



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE

MEDIA RELEASE

SILICOSIS INQUIRY CONTINUES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
28 November 2019

The Standing Committee on Law and Justice in the New South Wales Upper House will continue its inquiry into silicosis in the manufactured stone industry up until late March 2020, as part of its regular oversight review of the Dust Diseases Scheme in New South Wales.

Silicosis is an occupational lung disease caused by breathing in crystalline silica dust. When workers cut, crush, drill, polish, saw, sandblast or grind materials that contain silica dust, such as manufactured stone, dust particles are generated that are small enough to lodge deep in the lungs, which can lead to illness and diseases such as silicosis. There reportedly has been an increase in the number of accelerated silicosis cases across the country, with instances of young men being diagnosed early in their working life.

To date, the committee has heard from a range of key stakeholders at hearings including medical professionals, unions, lawyers, industry experts and regulatory agencies. It has taken evidence on various issues including medical screening for the disease, the effectiveness of control measures such as wet cutting and regulatory enforcement of fabricators and installers.

While the committee recognises the need for urgent action to address the risks to those working with manufactured stone products, the committee is mindful that regulatory developments in this area are currently in flux, both at the federal and state level. To this end, the committee has extended its inquiry in order to consider the outcome of these developments before finalising its conclusions and recommendations to the NSW Government.

The Committee Chair, the Hon Wes Fang MLC, stated: "Tackling the rise of silicosis in the manufactured stone industry is a priority. While we have already received evidence from a range of stakeholders to date, the committee is aware that a number of regulatory developments and outstanding issues in this area are currently being progressed. To ensure that these matters are given due consideration, the committee will extend its inquiry to late March next year and have one further hearing".

The next hearing will take place on Tuesday 11 February 2020 and will be broadcast via the NSW Parliament's website. The committee's report is expected to be tabled by 25 March 2020.

Further information about the review, including the terms of reference, submissions and hearing transcripts, can be found on the committee's website at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/law>

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Wes Fang MLC, on 9230 2888