staff and neighbours on the works that would be undertaken in the lead up to and during the school holidays. This consultation continued throughout term 4 and whilst preparation works were underway.

During the planned replacement of Newcastle East Public School's heritage roof, routine precautionary monitoring identified non-bonded (friable) asbestos. The area was immediately secured and appropriate control and monitoring measures were installed.

During the removal of the existing roof of Block A, remnants of the previous roof fabric were discovered and confirmed to be 'Super 6' sheeting (a bonded asbestos product, common in the Australian built environment). The Department followed its standard procedures. Which is the appointment of an independent hygienist to direct the works. The department ensured the safety of the school and local community by fully remediating and decontaminating Block A and obtaining a clearance certificate from the independent hygienist.

In preparation for the start of the new school year, further precautionary testing was undertaken at the request of staff. Of the items staff requested testing across the school, 75 were negative and one positive result was returned in the library. The area was immediately remediated overnight and a clearance certificate was provided by the independent hygienist.

Following consultation with staff, a further 167 composite swab samples were taken. Of this, 164 samples were negative and three were positive. These areas were remediated and clearance certificates issued. This was followed by a full environmental clean of the entire school

It is important to note that while the loose fibre bundles found in the samples cannot be seen with the naked eye, these bundles are still too large to be 'respirable' – this means they cannot travel deep into the lungs.

Newcastle East Public School has had an unprecedented amount of testing at the school. All air-monitoring has consistently returned results consistent with acceptable levels in ambient air and upon the advice of the independent hygienist, the department is confident the school is safe for students and staff.

Questions received from parents via the Member for Newcastle, Tim Crakanthorp MP.

- 1. When will you convene a school community meeting? Please ensure that safety experts, including asbestos specialists, are present at this meeting.**

A meeting for parents and the community was held on Monday 3 February at the school. The school community was notified of this event and approximately 180 parents and community members attended. Also in attendance were the Minister for Education, Secretary of the Department of Education, Chief Executive of School Infrastructure, representatives from the local area Health District, the Department of Education's Health and Safety and School Operations and Performance Directorate's, Safe Work NSW and WSP who are the independent hygienists who tested and supplied clearance certification for the Department at Newcastle East Public School.

- 2. Has the Department of Health been contacted? Will a Department of Health representative attend any community forums?**

Yes. The Environmental Health Manager from Hunter New England Population Health was present at the community meeting.

- 3. Could you please confirm what type of asbestos was found, and where exactly? When was this found?**

The independent hygienist has provided the following advice:

Samples of asbestos were found in Buildings A (18 December 2019), Building C (28 January 2020) and in some ground areas.

Surface tape or swab samples that returned positive for asbestos included the following:

- 18/12/19 – small fragment of non-friable chrysotile asbestos fibre cement sheet debris atop the cupboard in AR0010 (wet area of AR0011)
- 19/12/19 – chrysotile asbestos loose-fibre bundles (asbestos containing dust) in AR0032/AR0024 (top of east door), AR0020 (picture rail, north west corner) and AR0011 (top divider between AR0011 and AR0020)
- 28/1/20 – chrysotile asbestos loose-fibre bundles (asbestos containing dust) in CR1002 (various books south east corner)
- 29/1/20 – chrysotile asbestos loose-fibre bundles (asbestos containing dust) in CR0004 (various items to toe shelving and table and chairs east side of room)
- 30/1/20 – chrysotile asbestos loose-fibre bundles (asbestos containing dust) in the sports shed (various items south west section of shelving) and sports shed (various items north east section of shelving).

# NSW Department of Education – School Infrastructure

It is important to note that while the loose fibre bundles found in the samples cannot be seen with the naked eye, these bundles are still too large to be 'respirable' – this means they cannot travel deep into the lungs.

Please see the attached school layout in Appendix A.

**4. Have NEPS students and staff been exposed to asbestos? If so, for how long? Can you approximate the level of exposure?**

Low levels of asbestos fibres are present in the environment from the breakdown of asbestos products and from naturally occurring asbestos. For example asbestos is released to air from clutches and brakes in cars and trucks. (source: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/asbestos.pdf>)

The independent hygienist has advised, without historic sampling and monitoring in the spaces, quantifying the level of exposure is not possible. All surface sampling and air monitoring performed within Block A at occupant height returned negative (non-detect) for asbestos or consistent with acceptable levels in ambient air (i.e. <0.01 fibres/mL).

**5. At the end of the 2019 school year, children assisted with the setting up of classrooms ready for 2020. This involved moving desks, chairs, tables, stationary, teaching resources, books etc. from the heritage building to other buildings throughout the school. Have all these items been tested for asbestos? Do we know that they are safe?**

The independent hygienist has advised, comprehensive sampling of rooms contents throughout the school has been undertaken including over 243 composite settle dust samples, each contacting at least 10 surfaces (i.e. 2,430 sample surfaces). Following consultation with staff, sampling was conducted on items that previously resided in Block A.

The 4 locations where samples returned positive have been remediated and clearance provided. All other areas are considered safe based on negative (non-detect) surface samples and air monitoring returning results consistent with acceptable levels in ambient air (i.e. <0.01 fibres/mL).

**6. The School Office was also relocated from the heritage building to a temporary building. Have all of the items in this temporary building and in storage spaces been tested? Are they safe for use?**

Yes, the independent hygienist has advised, composite surface sampling of contents and furnishings as well as air monitoring for asbestos fibres have been performed in the temporary Admin building. All results are considered safe based on negative (non-detect) surface samples and air monitoring returning results consistent with acceptable levels in ambient air (i.e. <0.01 fibres/mL).

**7. Please provide a timeline that outlines the building works program, including the new building and replacement of the heritage building roof, when asbestos was identified (including type, size and exact location/s), the asbestos management plan put in place following this discovery and what clearance testing has been completed to date.**

Please see the attached visual timeline in Appendix B.

- 8. Have all previous asbestos management plans been adhered to, including:**
- the excavation of the former COLA site and associated areas for the construction of the new building?**
  - the removal of the asbestos roofing on the Heritage Building?**
  - the management of the lower playground?**

The Department is required to follow all asbestos management plans and take the advice of the independent hygienist and SafeWork NSW in the planning and remediation of asbestos.

**9. Please provide evidence of how the existing asbestos located under the lower playground was managed during the excavation of the site and the construction of the new building? Was testing undertaken during this process given this area has seen more traffic from students playing and as a thoroughfare? If so, please provide the results.**

As with all capital works and maintenance projects, a site-specific asbestos management plan was implemented prior to excavation and construction for the new building. An independent hygienist was engaged to perform airborne fibre monitoring and clearance certification during excavation of the known asbestos area, in accordance with the Code of Practice. Excavation was performed by a licenced asbestos removal contractor with all fill materials excavated, removed from site as asbestos waste. The remaining asbestos area was encapsulated to ensure the safety of students, staff and contractors.

**10. Could you please supply the full results of all of the monitoring and sampling for the past ten years for the whole school site? Please include testing methodology, results and recommendations, as well as dates that samples were taken, exact locations, what was found, when results were known and to whom.**

It will take some time to compile these documents. However, the documents will be collected and made available as soon as possible.

# NSW Department of Education – School Infrastructure

The asbestos management plan will be updated to reflect the current clearance certificates and results of Newcastle East Public School. Copies of the clearance certificates can be found on the School Infrastructure website at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/about-us/workingwithus/schools-asbestos-register/schools-asbestos-register-n.html>

## 11. Was baseline testing undertaken prior to any disturbances on the Heritage Building? If so, please provide the report.

Yes. Baseline testing was conducted using air monitors prior to planned maintenance works commencing to replace the roof, in accordance with the site-specific asbestos management plan.

