

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**2003-2004 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING
6 NOVEMBER 2003**

COMCARE

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Question Number: W175-04

Question:

Senator Carr asked in *writing*:

Has it taken Comcare three years and three investigations to finally conduct standard asbestos tests and find the problem?

Answer:

No. Inquiries made by Comcare in 2001 following the initial complaint established that the NGA had engaged an asbestos removalist to clean the affected area on 13 July 2003 which was followed by testing, also commissioned by the NGA. The test report indicated that no asbestos fibres were present. At the time Comcare made its inquiries, NGA employees were either not willing to provide detailed information or in some cases, did not want to provide information to Comcare. Based on the information available to Comcare at the time these inquiries were made, Comcare was satisfied the NGA had dealt appropriately with the matter and had met its duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* (the Act) and a formal investigation was not warranted. Three years after the incident occurred, some NGA staff decided to provide Comcare with information which led Comcare to commence a formal investigation under the Act into this matter on 3 July 2003. As part of this investigation, Comcare commissioned testing which revealed the presence of two asbestos fibres and synthetic mineral fibres. This has led to a further regime of cleaning and testing. The source of the fibres has not yet been determined. The investigation into this matter is ongoing. A copy of the report of investigation will be made available to the Committee when it is completed. Please also refer to W172-04, W173-04 and W174-04.