



Australia taking action to reduce the risk of silicosis

Recently, there has been significant exposure by the Media in relation to Silicosis. In particular, a number of news and current affairs programs have now brought to the attention the dangers which young Australian tradies and workers are facing due to exposure of Silicosis.

A majority of this exposure is due to beautifully crafted bench tops from manufactured stone. Whilst other workers, miners and construction workers and engineers may be affected, it is stonemasons who currently have a high risk due to the levels of dust created when cutting kitchen bench tops and in particular the lack of suitable protection such as breathing masks.

Dust particles entering a person's lungs can cause permanent lung damage, leading to a long-term lung disease known as silicosis.

In response to various Union groups calling for changes to be made, there was a national meeting held in Canberra at the beginning of March 2023. During this meeting, Ministers supported the Commonwealth Government in exploring bans on the importation of engineered stone, together with consultations with stakeholders on the effects of a ban.

Further, consultation with stakeholders on the affects of the ban is also to be addressed. As a result of the meeting, Ministers have agreed to implement a National campaign with employers and Unions in order to increase awareness about the risks and perils of being exposed to Silica dust; the campaign will also inform businesses and workers on how to implement effective control mechanisms in the work place.

New regulations will be developed by the end of 2023 in order to manage high risk crystalline silica processes across a range of industries. These will potentially encompass a range of requirements for air monitoring, further training and also the reporting of any exposure to health and safety regulators.

The Attorney General of South Australia, Kyam Maher, has also stated that while the South Australian Government will allow time for ongoing analysis and consultation on the potential ban and National Licence regime to be done, the option on the table is for the South Australian Government to “go it alone and pursue a ban on a State level if there was no action by the end of year”. This sounds promising for our employees working in these fields moving forward. You can read a media release on **Decisive nation action on silicosis** [here](#).

The Australian Workers Union, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the CFMEU have recently launched the [“Stop this Killer Stone”](#) Campaign, urging regulatory bodies to take immediate action to stop rising cases of silicosis, a lung disease caused by inhaling crystalline silica dust.

How can Andersons’ help?

Should you require advice or assistance on any work, health or safety issues, please contact this article’s author [Madelaina Mestroni](#) or [contact the team](#) to book a free initial 30 minute consultation.