



Submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Australian Engineered Stone Advisory Group's application for authorisation AA1000461—interested party consultation

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Submission by:

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Unions NSW welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Unions NSW supports the submissions of our affiliate unions.

Unions NSW is the peak body for NSW Unions. Unions NSW represents approximately 60 affiliated unions comprising over 600 000 members. These unions represent a diverse range of workers from both blue and white- collar industries.

Unions NSW supports the work of The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ). The Society leads in research and treatment of lung diseases and the key role they are currently playing in advising the Government in responding to the re-emergence of the disease silicosis, particularly the emergence of the new 'early onset' silicosis, is critical. Unions NSW supports the mission statement of the Thoracic Society;

Mission Statement

"We lead, support and enable all health workers and researchers to prevent, cure and relieve disability from lung disease."

Unions NSW agrees with the submission lodged in December 2019 by The Thoracic Society to the ACCC. As a result of work done by TSANZ, the National Dust Diseases Taskforce has been formed. The Terms of Reference for the Taskforce are as follows:

The National Dust Disease Taskforce will inform a national approach by undertaking an independent review of the systems in place to protect Australians who are at risk from occupational dust disease. This will include providing advice on:

1. Actions that have been taken to date to address occupational dust disease across all Australian jurisdictions.

2. Existing policy and regulatory arrangements in Australia to protect those at risk from occupational dust disease, more specifically reviewing what controls are in place; and how these are applied and monitored by the system.

3. Opportunities for improvement across the system to ensure protection of those at- risk populations.

4. Options for sustainable approaches for the future prevention, detection and management of occupational dust diseases, including the consideration of the establishment of a National Dust Disease register, including its scope and outcomes to be achieved.

5. Options for potential new research required to support understanding, prevention and treatment of preventable occupational lung disease.

The taskforce will engage with a broad range of stakeholders including key health and medical professionals, relevant state and territory governments and regulators, consumers, industry and workplace health and safety stakeholders, including Safe Work Australia.

Unions NSW supports the formation of the National Taskforce and the Terms of Reference and awaits the results of the report.

Unions NSW is acutely aware of the harm caused to workers resulting from unsafe work practices when cutting manufactured stone products and being exposed to high concentrations of silica.

We understand that there remains a great deal of uncertainty around the safety of the combination of resins and metals used in the construction of manufactured stone and agree that research is urgently needed into the composites of manufactured stone and the effect of these when airborne.

Unions NSW does not support the current application from AESAG for self-accreditation at this stage.

The industry and stakeholders must await the report of the National Taskforce and be guided by its results. An approval of this application by the ACCC may result in an outcome which contradicts the report issued by the National Taskforce.