



"SKILLING TOMORROW'S  
WORKFORCE TODAY"

# Australian Skills Group Newsletter

March 2024

## Silica safety reminder ahead of engineered stone ban



WorkSafe is reminding employers that controls to protect workers from crystalline silica dust will be enforced in the lead up to the nationwide engineered stone ban later this year.

From 1st of July 2024, employers will no longer be permitted to carry out work involving the manufacturing, supply, processing or installation of engineered stone.

Victoria already has the strongest regulatory regime in Australia with respect to the use of engineered stone, including a ban on the uncontrolled dry-cutting of engineered stone and requiring businesses undertaking engineered stone processes to hold a licence.

WorkSafe executive director health and safety Narelle Beer, said employers must continue to comply with the state's strict engineered stone requirements ahead of the ban. "Hundreds of tradies have already been diagnosed with silicosis – a debilitating and potentially deadly disease that can devastate young workers and their families," said Beer.

WorkSafe has now received 669 silicosis-related compensation claims following a positive diagnosis.

Workers in the industry are able to have a comprehensive health assessment at the Alfred Occupational Respiratory Clinic, offered in partnership between WorkSafe and The Alfred.

The clinic is Australia's only dedicated public hospital occupational respiratory clinic and 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.

Government is working on enacting the prohibition of engineered stone through amendments needed to Victoria's occupational health and safety laws from 1st of July.

Some exceptions will be made for the removal, repair, minor modification, and disposal of engineered stone products installed prior to the ban (legacy products), as well as appropriate exceptions for engineered stone products with trace levels of crystalline silica (under 1 per cent). A customs ban will also provide an additional layer of enforcement and deterrence at the border.

Current Victorian engineered stone licences will remain valid as work continues to raise awareness of the ban and its impact on the stonemason industry before it comes into effect.