

PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF ENGINEERED STONE PRODUCTS.

5th March, 2023

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my concern over the continued use of Engineered Stone and indeed any other products containing high percentages of silica.

As an operator of [REDACTED] since late 1991, I cannot understand how any stakeholder involved in fabrication, marketing, installation, alteration, industry association or regulatory oversight of the Engineered Stone Industry has allowed the current circumstance to occur where we have 500+ workers affected from silicosis.

From my perspective there seem to be three levels of failure in this tragic circumstance. The first being the failure of the Engineered Stone Manufacturers not effectively communicating the dangers of exposure to respirable crystalline silica dust to their distributors, resellers, and customers. Clearly these manufacturers have substantial marketing budgets which clearly has not extended to the effective communication of their WHS duty.

The second major failing is that of Engineered Stone installation businesses failing to identify and communicate the respirable crystalline silica hazard in their workplaces these PCBU's have not met their WHS duty.

The third and possibly most difficult to understand is how the WHS regulators in each state and territory had not acted sooner on this obvious disaster? Within each authority there exists the understanding of the potential danger of the onset of silicosis from the disturbance by dry drilling, crushing, milling, cutting or airborne conveyance of respirable crystalline silica dust particles from any siliceous stone (engineered or natural) and sand containing silica.

From my perspective the WHS regulators in each state and territory have allowed this terrible circumstance to occur through their collective inaction. If not, why were Prohibition notices not enforced in these workplaces when quite obviously there existed an elevated risk of silica exposure?

Elimination of this substantial WHS hazard can be the only solution to the most major WHS failing in recent Australian history. Engineered Stone products can easily be substituted by the use of more environmentally friendly natural stone or timber products and less hazardous manufactured products.

Clearly the Engineered Stone industry cannot be trusted to protect its workers. Many of the engineered stone installation businesses could easily transition to using natural stone products.

Please eliminate and regulate the elimination of Engineered Stone products in the best interests of the Australian community. Prior to 1990 we had largely lived without Engineered Stone and in an improved Australia in 2023 we can do so again.