

INQUIRY INTO 2019 REVIEW OF THE DUST DISEASES SCHEME

Organisation: Australian Lawyers Alliance

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2019 review of the Dust Diseases Scheme

Submission to the Standing Committee on Law and
Justice

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Who we are

The Australian Lawyers Alliance (ALA) is a national association of lawyers, academics and other professionals dedicated to protecting and promoting justice, freedom and the rights of the individual.

We estimate that our 1,500 members represent up to 200,000 people each year in Australia. We promote access to justice and equality before the law for all individuals regardless of their wealth, position, gender, age, race or religious belief.

The ALA is represented in every state and territory in Australia. More information about us is available on our website.¹

The ALA office is located on the land of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation.

¹ www.lawyersalliance.com.au

Introduction

1. The ALA welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Law and Justice (Standing Committee) as it conducts its 2019 review of the Dust Diseases Scheme (DSS). The ALA notes that this review is focused on the response to silicosis in the manufactured stone industry in New South Wales.

The incidence of silicosis in New South Wales

2. The ALA notes that accelerated silicosis is an illness that is preventable. Silicosis is caused by the inhalation of silica dust. The ALA further notes that there has been a rise in workers in the manufactured stone industry being diagnosed with silicosis. In its 2018 submission the ALA noted that the incidence of silicosis from caesarstone cutting and manufactured stone continues to rise. The emergence of this disease was observed in the 2017 Review. The ALA submits that given the rising incidence of this disease, more education of the community about it and the risks involved is needed.
3. It is estimated that manufactured stones contain 90% silica content.
4. The ALA supports the recommendation from the 2018 Review that icare and SafeWork NSW conduct a case finding study for silicosis in the manufactured stone industry in NSW.
5. The ALA supports the recommendation from the 2018 Review that the NSW Government establish a NSW Dust Diseases Register for silicosis if a National Register is not established by December 2019.
6. The ALA supports the recommendation from the 2018 Review that the NSW Government undertake targeted awareness and education initiatives into the dangers associate with the manufactured stone industry including a focus on non-English speaking workers and employers.
7. The ALA submits that all employees in NSW in the manufactured stone industry be offered free lung screening for the first round of screening. The ALA further submits that there should be no costs to the first round of screening.

Conclusion

8. The ALA welcomes the opportunity to have input into the 2019 review of the Dust Diseases Scheme conducted by the Standing Committee. The ALA would also welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee at the scheduled hearing for this inquiry.

Andrew Christopoulos

President

Australian Lawyers Alliance