

# Media Release

**Ingrid Stitt MP**  
Minister for Workplace Safety  
Minister for Early Childhood



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## **MORE SUPPORT FOR WORKERS AND FAMILIES IMPACTED BY SILICA**

The Victorian Government is making it easier for workers impacted by deadly crystalline silica dust to get the care and support they need.

Lung cancer with silicosis and scleroderma with silicosis have been added to Victoria's list of proclaimed diseases, which are automatically deemed to be caused by the nature of a worker's employment.

It means stonemasons and others working with engineered stone who contract either of these conditions will no longer have the onus of proving that they were injured at work to be eligible for compensation.

This will ensure injured workers and their dependants get simpler and faster access to entitlements, which could include medical expenses and payments for lost wages and pain and suffering.

Silicosis itself is already a proclaimed disease in Victoria for workers exposed to the inhalation of crystalline silica dust.

The change will not only apply to new and existing silicosis claimants who develop lung cancer or scleroderma, but will allow any affected worker or their dependants to retrospectively submit a new claim for injuries suffered since Victoria's workplace injury compensation scheme commenced in 1985.

It follows a WorkSafe review of proclaimed diseases as part of the Government's comprehensive silica action plan, which also includes a ban on dry cutting, a tough new compliance code for businesses and the development of Australia's first licensing scheme for engineered stone, a specialist WorkSafe team focused on silica-related hazards and campaigns to highlight the risks of working with engineered stone.

More than 85 per cent of Victoria's estimated 1,400 past and present stonemasons have also now registered for WorkSafe's free silica health assessment program, which includes testing for auto-immune conditions such as scleroderma.

A fast-tracked compensation process is in place for affected workers and their families so they can get the personalised treatment and support they need.

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt**

*"We're taking tough action to ensure employers are protecting workers from this silent killer – but it's also important there's a strong safety net in place for workers that do get injured."*

*"A diagnosis of a silica-related illness can have a devastating impact on workers and their families. This change will help ensure they get quicker access to the compensation they need."*