## 12. When will the hazard report be made available?

The Health and Safety Directorate of the Department of Education has advised the hazard report is available to view at the front office. The front office staff will be happy to assist you.

## 13. Have you informed SafeWork NSW? If so, what role will they play going forward?

Yes. The regulator was informed as per requirements when handling the removal of asbestos. The regulator has advised they are satisfied with the Department's remediation process for the affected areas. A representative from SafeWork NSW visited the site on 30 January 2020 and representatives from SafeWork NSW were in attendance at the meeting on Monday 3 February 2020.

## 17. Can you guarantee that there will be no further exposure?

The independent hygienist has advised low levels of asbestos fibres are present in the environment from the breakdown of asbestos products and from naturally occurring asbestos. Environmental weathering of asbestos-cement sheets in roofing and wall cladding, disturbance of asbestos from a variety of building materials like insulation, ceiling tiles, and floor tiles and asbestos release to air from clutches and brakes in cars and trucks results in asbestos fibres being widespread in the environment.

The typical environmental background in outdoor air is 0.0005 fibres/mL and 0.0002 fibres/mL in indoor air. The daily inhalation volume for an average adult is 22 m<sup>3</sup> or 22,000 litres<sup>2</sup>.

This means 5,500 fibres are breathed in per day by the average person (assuming 20 hours/day indoors). Despite this, the general population does not contract asbestos related disease in significant numbers.

(source: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/asbestos.pdf>)

## 18. How long does exposed or airborne asbestos stay 'active' or hazardous? Does it deplete over time?

Asbestos is a naturally fibrous mineral and as such does not break down over time. We are exposed to low levels of asbestos fibres every day in ambient air. All air monitoring samples collected at Newcastle East Public School have returned consistent with ambient air (i.e. <0.01 fibre/mL) and are therefore considered safe for occupation.

## 19. Has the area used by our OOSH ever been tested? If so, what are the results?

The independent hygienist has advised both surface sampling and continued air monitoring in the OOSH took place over the holiday period. All results are considered safe based on negative (non-detect) surface samples and air monitoring returning results consistent with acceptable levels in ambient air (i.e. <0.01 fibres/mL).

## 20. What compensation arrangements does the Department have in place to support any current or former students or current or former teachers or staff whose health is negatively affected by asbestos shown to be from the time the individual spent at the Newcastle East public school site?

The Dust Diseases Tribunal of NSW is a Court that has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and determine damages claims for those who have been affected by dust diseases including diseases related to asbestos exposure.

## 26. What additional testing was done on Tuesday 29 January? What prompted this additional testing? At what point were these decisions made in relation to the meeting held with teachers on Tuesday 29 during their development day? What did you tell teachers during that meeting?

On 28 January 2020 school staff were informed of the planned maintenance activities undertaken over the school holidays and the subsequent remediation activity that occurred in Block A. Staff requested additional sampling within other school buildings. This was conducted in the afternoon and analysed in the hygienist's laboratory.

A single sample returned positive for asbestos and therefore all books were removed as a precautionary measure under the advice of the independent hygienist. The library was remediated overnight.

On 29 January 2020, the library was retested and cleared by the hygienist. The school community was informed.

**27. What further testing of the site is being undertaken (as at 30 January 2020) as referred to in the Department’s statement provided to ABC Newcastle?**

Daily air monitoring is continuing. Internal and external air monitoring is being performed across all school buildings as well as around the construction site, with 20 static air monitors in place.

This monitoring will continue until all work is completed.

**28. When will the results of these further tests be made available?**

The school has already been notified that results of air monitoring are clear.

**29. How comprehensive is the method of testing being carried out? On a percentage basis, how do you rate the confidence there is no remaining friable asbestos?**

The independent hygienist has advised comprehensive sampling has been performed in all school buildings. Asbestos is ubiquitous in the built and natural environment and as such no location, including schools, shopping centres or the home can be completely free of asbestos fibres, however this level of testing indicates levels are extremely low.

The asbestos containing materials have been removed as far as reasonably practicable and in accordance with the Code of Practice.

**30. Regarding the opening of the school on Wednesday 29 January:**

- a. In light of the asbestos discovery, who then made the decision to open the school to students on the first day of the year?
- b. Why was it so important to open the school when you knew there was asbestos in the school and that you were conducting further testing to verify that?
- c. What is the name of the person in the Department responsible and accountable for these decisions?
- d. Was consideration given to pushing back the start day of school to Monday 3 February, so that more information could be provided to parents? If not, why not?

The school was open on Day 1 Term 1 2020 because the independent hygienist had confirmed the school was safe for students and staff to return as normal. The Principal had raised concerns which were thoroughly explored. On the advice of the hygienist it was determined that no risk existed that would necessitate the closure of the school.

In response to feedback, the department undertook additional precautionary testing of the school and carried out a full environmental clean from 31 January to 2 February 2020.

**31. Could you please supply the clearance certificates for every room that is now in use?**

All necessary clearance certificates and testing reports have been provided to SafeWork NSW and can be found on the School Infrastructure website at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/about-us/workingwithus/schools-asbestos-register/schools-asbestos-register-n.html>

**32. Which company supplied the certificates? Are they independent?**

WSP Australia. Yes.

**33. Has all the asbestos now been removed from the entire school grounds? If not, why? And when will this happen? Is there an asbestos management plan for any remaining asbestos? If so, please make this available.**

We are advised by our independent experts that all asbestos containing material included in the scope of the roof replacement has been removed and clearances issued.

Asbestos containing materials remain in-situ in other areas of the site. These are recorded on the site specific Asbestos Register and managed in accordance with the Department’s Asbestos Management Plans in accordance with SafeWork NSW Code of Practice: How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace 2019.

The department is currently reviewing the asbestos management plan for the school and will explore opportunities to remove all asbestos containing materials from the school buildings. The school community will be kept informed as this planning continues.

It is important to note the identification of asbestos does not automatically necessitate immediate removal. According to the SafeWork Australia *Code of Practice*, there are several ways to control asbestos, including leaving in-situ, encapsulation/sealing, enclosure and removal. This depends on the type of asbestos and its location. Expert advice indicates that removing the material may not always be the most appropriate way of managing it

The processes used in managing school sites affected by asbestos have been developed with stakeholders including NSW Health, Safe Work NSW and Public Works, with supporting independent occupational hygienists.

# NSW Department of Education – School Infrastructure

**34. Will astro turf be installed to the lower playground? If so, who will pay for this? Will it completely negate the risk of further exposure to asbestos? What monitoring will be done on this area?**

Yes. Planning is underway to install astro turf on the lower playground which will be funded by the Department of Education. These works will be prioritised and the school community will be kept informed. Air monitoring will be in place throughout the duration of these works.

**35. Is there an asbestos register for the school?**

Yes. Each school has an asbestos register which records all identified and suspected asbestos on the site. The register is publicly available and is consulted before any maintenance or capital works are undertaken at a school.

Every school's asbestos register is updated annually by the Department of Education's Compliance and Safety. In addition, registers are updated throughout the year if asbestos containing material (ACM) or suspected ACM is found or the site changes (e.g. renovations or construction work).

School asbestos registers are usually located in the school Administration areas as well as being publicly available at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/about-us/workingwithus/schools-asbestos-register.html>

**36. A draft Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) for the school grounds dated 2014 by consultancy Parsons Brinkerhoff is available on the Department's website (along with the Asbestos in Schools register). We understand that remediation works were implemented by the Soil Conservation Service at this time. Why are all of the asbestos management plans publicly available?**

As per above, the current asbestos management plan is publicly available at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/about-us/workingwithus/schools-asbestos-register.html>

**37. Was asbestos found on the rafters of the heritage building? Are these rafters exposed?**

There was known asbestos in the existing roof tiles and therefore the rafters were considered potentially contaminated and therefore remediated as a precaution. The hygienist has advised that the asbestos that has been found is dust from bonded asbestos. It is not friable, loose fill asbestos.

