

Kyam Maher MLC
Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector

Friday 22 March 2024

Engineered stone ban moves a step closer

A national meeting of Commonwealth, State and Territory work health and safety ministers has today agreed on the next steps for the implementation of a nationwide ban on engineered stone.

When engineered stone is processed, such as by cutting or grinding, it releases small particles of respirable crystalline silica dust that, when inhaled into the lungs, can cause silicosis – a disease resulting in permanent disability and death, and with no known cure except lung transplantation.

A nationwide ban on engineered stone was unanimously agreed in December last year, after an expert report by SafeWork Australia found there was no scientific evidence for a “safe” threshold of crystalline silica content in engineered stone.

Further details agreed at today’s meeting include:

- The ban will apply to the manufacturing, supply, processing, and installation of engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs and will take effect from 1 July 2024.
- There will be a transitional period for contracts for the installation of engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs entered on or before 31 December 2023 – these contracts will be exempt from the ban provided installation is completed by 31 December 2024.
- Ministers have agreed to develop a stronger regulatory framework for high risk crystalline-silica processes in other industries, including requirements for additional risk assessments, training, and air monitoring.
- There will be a review of the engineered stone ban by July 2025, to ensure the ban is working effectively to protect workers from exposure, and to identify and address any unintended consequences.

Quotes attributable to Kyam Maher

Engineered stone is a dangerous product and banning it will keep South Australians safe from the harmful effects of silicosis.

The transitional arrangements agreed to today provide a sensible balance between protecting workers from exposure to respirable crystalline silica and minimising significant disruption to the residential construction industry.

We are strengthening the regulations to provide further protection to workers from the harmful effects of crystalline silica exposure.

SafeWork SA will act against any company that fails to protect workers or intentionally rebrands engineered stone as another product to avoid the ban.