

Media Release

Mr Danny Pearson MP

Minister for Government Services

Assistant Treasurer

Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC

Minister for Consumer Affairs



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EXTENDING DEDICATED CARE FOR WORKERS AT RISK OF SILICOSIS

More than 600 stonemason industry workers have had a comprehensive health assessment as part of nation-leading action to protect Victorian workers from deadly silicosis.

Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC Danny Pearson today announced a partnership between WorkSafe and The Alfred to deliver Australia's only dedicated public hospital occupational respiratory clinic has been extended for another three years.

The Alfred Occupational Respiratory Clinic offers a multi-disciplinary approach to the diagnosis and management of debilitating lung disease silicosis. Since its launch in July 2021, the Alfred clinic has provided 621 eligible workers with a health outcome and treatment plan.

The clinic provides a range of diagnostic tools and specialist services not readily available to GPs, increasing the chance of early identification while saving time and reducing stress for workers and their families.

The extended partnership caters for the high proportion of workers in the stonemason industry that come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by adding translation and interpreting services.

Former stonemason Glenn Turner is one of the clinic's patients. The 36-year-old is being supported by WorkSafe and the Alfred after being diagnosed with silicosis following a health assessment in November 2021 while working in the stone benchtop industry.

Glenn had been mindful of health and safety during his 16-year career, but like hundreds of other workers, he contracted the disease through no fault of his own. Stonemasons working with engineered stone are at a particularly high risk of silicosis due to the product's high concentrations of crystalline silica.

Victoria has introduced the toughest regulations in the country to protect workers from exposure to crystalline silica, including a ban on the uncontrolled dry-cutting of engineered stone and Australia's first licencing scheme for the industry.

The Andrews Labor Government has also supported moves to examine a national ban on engineered stone.

Quotes attributable to Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC Danny Pearson

"No one should be exposed to a potentially deadly disease by simply showing up to work."

"The extension of this partnership shows we will not rest in the fight to better understand the risks of engineered stone and increase the quality of life of injured workers."

Quote attributable to WorkSafe Executive Director Health and Safety Narelle Beer

"The clinic plays a crucial role in the health journey of so many Victorian workers facing an uncertain future and this ongoing collaboration will ensure that world-class care continues."

Quote attributable to Alfred Occupational Respiratory Clinic patient Glenn Turner

"Getting my diagnosis has been devastating but it's been made so much easier having such a dedicated and caring team around me – I'm so grateful to WorkSafe and The Alfred for everything they do."

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