**38. If/when the asbestos was found on the rafters was it also found to test positive in other parts of those rooms i.e. on the floor, on the surfaces, in the air where the children and teachers sit?**

The independent hygienist has advised all surface sampling and air monitoring performed within Block A (occupant height i.e. below 2 metres) returned negative (non-detect) for asbestos or returned results consistent with acceptable levels in ambient air (i.e. <0.01 fibres/mL).

**39. Regarding the removal of resources and equipment from the school:**

- a. What has been destroyed and what is being cleaned (please supply us with an inventory)?
- b. How was it decided which items were to be destroyed and which were to be cleaned? Who made this decision?
- c. Were these items removed because they tested positive for asbestos or was this a precautionary measure?
- d. The school contained many heritage items of state and regional significance, including honour boards for the war and academic achievements, as well as an 1816 roll, photographs and much more. Have these items been removed and preserved for professional decontamination? Have any of these items been destroyed? If we cannot house them in the school, can we have a say as to where they will be housed?
- e. Will DET pay for all of these items, including any staff personal belongings, to be replaced?
- f. What is the timeframe for this?

The Department deeply regrets the loss of important historical material.

On the advice of the independent hygienist, the licenced asbestos removalist was not able to save the documents and photographs collected for the 2016 bicentenary that were in a storeroom in the heritage building due to the possibility of contamination.

The decision to dispose of the documentation was made to ensure the health and safety of students and staff at the school.

The Department will clean or replace all school resources as required.

**40. Can asbestos bond to clothes, if so, should we dispose of their uniforms? Will DET pay for them to be replaced?**

The risk of clothing contamination from trace levels of asbestos on contents is negligible. As asbestos is ubiquitous in the ambient environment and therefore potentially present on our clothing, the independent hygienist has advised laundering these items will reduce the potential risk of exposure.

**41. Regarding the books have been identified as contaminated:**

- a. Should we be concerned about the books that are still in children's homes and in other classrooms?
- b. Will there be a collection of these books?

- c. If not, what should be done with them?
- d. What should be done with school library bags that have carried potentially contaminated books?
- e. We are particularly concerned that library books were found to be contaminated despite the fact that the library has not been housed in the heritage building for around 8 years. That is at least 8 years that contaminated books have been circulating around the school community. Do we have any understanding of the turnover of books within the library i.e. are books replaced on a cyclical basis, or just when they are worn?
- f. Where do the books go when the school no longer requires them?
- g. What quantity of asbestos material was found on the library books? And what was the likely source of that material?
- h. What sampling density was used to ensure the remaining areas are not impacted by friable asbestos?
- i. Was the area carpeted?
- j. Has the carpet been removed as potentially asbestos impacted?
- k. Was there air monitoring while the removal was in process?
- l. Can we estimate what the level of asbestos would be at the initial time of contamination of the books? Is this at hazardous levels?
- m. Is it a fair assumption that at point in time, all of the library books would have been contaminated?

The independent hygienist has confirmed sampling of the school books was comprehensive. A single sample returned positive for asbestos and therefore all books were removed as a precautionary measure.

**42. The library was housed in a demountable building for several years, as an interim arrangement. As this room is to be returned to a classroom, has this room been decontaminated, particularly carpet and soft furnishings?**

The demountable has been cleaned and tested, including carpet and soft furnishings, as part of the environmental cleaning of the whole school.

**43. Regarding the remedial works:**

- a. The material that was found (as referred to in discussions with DET School Infrastructure) was non-bonded asbestos-containing material, which means it is friable in nature, the highest risk asbestos material. What hygienist was engaged to conduct the works? Please supply their license number.
- b. Could you please supply the hygienist reports produced for the remediation for our review?
- c. What the suspected source of the friable material?
- d. What is the extent of testing undertaken?
- e. How was the area in the library specifically delineated? What is the justification that just a small portion of books have been contaminated?
- f. How many library books were found to be contaminated?

All hygienist reports have been provided to the school and are provided to Safe Work NSW.

Testing has been comprehensive.

The independent hygienist is WSP Australia, Joshua Trahair (NSW LAA001230).

The independent hygienist believes the source of the material is the former asbestos roof products.

A single sample returned positive for asbestos and therefore all books were removed as a precautionary measure.

The carpet is not considered contaminated and has been HEPA vacuumed as a precaution. Sampling (micro-vac) of the carpet has returned negative for asbestos.

All air monitoring results have returned consistent with ambient air (i.e. <0.01 fibres/mL).

**44. During the construction works for the new building, there were significant amounts of raised dust, and exposed earth on spoilt heaps, worn paths etc. Has this elevated the risk of mobilising the asbestos fibres?**

A site-specific asbestos management plan was implemented prior to excavation and construction for the new building. An independent occupational hygienist was engaged to perform airborne fibre monitoring and clearance certification during excavation of the known asbestos area. Excavation was performed by a licenced asbestos removal contractor under controlled conditions.

45. The scaffolding for the roof works, was put in place while children were still at school. This activity could have disturbed fibres that would have otherwise been left in place. Why did this work commence before the end of term?

Scaffolding was erected in line with SafeWork NSW procedures. The scaffolding needed to be constructed to ensure roof tiles could be removed during the school holidays while no students or staff were on site.

Air monitoring was in place and all results were within safe levels.

46. Regarding future monitoring:

- a. What is the proposed ongoing monitoring program?
- b. Will it include continuous air monitoring as well as swabs?
- c. Where will the monitoring equipment be located?
- d. Frequency?
- e. Duration?
- f. What plans will be in place should a hazard be detected?
- g. How will you communicate the results to the school community?

The Department is required to follow all asbestos management plans. The Department will continue to take the advice of the independent hygienist and SafeWork NSW in the planning and remediation of asbestos.

SINSW will notify the school community of any asbestos removal or remediation works before work begins, and inform the community when the work is complete and clearance certificates have been issued.

Further (different) questions received from school, parents and community (SINSW inbox, phone, community meeting and QR code)

**Are the asbestos contractors qualified to remove friable asbestos?**

Yes, the asbestos contractors are licensed by SafeWork NSW to remove friable asbestos. The contractors are:

- Artel – (Principal Contractor)
  - Heritage Roof Restorations – (Artel Subcontractor)
    - GBar Australia (Specialist Asbestos Removal – Contractor)
    - GBar completed asbestos roof tile removal and decontamination of two classrooms in Block A

- P&M Ferry
  - Hunter Tech Services (Subcontractor to P&M Ferry – Specialist Asbestos Removal contractor)
  - Hunter Tech Services decontaminated remaining areas of Block A except for the two rooms completed by Gbar.

**Since the media coverage last week, has there been steps taken to review the safety of the scaffolding at the school.**

The Code of Practice requires a competent scaffolder to inspect the scaffold once every 30 days and sign off that it is structurally adequate. The scaffolding has been inspected three times to date and is covered by a current certification of structural adequacy. The next inspection is due on 15 February. However, the contractor has instructed the scaffolder to reinspect the scaffold on 5 February.

**Can you now ensure the scaffolding is safe? Please provide report or professional information to confirm this is the case.**

A qualified engineer has provided a certificate of compliance.

