



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 February 2024

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Engineered Stone**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (10.16 am): I am pleased to update the House that our government's longstanding campaign to stop the use of engineered stone has culminated in a national ban on this dangerous product. The ban, which is effective from 1 July 2024, was agreed by Commonwealth, state and territory leaders at December's work health and safety ministers meeting.

In 2018 I received an urgent briefing from my department on the sudden and alarming emergence of silicosis and we took immediate action by: implementing a ban of all dry cutting of engineered stone; issuing an urgent safety warning to workers in the industry about the serious risks; ensuring Workplace Health and Safety Queensland conducted a widespread and comprehensive statewide audit of all known engineered stone workplaces in Queensland with ongoing compliance and enforcement; and introducing free WorkCover health screening for over 1,000 Queensland workers and \$5 million for medical research into occupational lung disease.

The Queensland government led the nation. In 2019 we introduced Australia's first code of practice for the stone benchtop industry, Australia's first dust lung disease register and in 2023 Australia's first code of practice for managing silica dust exposure in construction and manufacturing. This is an issue we have been very vocal about on this side of the House and I have consistently called for a national response. In fact, I wrote six times to former Morrison government ministers on this critical safety issue and received no response of substance. What a breath of fresh air it is to work with the Albanese Labor government, which actually cares about workers and is taking significant action on this scourge.

I want to thank Commonwealth workplace relations minister Tony Burke for taking the lead and working with states and territories to deliver this important ban. Workplace health and safety ministers will meet again in March to consider matters relevant to the introduction of this ban including transitional arrangements for existing contracts and a national framework for removal, repair and minor modification of existing products. I have always said the best way to manage a risk in the workplace is to eliminate it if possible and I am proud that Queensland has led the way for this to happen. That is because we know that occupational dust lung diseases can severely impact the lives of workers and their families.

The Miles government will always stand up for workers. Our record is second to none and we are proud of it.