



NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION SHEET INDUSTRIAL FILLING USED IN CARRINGTON

BACKGROUND

Council's attention has been drawn to the presence of a black glassy slag and ballast used as filling material in Carrington over 100 years ago. The exact number of residential properties now containing this industrial waste material is not known.

When tested this slag was found to contain a number of heavy metals including a form of lead. The lead when present in large pieces of glassy slag is unlikely to represent a risk to human health. However, if the slag is ground up the smaller particle size could present a greater health risk particularly to children.

INFORMATION THAT IS KNOWN TO COUNCIL

Searches of historic subdivision maps, maritime maps, newspaper clippings, archival records and visual surveys of public streets, footpaths and public places in Carrington has revealed the following information:

- Maps from 1878 and 1885 showing extensive low-lying areas of Bullock Island prior to development of the township of Carrington;
- A 1902 map of Carrington showing the township following the filling of low-lying land.
- Newspaper clippings from 1889, 1937 and 1962 which refer to the use of ballast to reclaim the land.
- A smelter operating from 1868 to 1892 on nearby Port Waratah.
- A visual survey of the bare soil surfaces of roads, laneways, median strips and parks in Carrington which revealed some black glassy slag both within and outside the likely fill areas shown on the old maps. The extent of the landfilling could not be ascertained with accuracy from the old maps.
- Carrington like other older suburbs of Newcastle has lead present in surface soil in residential properties.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions and answers are provided to assist the public in understanding the issues arising from the presence of the industrial waste on residential land in Carrington.

Question: What does the industrial slag look like?

Answer: The slag is generally a shiny black glassy colour. It has sharp edges and is heavier than other rocks the same size. Although most pieces so far sighted are small, one piece as large as half a tennis ball was found in a Carrington footpath.

Question: Why raise this issue?

Answer: It is important that people know there is a possibility that their parcel of land contains an industrial slag waste containing heavy metals or other material such as ballast.

Council also has a responsibility to provide factual information to allow people to make informed decisions.

Question: What is the notification process?

Answer: Council will be disclosing the possible presence of the industrial slag and other fill materials on Section 149 Certificates relating to land at Carrington.

Question: What is a Section 149 Certificate?

Answer: Section 149 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 allows a person to apply to Council for a certificate which specifies matters affecting a particular parcel of land that the Council is aware of. These certificates are normally only obtained when land is purchased or re-financed.

Question: What information does Council provide?

Answer: Council provides the following information to applicants on the Section 149 Certificate:

"Land history information indicates that the subject land may be within an area which was once low lying and may have been filled.

Limited investigation indicates that the filling material may contain ballast and industrial slag which contains some heavy metals including lead.

The Council does not hold information which allows it to say whether or not the subject land contains such filling material and purchasers should make their own enquiries in that respect.

If the land does contain such filling material this should be taken into account in the use and the development of the property.

Soil sampling and remediation may be required for the further development of the land.

Further information can be obtained from the Environmental Protection Unit of Council's Environmental Management Division."

Question: Can the notification be removed or modified?

Answer: If Council is made aware that the land does not contain metal-bearing slag or other industrial fill containing heavy metals it may remove the notification or otherwise modify its wording to reflect the current position.

The property owner would need to seek at their own expense a report from an expert environmental consultant outlining the investigation that has been carried out and certifying that the land does not contain metal-bearing slag or filling.

Question: What should I do if I find pieces of slag?

Answer: Individual pieces of black glassy slag may be placed in your garbage bin for disposal provided the total weight does not exceed 500 grams. No attempt should be made to grind the slag or use it for any purpose where finer particles may be produced. Fine particles that contain lead or other metals are capable of being swallowed or inhaled.

Question: What should I do with large quantities of slag excavated during construction work?

Answer: Any slag excavated during construction work eg house footings, swimming pool excavation or drainage work must be taken to Summerhill Waste Management Centre for burial or for disposal by any other method approved by Council or the EPA.

As indicated below the slag will not leach when buried at a landfill.

Question: Should I excavate and remove the soil from my yard?

Answer: This is not necessary. It is quite safe for the slag to remain buried in the ground.

Question: What heavy metals exist in the slag?

Answer: An analysis revealed a range of heavy metals including the following:

Lead (5.4%), Zinc (1.2%), Iron (10.4%), Copper (0.14%), Alumina (7.7%) and Manganese (7.5%).

The high percentage of silica (32.7%) is responsible for both the glassy nature of the slag and it binds the heavy metals which can only be partially leached using a strong acid or alkali.

Question: Is the slag responsible for the lead that may exist in surface soil in Carrington?

Answer: No tests have been carried out by Council in Carrington or in any other suburb of Newcastle to determine the source of any lead that may be present in surface soil. Lead in surface soil can arise from leaded house paints, emissions from motor vehicles using leaded petrol or localised lead sources. High levels of lead can occur particularly in the soil at older suburban areas.

Question: Do any other suburbs in Newcastle contain this metal-bearing slag?

Answer: Council has no knowledge of the slag being present in any other suburb. As previously stated a significant smelter which produced a metal-bearing waste slag operated at Port Waratah from 1868 to 1892.

If metal-bearing slag is found in any other suburb the Council will consider applying similar conditions to those introduced at Carrington.

Question: What precautions should be taken by the residents of Newcastle to prevent exposure to lead?

Answer: Fact sheets issued by the Environment Protection Authority and NSW Health Department outline a range of precautions for both inside and outside the house. One important measure is to plant grass or ground cover on exposed areas of soil in your yard.

Question: Where can I obtain more information on lead?

Answer: Seek advice from your doctor if you have any health concerns. Further information on lead may be obtained from:

Hunter Population Health

Booth Building, Wallsend Health Services
Longworth Avenue
Wallsend NSW 2287
Phone (02) 4924 6477
Fax (02) 4924 6209

Newcastle City Council

282 King Street
Newcastle NSW 2300
Phone: (02) 4974 2000
Fax: (02) 4974 2222
8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday

Department of Environment & Conservation: Newcastle Office

117 Bull Street
Newcastle West
NSW 2300
Phone: 02 4908 6800
Fax: 02 4908 6810

THIS INFORMATION SHEET HAS BEEN PREPARED BY
NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL IN CONSULTATION WITH THE
ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT

MAP OF CARRINGTON INDICATING THE EXTENT OF THE PROPOSED SECTION 149 NOTIFICATIONS