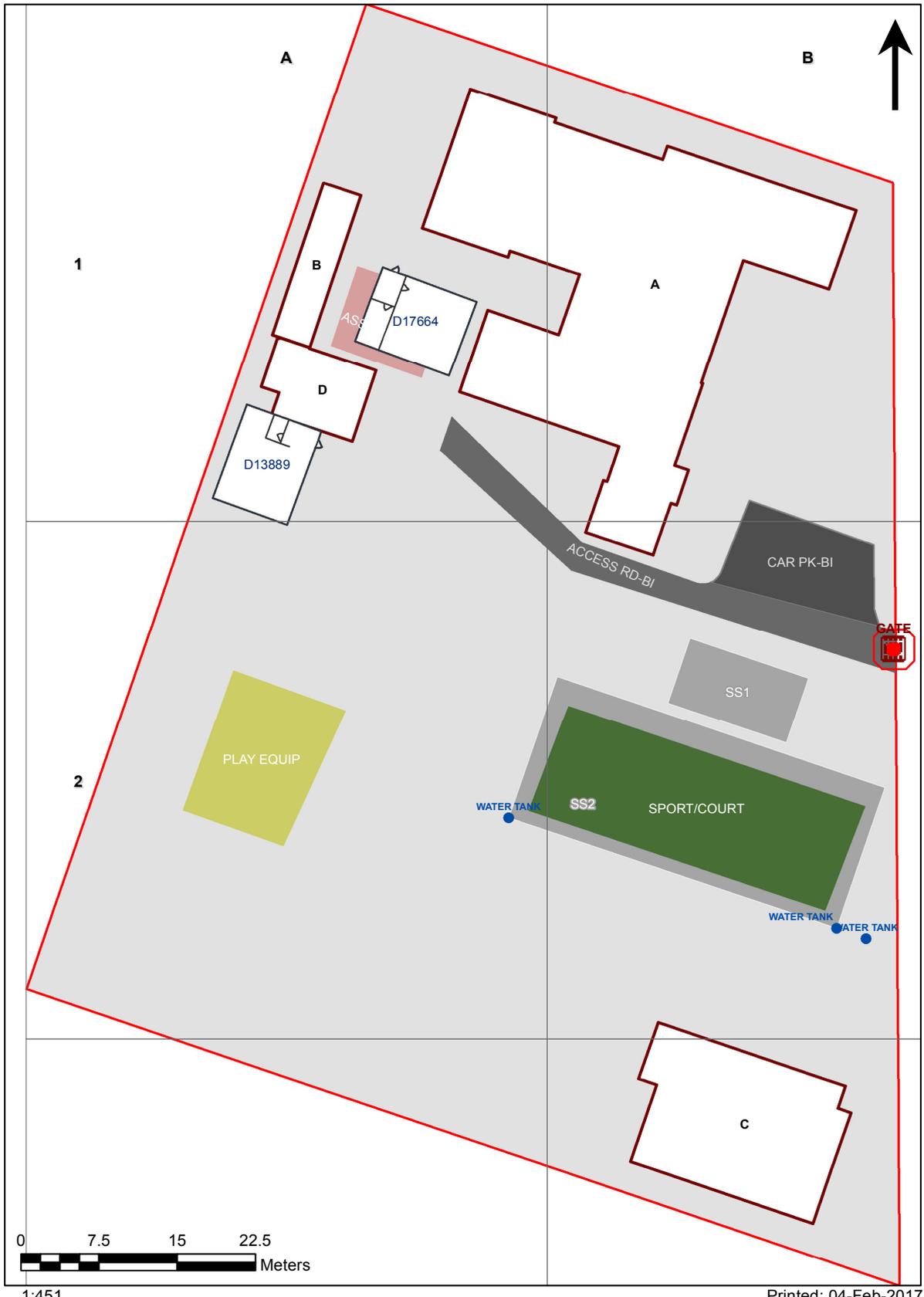
**In the case of a fire and with the building works onsite, has there been a 2020 fire plan put in place? Is there a copy of this plan and have the children been run through a fire drill? Have staff also been briefed?**

The school's Emergency Management Plan is reviewed by WHS and the school principal each time there is a change on the school site. Staff are also briefed about changes. The Emergency Management Plan is up to date with the exception of Block E evacuation maps, which are in the process of being updated. Posters showing evacuation information are put up in each classroom, toilets, and the staffroom.

The school runs its evacuation/fire drill/lockdown drills in week 7 of each term.

Appendix A – Layout of Newcastle East Public School

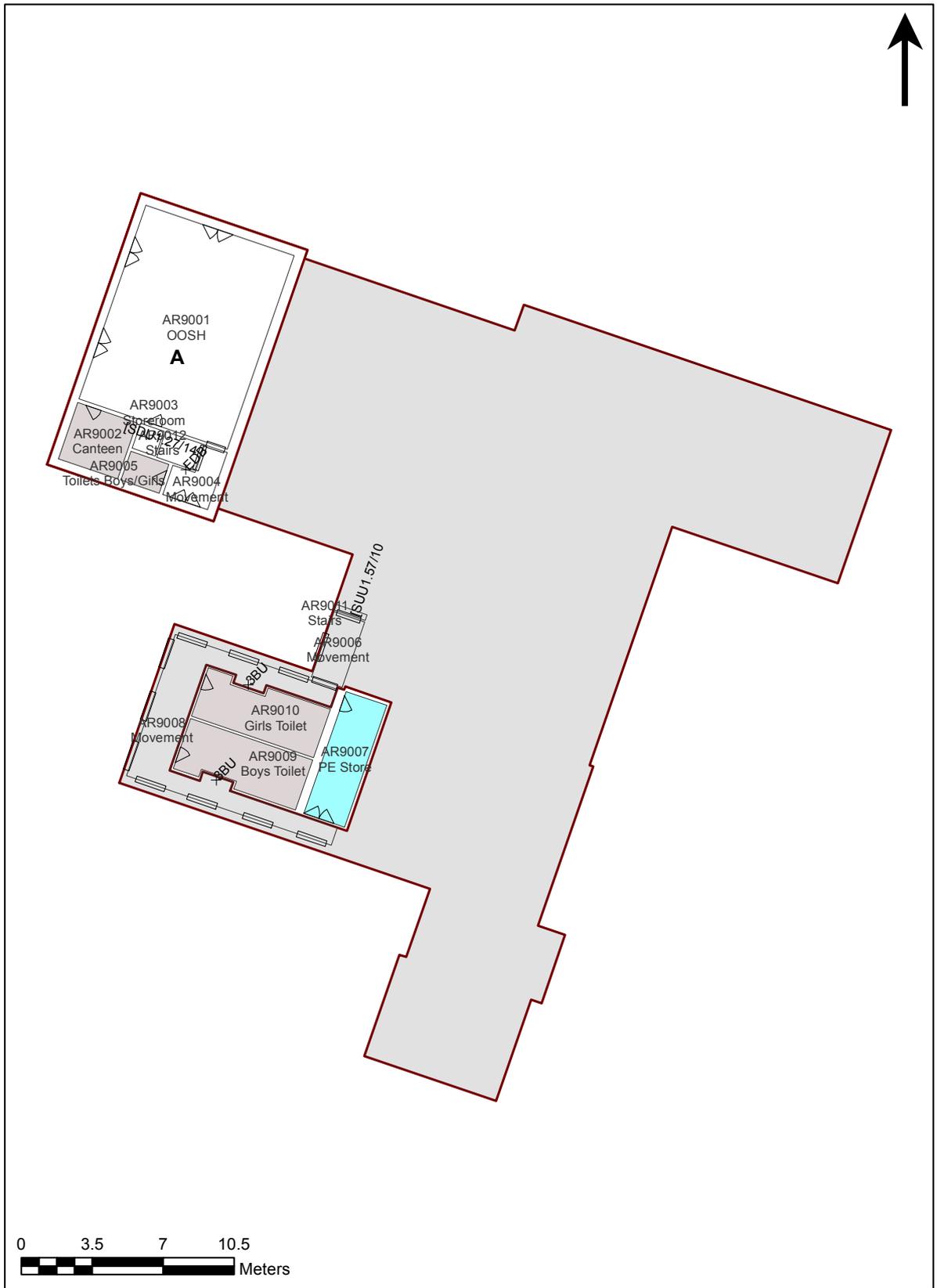
2736 - Newcastle East Public School  
Site Plan (11296)



