



MEDIA RELEASE
14th December 2023

Cancer Council welcomes ban on engineered stone products, protecting the lungs of thousands of Australian workers

Cancer Council applauds the decision made by federal and state Work Health and Safety Ministers yesterday to ban all future use of engineered stone protecting thousands of Australian workers who are regularly exposed to deadly crystalline silica dust from this product.

Crystalline silica dust, a fine dust 100 times smaller than a grain of sand, is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen or cancer-causing substance by the leading authority, the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

Breathing in the dust can cause silicosis and lung cancer. Each year approximately 230 people will develop lung cancer because of past exposure to silica dust at work.

Professor Tim Driscoll, Chair of Cancer Council's Occupational and Environmental Cancers Committee, said the decision will protect workers.

"Cancer Council welcomes today's announcement to ban engineered stone following a meeting of the Work Health and Safety Ministers. With this decision, all levels of government have taken a critical step towards ensuring that people working with engineered stone benchtops are protected from the harms of silica dust. In addition to engineered stone, silica exposure occurs in many other workplace settings including quarrying, mining, construction and tunnelling, or as stonemasons - and it is important that their exposure is also prevented or minimised," Professor Driscoll said.

"Implementing a ban on engineered stone could prevent approximately 100 lung cancers and 1000 silicosis cases in Australia in workers from across the entire supply chain in Australia – from workers cutting in a factory to the tradies installing your kitchen bench," Professor Driscoll explained.

The decision to ban all engineered stone, including 'low silica' products, is consistent with Cancer Council's calls and evidence, the findings of the National Dust Disease Taskforce Report to the previous Federal government in June 2021, and the Draft National Silicosis Prevention Strategy.

"Cancer Council welcomes this decision and commends each government and enforcement agency for their collective efforts to keep more Australians safe at work," Professor Driscoll concludes.

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Contact details

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About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice