

My name is [REDACTED], I have worked in the manufacturing and installation of engineered stone industry since [REDACTED] (WA)

My opinion of the current issue surrounding the industry is rather short.

I believe that the true issue is the safety of employees, and I support the movement regarding that. Air filtering, fan assisted positive pressure masks (half face) should be required by all factory employees that assist in the manufacturing of engineered or natural stone.

I do not believe that the product should be banned, I believe that suppliers should be working hard to reduce the silica content of all man made stone. Which majority of the suppliers we use are already doing so, some suppliers even planning on releasing less than 40% silica products by end of the year.

Health monitoring yearly is absolutely a necessity, with the LDCT annually for active manufacturing employees and every two years for remaining employees who regularly visit or enter an active manufacturing work shop.

I do also believe that there should be research and studies being held in every state of Australia, were we as employees that work or have worked in the industry can volunteer to be participants in these studies. To hopefully identify who may be more susceptible to silicosis or distinguish why someone who has worked in the industry for 10 + years will minimal PPE does not show any sign of lung damage, but someone who has worked in the industry for less than 5 years can develop silicosis or at least be showing signs of scarring associated with silicosis. I myself would put my hand up for such research programs.

Before safe work prohibits the use of engineered stone, I feel they should take a look at the means of the training platform available. An educational video highlighting the correct work procedures, health effects, protective equipment available, prevention methods and the risk of long term exposure can cause. Similar to the process of obtaining a white card.

Work safe should be working with the stonemasons of Australia, potentially have a designated employee/employees whose job will be to help companies do their best to make the industry safe, ensure the employees have an abundance of training and knowledge of how to keep themselves safe.

To conclude, I myself am worried about the exposure level I have had to silica in my previous years in the industry. But I disagree with the act to prohibit engineered stone. As long as employers aim to keep their employees safe by following the correct prevention methods, do the yearly health monitoring, provide top quality PPE, provide high quality water feed tools and machinery and offer all the training available, those who don't should not be allowed to continue working for the safety of their employees. Suppliers should continue to aim to reduce/remove the silica element to their products. Safe work and other companies involved in the "fight against silicosis" should look to offer research programs in each Australian state. A training program should also be investigated, similar to applying for a white card to ensure each and every employee are aware of the dangers and how to prevent the exposure to silica.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