1:451

Printed: 04-Feb-2017

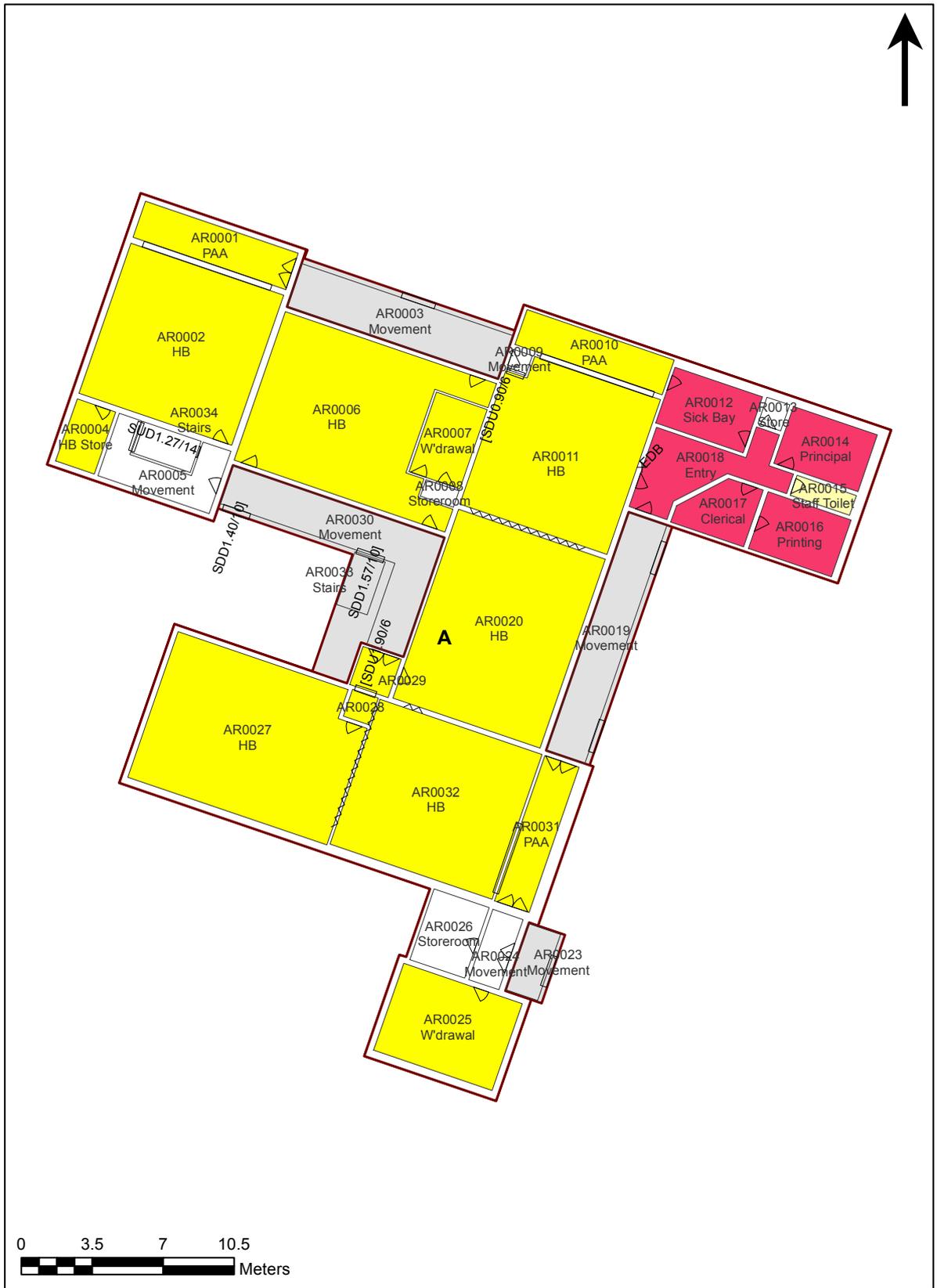
2736 - Newcastle East Public School  
General Learning/Administration (B00A) - Basement 1 (Room Function)



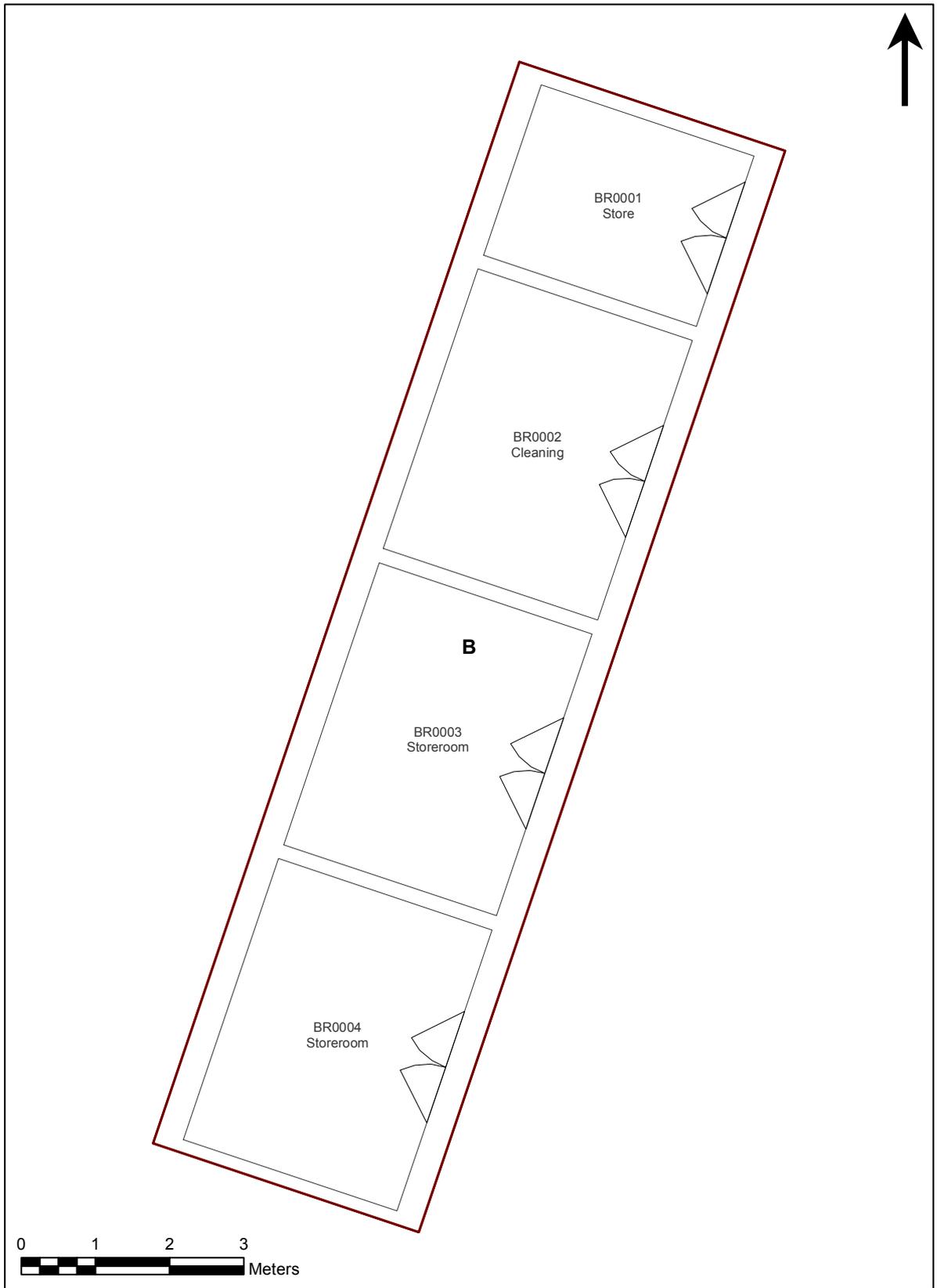
1:235

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2736 - Newcastle East Public School  
General Learning/Administration (B00A) - Ground Floor (Room Function)



