

I discovered on the 1st of April that Safe Work Australia's Engage website opened a public consultation on the engineered stone ban since the 2nd of March, 2023.

However, we first knew of this when [REDACTED] notified us on the 24th of March and invited us to submit a response. Stone Ambassador sent a similar invite on the 28th of March, 2023.

I am sitting here at the 11th hour, wondering how I will have enough time to put something together that would make sense. As a matter of fact, I have been thinking about this for days. I have a lot to say, but I can't find the words to convey the disappointment, stress, and increased anxiety I am experiencing at this moment.

One question keeps popping up in my head.

'As a stonemason/benchtop fabricator and a stakeholder, why were we not invited to participate in this public consultation by either Safe Work Australia or WorkSafe Victoria?'

[REDACTED] has been in operation since 2010.

From the onset, we had always had processes in place to ensure that dust generated for the benchtop fabrication processes is kept to a minimum; the broadened awareness of the hazards of crystalline silica in recent years, more comprehensive guides, literature from the slab manufacturers, as well as WorkSafe Victoria, had made a big difference in our industry and how we operate.

As a business, we have invested significantly in new PPEs, tools, and machinery as they became more readily available. Additional training and processes are introduced. Our production staff is encouraged to have regular health checks where we pay for the days they are away from work to get the tests done.

Our air quality was monitored for respirable crystalline silica in September 2022; we have an active Engineered Stone Control Plan in place and hold an Engineered Stone Licence issued by WorkSafe Victoria that is valid until [REDACTED]

Essentially, we are a family business. The staff we employ is an extension of that. Ultimately, our goal is to provide a workplace where we can each carry out our daily tasks safely.

We support the **prohibition on the use of engineered stone containing 40% or more crystalline silica and licensing of PCBU's working with engineered stone containing less than 40 % crystalline silica.**

There are hazards in everything we do; hazardous material exists in almost everything around us. It is our knowledge and experience that keeps us safe. It is our ability to learn, adapt and solve problems that keeps us moving forward.