

Fluffy buyback extended to neighbouring properties that share a wall

October 27, 2015 [Kirsten Lawson](#)

Chief Minister Andrew Barr extended the Fluffy buyback and demolition scheme on Tuesday to include some properties that share a wall or roof with a contaminated house, in a move that opens a new front in the mass demolition program.

Mr Barr made the surprise extension last night, introducing legislation, which was passed by the Assembly, paving the way for the Asbestos Taskforce to make buyback offer to neighbours of perhaps 22 Fluffy properties.

Taskforce head Andrew Kefford said owners would be offered the same deal as the 1022 owners of Fluffy contaminated homes were offered, except their properties would be valued at a date to be set in the coming weeks, not at October 2014.

The taskforce pays for two valuations of homes and offers the average value to the owner. The value for Fluffy owners was set at October last year when the scheme was announced. The value for neighbours will be set at the date the new policy is announced this year, probably in November.

The buyback offers would be made on a case by case basis, and would depend on whether there was any contamination in the neighbouring property or whether its demolition was necessary to safely and completely demolish the Fluffy home, he said. The question was whether a Fluffy home could be demolished without leaving behind an asbestos risk.

"If the affected [Fluffy] property can be demolished without affecting the ones next door, that will be the approach. If it can't, either because there's a degree of structural dependence on each other or there is a degree of contamination, then they're the key issues that will determine whether or not it becomes an impacted property which is eligible [for the buyback]," he said.

Structural engineers would assess each house - which in some cases might appear to share a wall or roof space but be structurally separate.

"Now that the legislation has passed, the government's in a position to formally publish the policy, which is broadly in keeping with the rest of the buyback program except for the valuation date which will be a 2015 date and not a 2014 date," Mr Kefford said last night.

As with the Fluffy buyback, participation by neighbours would be voluntary. Asked what the government would do if a neighbour refused to sell and the Fluffy house could not be safely and completely demolished without it, Mr Kefford acknowledged the complication, but said, "That's a bridge that we'll cross when we get to it."

While some of the adjoining properties were duplexes, "a handful" were bigger complexes of townhouses. The taskforce would start with the immediate neighbours, but it might well turn out that other homes in a block also needed to be bought and demolished.

Some of the adjoining properties had already been tested for asbestos contamination. While no asbestos fibres had been found in living spaces, some of the roof spaces were contaminated, although to a lesser extent than Fluffy properties.

A spokeswoman said the addresses would not be made public yet, "as exploratory work is continuing and owners are yet to be formally advised".