



PROFICIENCY TESTING PROGRAM

ASBESTOS IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

Company Background

Proficiency Testing Australia (PTA) is one of Australia's largest and most experienced proficiency testing providers. We have a reputation for providing friendly, customer-focussed service using qualified, experienced staff and specialists.

Proficiency Testing Australia is able to service a very broad range of industries, and many of our clients come to use our services based on the recommendation of colleagues. Proficiency Testing Australia has offices in Sydney and Brisbane, so our services and support are readily accessible.

Proficiency Testing Australia is accredited as a Proficiency Testing Provider by The American Association for Laboratory Accreditation. The accreditation covers the specific proficiency testing sample/artefact types listed on the agreed scope of accreditation. The accreditation meets the requirements of ISO/IEC 17043 *Conformity assessment - general requirements for proficiency testing*.

Aim of the Program

The main aim of the program is to evaluate the "accuracy" and reliability of results produced by individual identifiers from participating laboratories in the area of bulk asbestos analysis (relevant standard AS4964).

Application of program to accreditation

Participation in proficiency testing programs would satisfy requirements of ISO/IEC 17025: 2005 *General requirements for competence of testing and calibration laboratories*.

Program Details

The Asbestos Identification Program is a biennial program consisting of two rounds per cycle. Each round is conducted from October through to March. Participants are scheduled to a month in each round, during which they will receive eight bulk samples. Participants are requested to analyse independently the eight samples provided, for the presence (including trace asbestos if detected) of chrysotile, amosite and crocidolite asbestos AND the presence of synthetic mineral fibres (SMF) and organic fibres, according to their laboratory's documented method. For Australian laboratories accredited through the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA), upon request, these results will be forwarded to the accreditation body.

Participants are requested to record all relevant observations, comments and conclusions on worksheets in accordance with the requirements detailed in AS4964, and the NATA *Supplementary Requirements for Accreditation in the Field of Chemical Testing June 2010, Annex 3.1: Asbestos Identification in Bulk Samples*. These documents should be retained by the analyst and made available to PTA on request. Results are to be submitted to PTA on the supplied “Results Sheet” only.

The results obtained by each identifier are compared with the reference results. The identifier is then assigned a score for each sample. The weighting for asbestos fibres is greater than for SMF and organic fibres.

In general, scores are allocated as follows:-

Condition	Score (Asbestos Fibres)	Score (SMF & Organic Fibres)
when an “easy” fibre category is not found	2	1
when a “medium” fibre category is not found	1.5	0.5
when a “difficult” fibre category is not found	1	0.5

If a fibre type is found by the identifier when it is not actually present in the sample, then the appropriate score in the above table is given for each incorrect fibre type found. A total score (for the eight samples) of < 4 is considered satisfactory, while a score of 4 or more is considered ‘unsatisfactory’. For each sample for which the identifier received a score other than zero, an “error code” is also provided.

A set of eight follow-up samples are issued to identifiers who obtain a score of 4 or more for the initial round.

Confidentiality

Each participating counter is assigned a code number to allow for confidential treatment of results in all reports and publications produced by PTA. Please refer to the PTA website (http://www.pta.asn.au/pta_Confidentiality) for more information.

Fees

Refer to the current PTA fee schedule available on the PTA website (www.pta.asn.au/pta_Schedules)

Further Information

For further information on the PTA Asbestos Identification Program, contact ptaenquiry@pta.asn.au