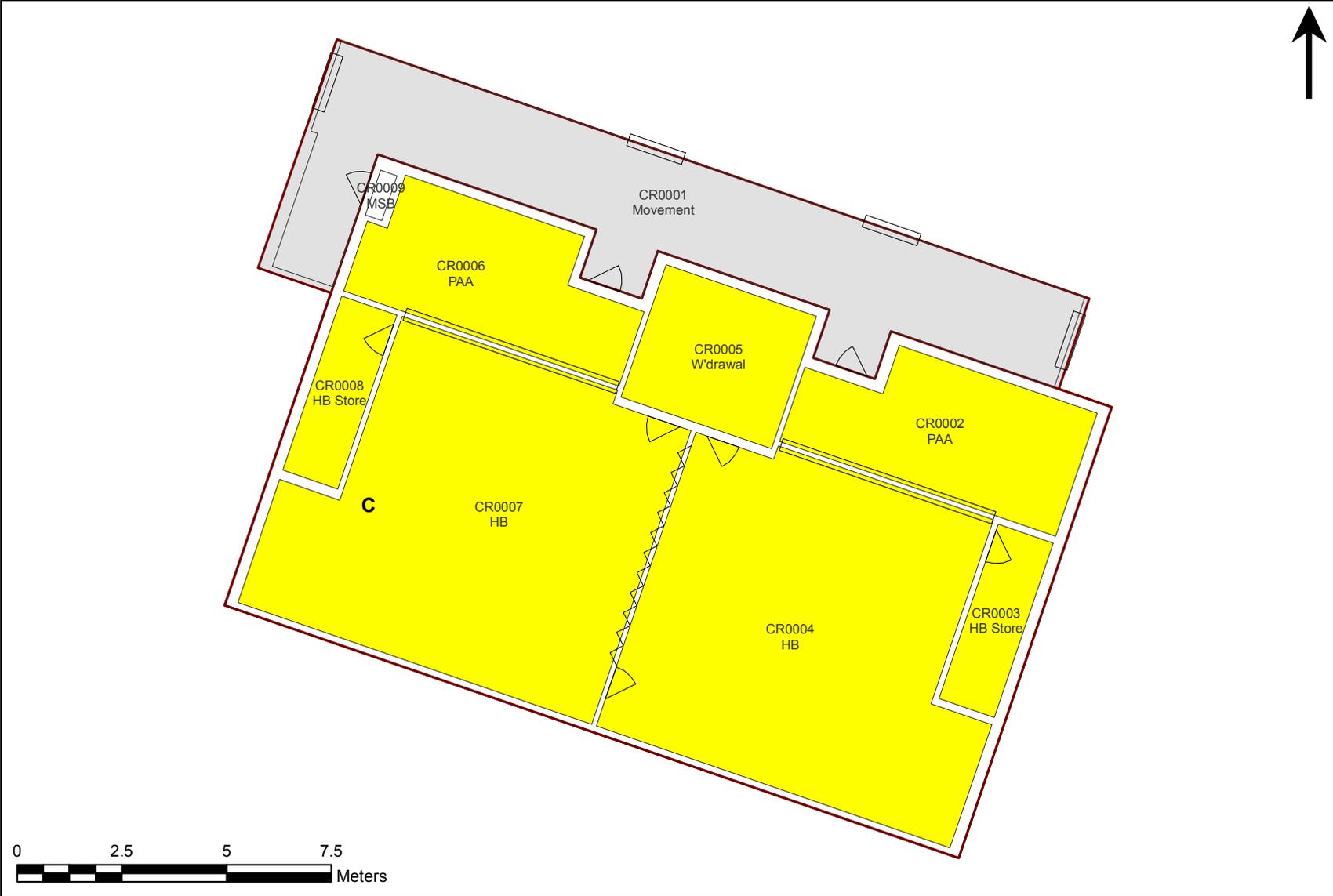
2736 - Newcastle East Public School  
Communal Facilities/Building Services (B00B) - Ground Floor (Room Function)



1:64

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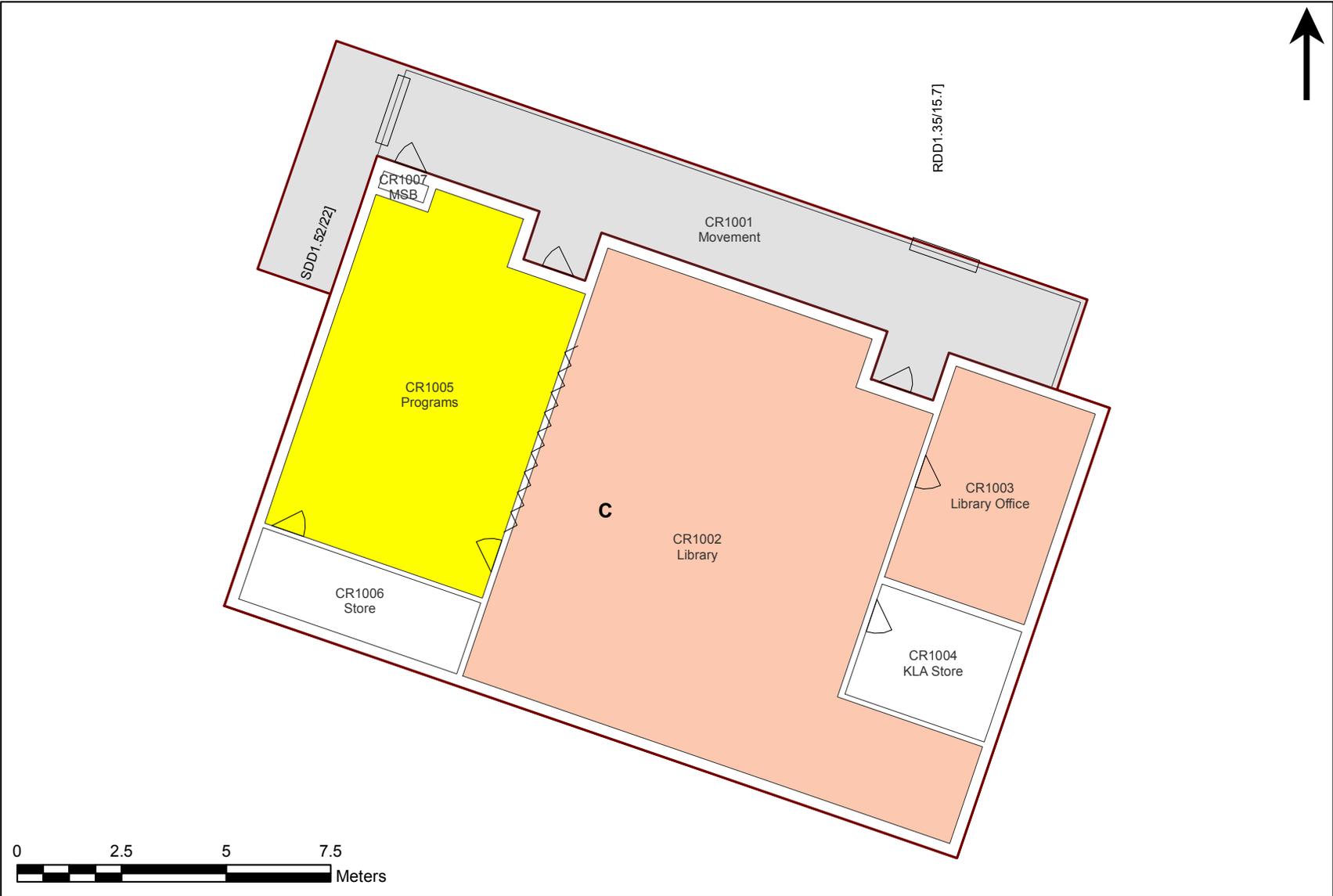
2736 - Newcastle East Public School  
General Learning/Library (B00C) - Ground Floor (Room Function)



