

15 December 2023

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
New Zealand

Also by email: Brooke.Vanvelden@parliament.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Minister

I am writing to you to seek your agreement to implement a complete ban on the importation, manufacture, and use of engineered stone products in Aotearoa New Zealand as soon as possible.

You may be aware of the recent decision of the Australian government to implement a ban and the CTU calls for New Zealand to do the same, as the harm caused by these products are identical here.

Engineered stone is a very harmful product; the silica dust created from cutting this material is extremely hazardous and, even with limited exposure, can cause the fatal lung disease silicosis. Workers exposed to this material have been shown to develop symptoms at a high rate, and at a young age.

Earlier this year, Safe Work Australia, the federal agency for workplace health and safety, issued a detailed report on the harm of engineered stone. This report supported a total ban of the material, outlining that there is no safe level of exposure.

The decision taken by the Australian Work Health and Safety Ministers is a great example of evidence-based policy which will massively benefit the lives of working people and their whānau.

The CTU has been vocal on the need for a similar ban on engineered stone in New Zealand and will continue to be.

Since Australia has already done the work, and shown leadership in this area, it should be relatively straight forward to regulate this material to protect lives here in New Zealand and follow suit.

I look forward to your positive response. Should you wish to meet to discuss this further, we would be happy to do so.

Ngā mihi nui,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wagstaff', with a stylized, cursive script.

Richard Wagstaff
NZCTU President