

INQUIRY INTO 2021 REVIEW OF THE DUST DISEASES SCHEME

Organisation: Agglomerated Stone Manufacturers Association (A.St.A)

Date Received: 12 December 2021



12th December 2021

The Hon. Wes Fang, MLC
Committee Chair
Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice
Parliament House, Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Via email: law@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Fang,

Subject: 2021 Review of the Dust Diseases scheme (NSW)

A.St.A (Agglomerated Stone Manufacturers Association) is a global association that represents 'engineered quartz' and 'agglomerated marble' product manufacturers which are widely used for kitchen and bathroom countertops, floor tiles, wall coverings; and architectural elements.

The Australian market has embraced our products due to their aesthetic diversity and their higher resilience and durability than alternatives due to the high percentage of quartz, which is one of the strongest elements on the earth.

Regulatory responses to silicosis

We have followed the dust diseases discussion in Australia the Law and Justice Committees reviews and wish to register our firm support for all health and safety initiatives that governments are taking to manage airborne silica levels in processing engineered stone and other silica/quartz based products.

A.St.A notes that engineered stone is a safe product as are other forms of stone and quartz compounds. Nevertheless airborne silica levels from cutting all types of silica-containing compounds can pose adverse health risks depending on the workplace environment, the quantity of activity and practices utilised.

A.St.A aims to support businesses that use and fabricate our products in implementing best practice in training and equipping their employees. A.St.A also encourages governments to take a consistent approach so that suppliers, fabricators and users of our products have consistent regulations in all jurisdictions.

The products

Agglomerate and engineered stone products contain a mixture of marble, quartz, granite and other natural stones, together with pigments and a polyester resin binder.

Crystalline silica is mineral found in these source materials as well as in other common materials such as sand, cement, ceramics, concrete and sandstone.

The cutting of any of these products or materials can result in airborne silica particles.

A.St.A considers that cutting and fabrication of engineered stone should always occur in professional fabrication facilities with health and safety measures in place. Any other on-site cutting should only occur using approved wet cutting techniques.

A.St.A. World-Wide

Agglomerated Stones Association

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European experience

Under the guidance of the European Commission, airborne silica limits are similar to Australia. Industries, regulators and employees have been working together to manage health and safety outcomes with respirable crystalline silica for the past two decades.

There is no move to ban engineered stone products. Rather, there is an evidence-based approach to safely managing how products are cut and polished – similarly this applies to other forms of rock, stone and concrete cutting.

A.St.A is, in response to recent Victorian licencing regulations, moving to provide support to fabricators to assist them by providing education around safe practices and in developing control plans to meet the new standards.

To further assist, A.St.A, through its European contacts and members is gathering some of the most recent information, statistics, data and best practices to share with fabricators and regulators.

If A.St.A is able to assist your Review please contact the undersigned on .

Beatrice Barbiero

Director A.St.A. World-Wide

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