1:113

Printed: 04-Feb-2017

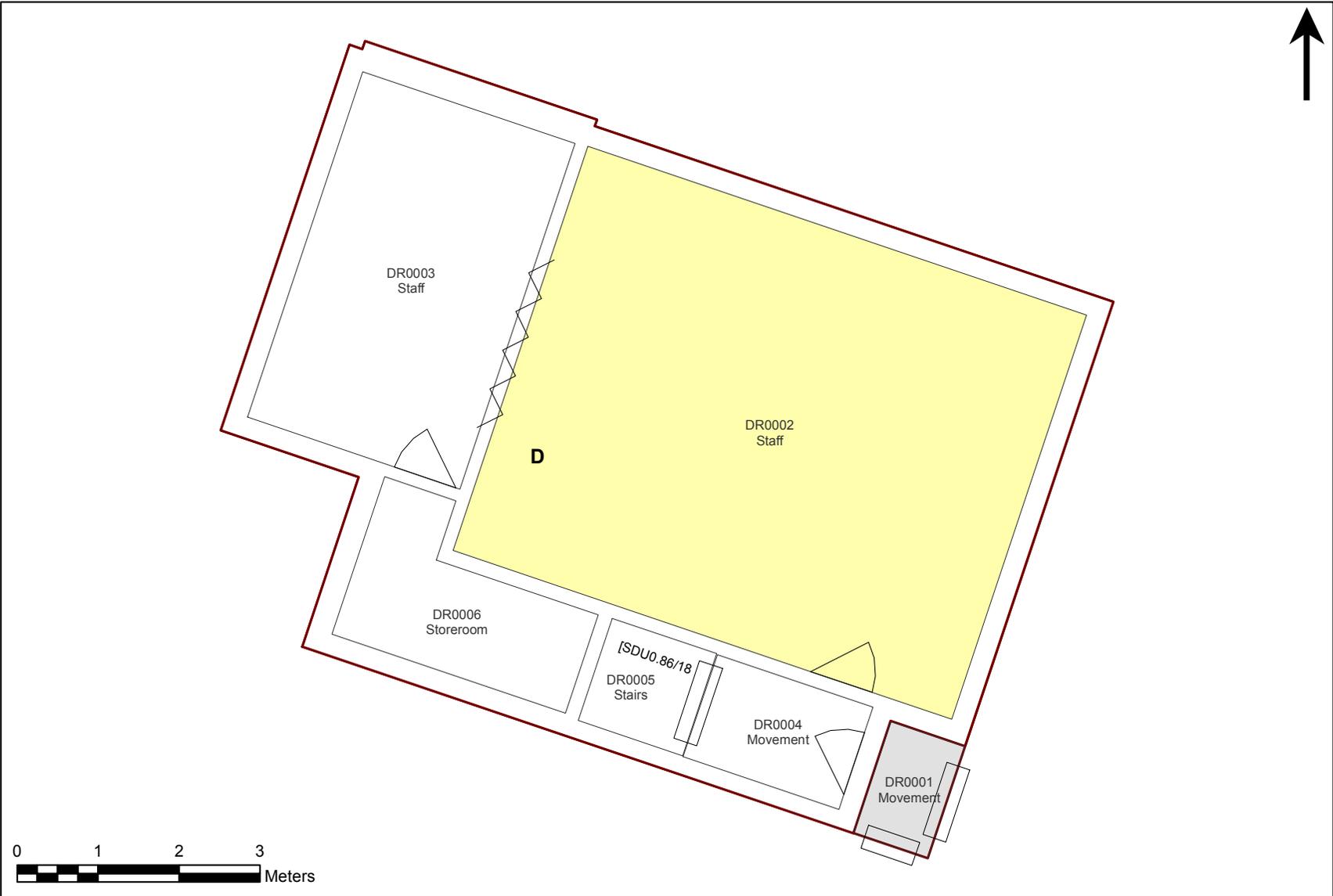
2736 - Newcastle East Public School  
General Learning/Library (B00C) - 1st Floor (Room Function)



1:113

Printed: 04-Feb-2017

2736 - Newcastle East Public School  
Staff Facilities (B00D) - Ground Floor (Room Function)



1:58

Printed: 04-Feb-2017

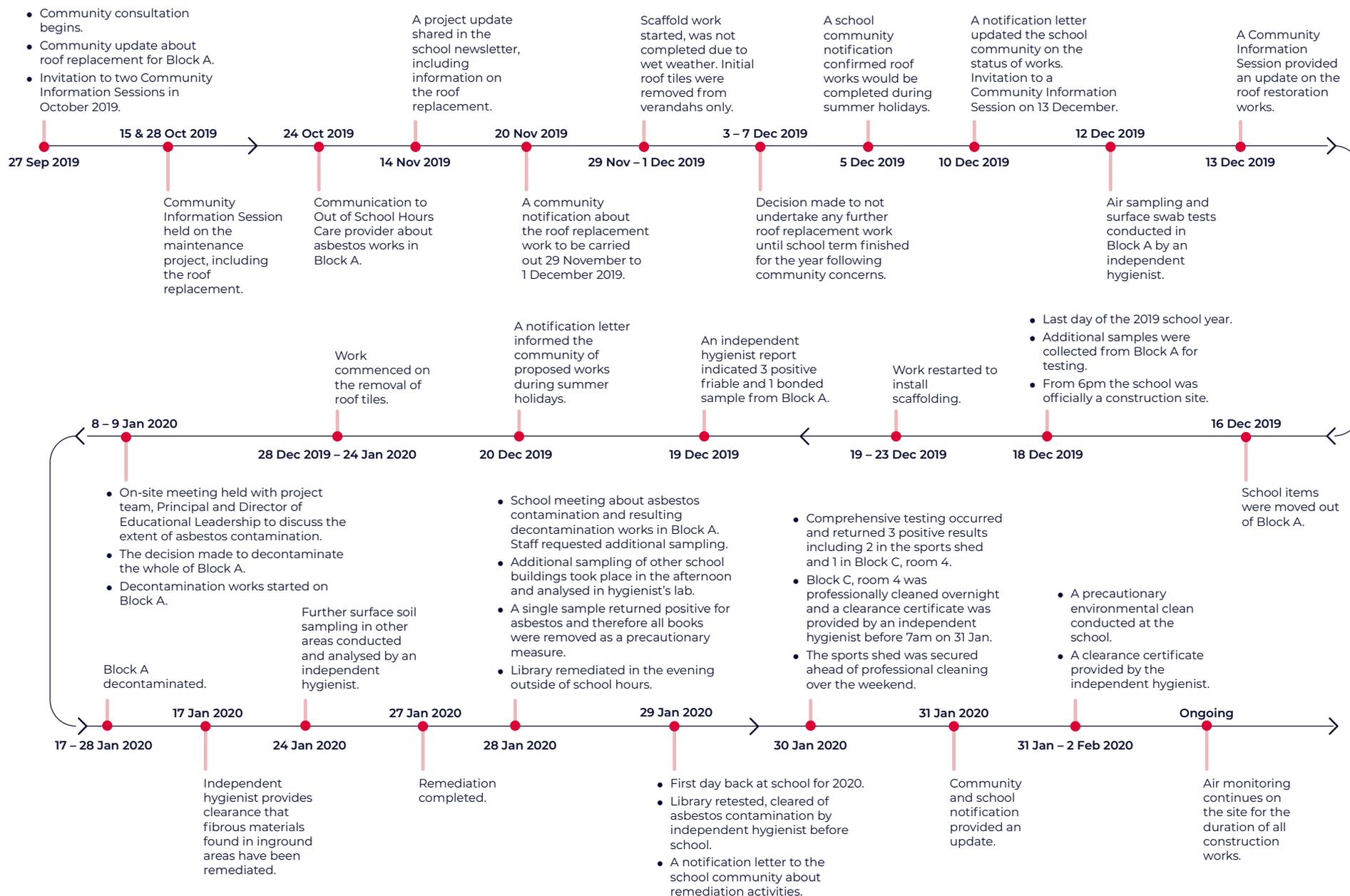
2736 - Newcastle East Public School  
Staff Facilities (B00D) - 1st Floor (Room Function)



