



Factsheet for the consultation on engineered stone and materials containing crystalline silica 2024–2025

BACKGROUND

This is an overview of the *Work with engineered stone and materials containing crystalline silica* discussion document. This resource is to support people and organisations who want to make a submission.

The Government is committed to a health and safety system that is clear, understandable, and effective, so that it supports businesses and organisations to focus on preventing harm to workers.

MBIE is consulting on options to address risks to workers resulting from engineered stone and other materials that contain crystalline substances, aiming to manage risks of worker exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) so far as is reasonably practicable.

WHY ARE WE CONSULTING ON THIS?

Respirable crystalline silica (RCS), or silica dust, forms a significant health risk to workers who cut, drill, grind, crush, polish, or otherwise disturb materials that contain crystalline silica, such as engineered stone. Inhalation of RCS causes this crystalline silica to penetrate deeply into the lungs, and lead to a range of respiratory diseases, including silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and lung cancer.

All workers who come into contact with RCS are at risk of developing chronic silicosis, a fibrotic disease of the lungs. Evidence shows that workers who fabricate engineered stone are at significant risk of developing ‘accelerated silicosis’, a more aggressive form of silicosis seen after larger exposures to RCS over shorter timeframes (typically three to ten years).

Current health and safety arrangements in place rely on general duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) without controls being specified. WorkSafe inspections indicate that workplace practices have not been standardised across industry, and additional regulatory requirements may be needed to ensure practices are sufficiently durable to reduce long-term risks to workers.

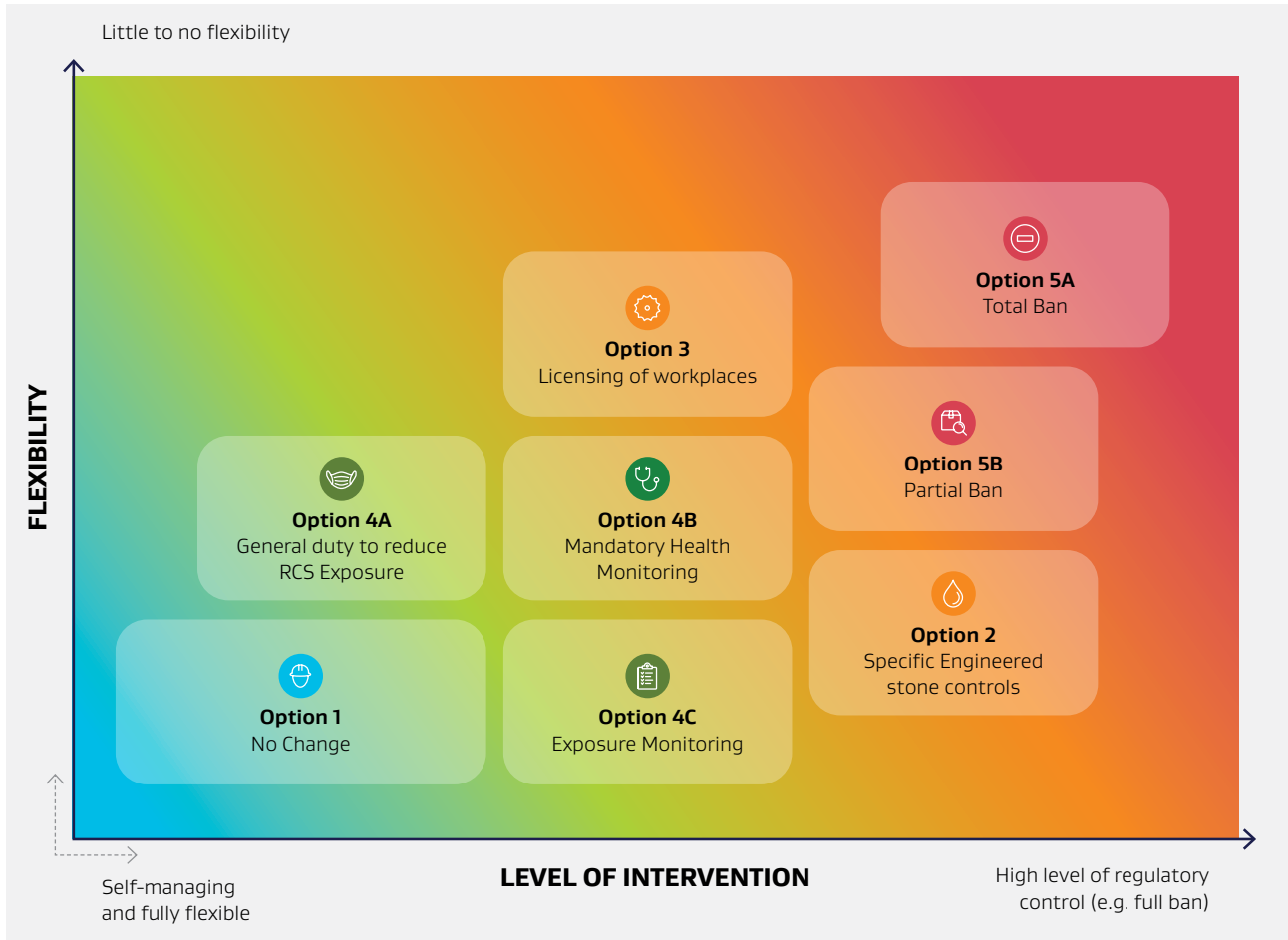
WHAT ARE WE CONSULTING ON?

We are consulting on a range of options that would eliminate or reduce risks to workers frequently exposed to RCS. These options include:

1. Maintaining the status quo (no change).
2. Implementing specific mandatory requirements for processing engineered stone.
3. Licencing of workplaces that fabricate engineered stone.
4. Increased general duties, health, and exposure monitoring in all workplaces where workers are likely exposed to RCS.
5. Limiting the import, supply, or use of engineered stone in workplaces.

The options included in the consultation are preliminary only, and there is no preferred option or package of options. Their inclusion does not mean that changes will be made, and we note that new options may be developed based on submissions received.

Options range in flexibility and the level of intervention.



Full version [here](#)

WHAT DO WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ON?

We ask a series of questions throughout the discussion document. Your answers and any additional information that you can provide, will help us determine what is the best option or package of options to ensure workers' health and safety in engineered stone and other industries in which workers are exposed to RCS.

Timeline

- › *December*: Consultation opens on 17 December 2024.
- › *March*: Consultation closes 17 March 2025.
- › *2025*: MBIE reviews submissions and provides advice to Government.*

*Timelines for the review will depend on the information received in the consultation and any new or emerging issues along the way.

HAVE YOUR SAY

The consultation on engineered stone and materials containing crystalline silica opens for public comment on **17 December 2024 and runs until 5pm, Monday 17 December 2025.**

→ To read the discussion document and for guidance on giving feedback, go to MBIE's engineered stone consultation web page: mbie.govt.nz/have-your-say/work-with-engineered-stone-and-materials-containing-crystalline-silica

