

## **INQUIRY INTO 2019 REVIEW OF THE DUST DISEASES SCHEME**

**Organisation:** Safe Work Australia

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**The Hon Niall Blair MLC  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Law and Justice  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000**

Dear Minister Blair

**2019 review of the NSW Dust Diseases scheme**

Thank you for your invitation to provide a submission to the New South Wales Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Law and Justice 2019 review of the Dust Diseases scheme. I would like to provide an update about the work being progressed by Safe Work Australia in this area.

Safe Work Australia leads the development of national policy to improve work health and safety (WHS) and workers' compensation arrangements in Australia. Safe Work Australia is an inclusive, tripartite body, working in partnership with governments, employers and employees to:

- develop and evaluate national policy and strategies
- develop and evaluate the model WHS legislative framework
- undertake research, and
- collect, analyse and report data.

Occupational lung diseases, including silicosis, are a priority condition under the *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022*. In response, Safe Work Australia is implementing a comprehensive [occupational lung diseases work plan](#) that aims to:

- raise awareness of the duties and control measures for eliminating and minimising airborne contaminants at the workplace that cause occupational lung disease, and
- inform the development of effective national policy.

The work plan has three key initiatives: research, education and data and evidence. The following information on the initiatives may be of interest to the Standing Committee for the 2019 review.

**Research**

Safe Work Australia has engaged experts at Monash University to update the report *Occupational lung diseases in Australia* (2006). The updated report will analyse trends between 2006 and 2019 and is expected to provide a present-day view of occupational lung diseases in Australia. We expect this report to be delivered in late 2019.

Safe Work Australia is also reviewing key literature on effective dust mitigation strategies and advances in technologies to control airborne contaminants at the workplace. The intent of this project is to identify the types and effectiveness of control measures to protect workers from a variety of airborne contaminants in a range of industries. The outcomes of this review will assist in providing further information for duty holders on how to discharge their duties relating to airborne hazardous chemicals and dusts.



## Education

In 2019, Safe Work Australia prioritised the development of a national *Guide for working with silica and silica containing products* to provide practical information about how to prevent and manage exposure to respirable crystalline silica. This guide will shortly be available on the Safe Work Australia website and translated into several languages.

To improve knowledge about airborne contaminants, Safe Work Australia is also developing a national education and awareness campaign. It will focus on micro, small and medium enterprises across a broad range of industries including agriculture, construction, manufacturing and transport. We expect the campaign to be implemented throughout 2020.

## Data and evidence

Data collection and analysis are fundamental to developing robust model WHS policy. Safe Work Australia is expanding its understanding of information collected, recorded and held across Australia to inform national policy work for occupational diseases. This includes investigating potential data sources held by WHS regulators and other Government bodies.

## ***Workplace exposure standards***

In parallel to the occupational lung diseases work plan, Safe Work Australia is reviewing the [Workplace exposure standards for airborne contaminants](#) to ensure they are based on the highest quality, contemporary evidence and supported by a rigorous, scientific approach. The methodology for this review includes:

- sourcing exposure standard information
- evaluating individual workplace exposure standards, including notations, and
- revising the list of chemicals.

This process will result in recommendations for the workplace exposure standard values, notations and the list of chemicals. These recommendations will be released alphabetically for public comment throughout 2019-2020.

Our agency continues to work closely with Safe Work Australia Members and other stakeholders to foster national coordination and cooperation on initiatives aimed at preventing occupational lung diseases. Our Chief Executive Officer was recently appointed to the [National Dust Disease Taskforce](#); an Australian Government election commitment. The taskforce is investigating a National Dust Diseases Register, and examining new research to support understanding, prevention and treatment of occupational lung diseases.

For further information about Safe Work Australia's work in this area, please contact Ms Jackii Shepherd on \_\_\_\_\_ or at \_\_\_\_\_

Yours sincerely

Amanda Johnston  
Chief Executive Officer a/g  
Safe Work Australia

16 August 2019