



Australian Government

Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Council

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Communique

Meeting 2 and 3 – 16 May and 12 June 2024

The [Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Council](#) (the Council) held its second and third meetings as extraordinary sessions, on 16 May 2024 and 12 June 2024. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were acknowledged, and respects paid to their Elders, past and present.

The meetings were convened to enable the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency (the Agency) to present, discuss and finalise the draft of the first Silica National Strategic Plan 2024–30 (SNSP), as well as the SNSP Companion and supporting material. This built on advice provided by the Council on a proposed process and broad content for the SNSP discussed at the Council's first meeting in March 2024.

The SNSP sets out how governments and other key stakeholders will work together to prevent exposure to respirable crystalline silica in Australian workplaces, to eliminate silica-related diseases. With up to 1.45 million Australians working in industries where they may be exposed to respirable crystalline silica, urgent and focussed action is needed to improve safety standards and increase our understanding of the risks and how to address them. Also given the new silica functions of the Agency, it was acknowledged that initial stages of the SNSP will involve building relationships and knowledge of the national and international silica landscape.

In the May 2024 meeting, the Council was provided with a high-level summary of the feedback received during targeted consultation on the SNSP in April 2024. The Council was also provided with drafts of the SNSP and SNSP Companion following this meeting. In the June 2024 meeting, an updated draft of the SNSP was provided, incorporating changes based on feedback.

Council members acknowledged that the SNSP has been formed by findings of reviews, including Senate and Ministerial inquiries, work of the National Dust Disease Taskforce, and the preliminary work led by the Department of Health and Aged Care with the Lung Foundation Australia. Along with research and extensive consultation, the SNSP reflects the fundamental right of all Australians to a healthy and safe working environment, as recognised nationally and internationally.

In addition, the Council noted that the SNSP, when endorsed, will represent the commitment of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, along with non-government entities, experts, unions, industry, support groups and other stakeholders, to address and ultimately eliminate silica-related disease in Australia. The Council acknowledged and thanked those who contributed to the initial draft of the plan, including the Lung Foundation Australia, members of the multi-disciplinary and multi-sector Expert Steering Committee, Reference Group and the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Council members provided final feedback on the final draft of the SNSP and agreed that, subject to the issues raised being addressed by the Agency, it be sent to ministers for endorsement through the Commonwealth Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. The SNSP Companion and a



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summary of feedback provided to the Agency since becoming responsible for the plan in December 2023 would also be provided for contextual information only.

The next Council meeting will be held in Canberra on 31 July 2024.