1:58

Printed: 04-Feb-2017

## Appendix B – Timeline of events



## Appendix C – Form to record your details on the National Asbestos Exposure Register



Australian Government  
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

# National Asbestos Exposure Register

Please register your potential asbestos exposure with the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency's database.

To be registered on the database, please complete all fields below.

Please complete the below form to submit your response. Please note you are required to complete all fields marked with an asterisk (\*) in order to successfully submit the form.

### Personal Details

Title:  Mr  Mrs  Ms  Miss  Master  Dr  Prof  Rev  Other

Gender:\*  male  female  not specified

DOB: (dd/mm/yyyy)\*

First name:\*

Surname:\*

Street address:\*

Suburb:\*

State:\*

Postcode:\*

Email address: *(Please note, an email address is required if you wish to receive confirmation of your registration)*

Phone number: \* *(include area code, no spaces)*

### Exposure to Asbestos

Year of first exposure (in the format YYYY)\*

*If you don't remember the exact year, please put the year to the best of your recollection.*

Duration/Frequency of exposure:\*  once only  0-6 months  >6 months to 2 years  >2 years to 5 years  > 5 years

How were you exposed? *Select which best suits your situation or where the greatest exposure/potential exposure occurred.*

residential  work  school/educational institution  environmental/domestic

other, please specify:

### Residential *(Only complete this section if you selected it in the Exposure to Asbestos section)*

Residential status when exposed:  owner or tenant  visitor to other person's residence

If the exposure/potential exposure relates to loose-fill asbestos (Mr Fluffy) in residential housing which best describes your situation?\*

owner having done DIY on house

owner having had work done on house (eg building alterations)

owner – no work done on house

tenant

visitor to residence of family/friends

tradesperson/worker

not exposed to loose fill asbestos

---

**Work** *(Only complete this section if you selected it in the Exposure to Asbestos section)*

Was the exposure/potential exposure directly related to your work?  yes  no

If yes, what was the nature of your job when exposed?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> electrician                 | <input type="radio"/> plumber  |
| <input type="radio"/> fitter and machinist        | <input type="radio"/> boilermaker  |
| <input type="radio"/> building/construction       | <input type="radio"/> asbestos removal/disposal                          |
| <input type="radio"/> mining/resources occupation | <input type="radio"/> other, please provide detail: <input type="text"/> |

If no, please provide detail of type of work at time of exposure. For example if you were an office worker incidentally exposed at your workplace.

If exposed at work, name of your employer:

If exposed at work, has the relevant workplace regulator been informed?  yes  no  not sure

If you were exposed in the past 12 months it is recommended you report the exposure to your workplace regulator. You can find the workplace regulator for your state or territory at <http://asbestossafety.gov.au/organisation-links#regulators>. The following are workplace regulators: Comcare; WorkSafe ACT, WorkCover NSW, SafeWork SA, WorkSafe TAS, NT WorkSafe; WorkSafe WA; WorkSafe QLD (WorkCover Qld); WorkSafe VIC (Victorian WorkCover Authority).

---

**School/educational institution** *(Only complete this section if you selected it in the Exposure to Asbestos section)*

Nature of your attendance when exposed:  teacher  pupil/student  parent or other visitor

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> What type of school?       | <input type="radio"/> pre-school/childcare         |
| <input type="radio"/> primary public             | <input type="radio"/> primary independent          |
| <input type="radio"/> primary Catholic education | <input type="radio"/> secondary public             |
| <input type="radio"/> secondary independent      | <input type="radio"/> secondary Catholic education |
| <input type="radio"/> tertiary                   |  |

Please provide name of school/institution:

---

**Environmental/domestic** *(Only complete this section if you selected it in the Exposure to Asbestos section)*

Select the option which best suits your situation:\*

- live or work close to building site
- live or work close to contaminated area
- regularly walk past building site or contaminated area
- lived or worked in vicinity of asbestos product manufacturing facility
- lived or worked in vicinity of asbestos mine
- possible exposure to release of fibres due to incident such as fire, accident or to natural disaster
- spouse, child or other family member living with asbestos worker
- other, please specify:

---

**Other** *(Only complete this section if you selected it in the Exposure to Asbestos section)*

Other, please specify:

## In relation to the exposure questions you answered from the selections above, please describe how you were exposed.

Please give details of exposure, including any multiple exposures in different situations. For example, if you have been exposed at both work and at home.\*

In which state/territory did the exposure occur?

ACT    NSW    NT    QLD    SA    TAS    VIC    WA

Are you/have you been a smoker?\*    yes    no

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?\*    yes    no

Have you been diagnosed with an asbestos related disease?\*    yes    no

If yes to diagnosis please answer the below:

Which disease?    Pleural Plaques    Asbestosis    Lung Cancer    Mesothelioma

Year of diagnosis (in the format YYYY)

How did you first find out about this register?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> ASEA website         | <input type="radio"/> friends/family                              |
| <input type="radio"/> internet search      | <input type="radio"/> local council                               |
| <input type="radio"/> leaflet/pamphlet     | <input type="radio"/> newspaper/television report                 |
| <input type="radio"/> employer             | <input type="radio"/> state/territory regulator                   |
| <input type="radio"/> union                | <input type="radio"/> training course                             |
| <input type="radio"/> medical practitioner | <input type="radio"/> other, please specify: <input type="text"/> |

## Declaration and Privacy Statement

To submit this form please complete the following checkboxes:

- By submitting this application form I declare that all the information contained within is true and correct.\*
- I understand the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency is collecting my personal information for the purposes of registering information provided by me of my potential exposure to asbestos. I understand this information may also be used in de-identified form for research purposes.\*
- I understand the information will be stored in a secure Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency database.\*
- I understand the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency may give some or all of this information to the Department of Health or Safe Work Australia.\*
- I understand that if a different Commonwealth agency deals with asbestos safety in the future, the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency may give information from this register to the new agency.\*
- I confirm I am at least 18 years of age or have obtained parental or guardian permission to provide this information.\*
- I wish to receive a copy of my submission via email.

To submit this form, click the button below to save this form. Attach the saved form to an email and send it to [enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au), print and fax to (02) 6204 2029 or mail to GPO Box 9880, Sydney NSW 2001.

[CLICK HERE TO SAVE REGISTRATION](#)