

Media Release

Mr Danny Pearson MP

Minister for Transport Infrastructure

Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop

Assistant Treasurer

Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC



Wednesday, 13 December 2023

BAN ON DEADLY ENGINEERED STONE TO KEEP WORKERS SAFE

The Allan Labor Government will ban the use of all engineered stone in Victoria from July 2024 to protect workers from the devastating lung disease silicosis.

Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC Danny Pearson today joined his Commonwealth, state and territory counterparts in agreeing to implement a national ban on the deadly product.

Victoria led the nation in introducing the toughest regulations and the country's first licensing scheme for businesses working with crystalline silica, and now work will start to enact a ban on engineered stone through changes to occupational health and safety laws.

Businesses and consumers are asked not to enter into contracts for engineered stone products from 1 January 2024, given the contracts may not be able to be legally fulfilled. Ministers agreed to consider at a meeting in early 2024 if there will be a need for a period of transition for contracts entered into before today.

From 1 July 2024, Victorian employers will no longer be permitted to carry out work involving the manufacturing, supply, processing or installation of engineered stone. The Commonwealth Government has also confirmed an intention to ban the importation of the product, providing further protections.

An exception to Victoria's prohibition of all engineered stone will apply if the work involves the removal, repair or minor modification of product installed in a premises before 1 July 2024. This work will be subject to existing control requirements for engineered stone and additional high-risk crystalline silica work regulations.

Until the ban takes effect, Victoria's existing laws in relation to exposure to crystalline silica dust and working with engineered stone will continue to protect workers.

Victoria established its Silica Action Plan in 2019 with a range of actions aimed at preventing exposure to crystalline silica dust and providing early intervention and support for affected workers.

This included the establishment of Australia's only dedicated public hospital occupational respiratory clinic through a partnership between WorkSafe and The Alfred.

The national ban follows a report by Safe Work Australia that recommended a prohibition on the use of all engineered stone, regardless of crystalline silica content.

Safe Work Australia's report found that the high levels of respirable crystalline silica generated from working with engineered stone are likely to contribute to more rapid and severe disease and that there is no evidence of a safe threshold of silica content.

The report defines engineered stone as an artificial product that contains crystalline silica; is created by combining natural stone materials with other chemical constituents such as water, resins or pigments; and undergoes a process to become hardened.

Several specific products will be expressly excluded from the definition of engineered stone including concrete and cement products; bricks, pavers and other similar blocks; ceramic and porcelain wall and floor tiles; roof tiles; grout, mortar and render; and plasterboard.

Media contact: Shaun Phillips 0407 553 763 | shaun.phillips@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Quotes attributable to Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC Danny Pearson

“No one should be exposed to fatal risks simply by going to work. It’s just unacceptable.”

“We led the way with regulation and licensing in Victoria and now a national ban will ensure workers are protected from this shocking disease.”