

Submission by Dr K C WAN on 7 March 2023 to Worksafe Australia

to oppose banning of engineered stone

My name is DR KAR CHAN(**KC**) , WAN. I have been practising as a consultant occupational physician in Perth, Western Australia since 1979. I graduated from Singapore University in 1969 with MBBS, Diploma in Industrial Health (DIH) RCSE& RCPL in 1973 and M.Sc.Occupational Medicine London University in 1974. I have held MFOM UK since 1981, FAFOEM Australia since 1981 and FACOEM USA since 1988.

I would like to assist the Worksafe Australia in relation to the proposal to ban engineered stone.

I have been in charge of surveillance and enforcement for control and prevention of silicosis, asbestosis related diseases and mesothelioma in Western Australia from 1979 till my retirement from WorksafeWA and WA MinesDept as chief occupational health physician in 2001.

I have continued to chair and sit as an occupational physician member of the WorkcoverWA Industrial Diseases Medical Panel (**IDMP**) formerly known as the WA Pneumoconiosis Medical Panel (PMP) since 1979. I have reviewed the cases certified for Workers Compensation in WA which I presented at the Asian Conference of Occupational Health in Beijing and recently provided a poster presentation update at the RACP-AFOEM conference in PerthWA.

Past enforcement of silica exposure standard of 0.3 mg/m<sup>3</sup> eliminated silicosis in WA as shown in statistics published in my paper "Silicosis Western Australia from 1984 to 1993". J.Envon Mede V1no1 jan-Jun 1999.

I would advise strongly **AGAINST** banning engineered stone because it is possible to reduce airborne silica from engineered stone operations by dust control and ventilation to prevent excessive worker exposure. The explosion of case of accelerated silicosis has arisen because of lack of control and enforcement to prevent worker exposure to airborne silica dust and not because of engineered stone..

An **action plan** rather than a national strategy based on modelling with uncertain projected outcomes should be developed by **Worksafe Australia** to prevent silicosis in the workplace.

1. Raise awareness of the risks of silicosis

All workers should be made aware of the risks of silicosis, how to protect themselves from exposure and what symptoms to look out for.

2. Implement safe work practices

All work activities that could expose workers to silica should be carried out in a safe and controlled manner.

### 3. Provide appropriate personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be provided to workers who are at risk of exposure to silica. This should include respiratory protection, such as a face mask, and protective clothing.

### 4. Regular health screening

Workers who are exposed to silica should be regularly screened for the early signs of silicosis.

### 5. Promote safe work practices

All employers should ensure that safe work practices are followed at all times. This includes ensuring that workers are properly trained in the use of PPE and that work areas are adequately ventilated.

If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

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Specialist in occupational & environmental medicine

chair/member workcoverwa Industrial diseases medical panel (**IDMP**) for medical determination of workers compensation claims in WA, former worksafewa chief occupational health physician for 20 years working to prevent silicosis in miners, sandblasters, foundries,etc...no new cases in wa after 1976 until recent cases from uncontrolled work exposures to airborne silica from engineered stone