

Friday 10 June 2022

## NSW Government must act swiftly on silica recommendations

The ACTU is urging the NSW government to implement all of the recommendations from the Parliamentary Standing Committee 2021 *Review of the Dust Diseases Scheme*, released today.

Adopting the recommendations would positively impact on the health of workers potentially exposed to silica across many industries.

The report calls upon the NSW Government to:

- introduce a licensing scheme, as Victoria has done, to ensure that manufactured stone businesses have in place appropriate controls for working with a potentially dangerous substance;
- strengthen the work health and safety framework around silica exposure, including the development and implementation of a compliance strategy by SafeWork NSW;
- implement a more rigorous regime of random on-site inspections at sites where manufactured stone is being installed.

Particularly encouraging are the recommendations that:

- the Minister for Small Business and Fair Trading indicate the NSW Government's support for a ban on manufactured stone should the industry not demonstrate sufficient improvement by 2024, consistent with the National Dust Disease Taskforce's recommendation and;
- the NSW Government actively work toward a health-based workplace exposure standard for respirable crystalline silica of 0.02mg/m<sup>3</sup>, including advocating for this change at a national level and supporting research that would enable this standard to be effectively measured

It is estimated that over one in ten (14%) cases of lung cancer could be prevented if asbestos, silica, diesel exhaust and welding fume exposure were reduced in workplaces.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

“The NSW Parliamentary Committee has heard the voices of workers, unions and experts calling for better and more rigorous protections for all workers potentially exposed to respirable crystalline silica.

“The recommendations should be adopted immediately by all governments who have not yet introduced licensing schemes for businesses using manufactured stone, including the Federal government and SafeWork Australia.

“These recommendations must be taken into account by SafeWork Australia before the release of the Regulatory Impact Statement on the options for the control of exposures to silica dust.”

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