

Macarthur House Demolition – Frequently Asked Questions

What is on this site?

Macarthur House, located on the corner of Northbourne Avenue and Macarthur Avenue, is an ACT Government owned office building. Macarthur House is comprised of an eight-storey office building and a three-storey annex building.

What is happening to the site?

As part of the Asset Recycling Initiative, the ACT Government is redeveloping some of its ageing office building stock.

Redevelopment of Macarthur House is a key element of the Government's urban renewal plan to help continue the work that is being undertaken to transform and revitalise the City Centre.

What is the timeframe for demolition?

The preparatory works for the demolition of the buildings have commenced and structural demolition is scheduled for completion in early 2019, noting that dates may change due to unforeseen circumstances, including wet weather.

What will be developed on this site?

The site is listed on the ACT Government Indicative Land Release Program for sale in 2018/19. To develop the site the purchaser will need to submit a Development Application (DA) for approval by the ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD). The public will be notified when the DA has been lodged and will have an opportunity to comment.

In accordance with the planning regulations applicable to the site, it is expected that the development will consist of a mix of commercial and residential uses.

Does Macarthur House contain asbestos?

Bonded and friable asbestos has been identified within the buildings. This is not loose-fill 'Mr Fluffy' asbestos.

Bonded asbestos products such as sheeting used in wet areas or under eaves is common in many Canberra buildings constructed in the 1950s to 1980s. Friable asbestos was used in a variety of applications such as insulation material within the building.

A specialist accredited contractor will remove all hazardous materials found, including asbestos. All asbestos will be removed from the buildings in accordance with the WHS Standards prior to structural demolition occurring. Appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the safety of the public at all times.

For more information about asbestos and its safe removal visit www.asbestos.act.gov.au.

How will demolition be conducted?

The building will be demolished by removing walls and internal structures floor by floor in a staged process. The contractor will complete demolition using a combination of small machines and equipment positioned at ground level.

This method complies with the WHS and environmental standards and will be subject to ongoing review by a suitably qualified structural engineer and environmental consultants.

Implosion will not be used as a demolition method.

How is disposal of asbestos managed?

There are strict guidelines about how contaminated material should be packaged, transported and where it can be disposed. Information about disposal of asbestos material can be found at www.asbestos.act.gov.au.

What about safety?

All work will be carried out by experienced contractors. Worksafe ACT, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and engineering consultants will monitor the contractor's performance to make sure there are no health risks to workers, neighbouring properties or the public.

Safety measures include:

- Restricted access
- Dust suppression including water sprayed over the site
- Air monitoring
- Noise monitoring
- Asbestos assessors will be on site at all times to supervise the removal of asbestos.

You may see workers on site wearing protective clothing, including a suit and mask. This is part of their normal procedures as required by the WHS Act. There is no need to be concerned about your safety.

Will the demolition be noisy and dusty?

While every effort will be made to minimise disruption to local residents, the nature of the work being undertaken will generate some noise and dust. The contractor is required to implement control measures specified in the contract and comply with the EPA guidelines. Contractual measures include spraying water to suppress dust caused by demolition and setting up monitoring stations to measure noise and dust levels at the site boundaries.

What is the big pile of dirt for?

Once the demolition works are complete, and the footings from the building removed, the contractor will use this material to prepare a graded site. This is required to make sure the finished surface of the site is safe and drains effectively.

Is there a cloud of dust coming off the site?

Tap water is pumped through a machine with nozzles under high pressure, which reduces the water into a fine water mist. The water mist is blown at the work site using a large fan. No additives are added to the tap water.

The water mist intercepts dust particles, making them wet, and therefore heavier, so they fall back to the ground. The community may see what looks like dust during site works blowing from the site, but it will be predominately excess water mist.

Will the demolition materials be recycled?

Yes. The contractor will put a significant effort into recycling the majority of the demolition waste. Materials will be sorted on site and taken to recycling facilities within the ACT and NSW.

Through this process the contractor is aiming to recycle over 95% of the materials removed from site. Contaminated material will be disposed at landfill following EPA approval.

What will be the impact on traffic, access and egress?

Drivers and cyclists may experience some minor delays due to trucks and vehicles entering and leaving the site. However, the work will be managed and staged to minimise impact on the public.

There will be periods when parking will not be available adjacent to the site due to access requirements for construction vehicles. There will also be some short periods of time where there will be impacts to traffic, cyclists and pedestrians in Wattle Street to allow the contractor to disconnect services.

Signage and letters will be used to notify residents and motorists prior to significant changes to traffic, pedestrian and cycle routes, and parking. Motorists, cyclists and pedestrians should comply with all signs during the demolition project.

Parking for contractor and site worker vehicles will be available on site to prevent impact on local parking.

How will the contractor protect the surrounding environment?

The works will be completed in accordance with the Construction Environment Management Plan. This plan includes a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan and a Landscape Management and Protection Plans approved by the EPA and TCCS respectively. In line with these plans, fencing and hoardings are being installed around the perimeter of the site and erosion and sediment control measures are in place. Additionally, an environmental consultant will monitor the performance of the contractor's work for compliance with the plans.

Will any trees be removed?

Some trees will need to be removed to make demolition more safe and efficient. Only non-regulated trees will be removed during the demolition.

Is structural collapse a risk during the demolition?

The demolition methodology is approved by a suitably qualified structural engineer with experience in demolition. The methodology will prevent structural collapse and is based on a process of progressively removing sections of the buildings in stages. The demolition method used by the contractor will be subject to ongoing review by the contractor's structural engineer and independent engineering consultants.

For how long is the site expected to remain vacant?

The site will be secured and remain vacant until sold in late 2018/19 and handed over to the purchaser who will then determine the next stage of development.

What other work is occurring along Northbourne Avenue and how will this and site affect light rail?

Urban renewal is a core priority of the ACT Government to grow Canberra’s economy, strengthen our community and respond to population growth. Northbourne Avenue is undergoing renewal, adding to the diversity and choice of lifestyle available to Canberrans and will help transform Canberra into a modern, international city.

The sale of Macarthur House is part of the Asset Recycling Initiative and the broad initiative to improve and revitalise Northbourne Avenue. This includes the construction of light rail and sale and development of aging government owned office buildings and public housing sites.

Where can I go for more information?

For more information and to join the mailing list, please email EPSDDComms@act.gov.au

For all enquiries, call Access Canberra on 13 22 81.