

Submission to Safework Australia

Re – Silicosis in Reconstituted Stone Products

On behalf of Central Coast Granite and its workers we strongly object to the hype surrounding the potential of Government bodies to shut down the Industry, this would have a catastrophic effect on the 1000 + fabricators , suppliers, associated businesses and hundreds of thousand workers and families. This would be the greatest mistake any government would make in Australian history.

When the product was firstly introduced and imported into Australia Safework Australia neglected their duty in researching the product and setting appropriate operational standards instead they just let the industry run wild.

We invested heavily in building a purpose built factory some 5 years ago which complies to new standards that came in well after we moved in, we felt responsible to start wet cutting and polishing for the safety of our workers.

We have improved air quality by installing additional exhaust fans and have been regularly tested and achieved results under guidelines, our staff have masks fitted and checked on a regular basis.

We have installed a commercial washing machine for laundering of workers clothing on a daily basis so that staff wear fresh clothing home, so they don't carry residue dust to their cars or households.

We have an internal water treatment plant and have employed a full time cleaner who hoses and cleans floors and walls on an hourly basis to minimize airborne dust.

It is our contention that if suppliers of reconstituted stone reduce silica content to below 40% and fabricators do the right thing the industry can safely flourish.

The threats against the Reconstituted Industry are driven by the media and unions, who are only interested in the hype and sensationalizing the story but not telling what the current stance is by suppliers and good fabricators, I agree that there are sectors of the industry that need to be cleaned up but that should be and is being handled by Safework.

Finally , because silica is in a large range of products what is being done to these other industries – tiling, bricklaying, concreting etc