



CLIMATE AND
HEALTH
ALLIANCE

Media release

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Coal combustion putting lives at risk

Coal-fired power generation is putting million of lives at risk around the world, a [new review](#) of the scientific evidence has found.

The [scientific literature review](#), conducted by environmental health experts at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), reveals pollutants generated from coal combustion have profound effects on the health of local communities but can also travel long distances, affecting communities remote from power plants.

Lead author Dr. Susan Buchanan, Director of the University of Illinois Pediatric Environmental Health Unit said: "Every step of the lifecycle of coal generates pollution that is harmful to human health, but the bulk of the health burden is associated with pollutants from combustion for electricity."

The review found air pollution from coal combustion was responsible for over 200,000 deaths globally each year, and caused almost two million serious illnesses, and 151 million minor illnesses. These figures do not include the health burden from climate change, to which coal is a significant contributor.

The review adds to a [suite](#) of recent [studies](#) that point to significant harms associated with the entire lifecycle of coal production, adding further weight to the scientific evidence that supports the advocacy of health groups seeking a transition away from coal on the grounds of harm to human health.

Climate and Health Alliance Convenor Fiona Armstrong said the latest review provided further evidence of that coal-fired power must be phased out and tighter regulation of the industry was needed.

"Current energy policy does not account for the harm to human health that is being by the combustion of coal and fossil fuels for electricity generation and transport," Ms Armstrong said.

"The health and wellbeing of Australians and people worldwide is being compromised by policies that privilege and prioritise the extraction and combustion of fossil fuels over safer, healthier, lower emissions, renewable energy resources."

The Climate and Health Alliance is calling for: the removal of subsidies for fossil fuels and for greater support for clean energy technologies such as solar and wind; for enhanced air quality standards to reduce exposure to harmful pollutants from coal; and for all new coal projects to be required undertake a comprehensive health impact assessment to evaluate the potential for harm to human health.

Download the report at http://www.noharm.org/global/news_hcwh/2012/dec/hcwh2013-04-10.php.

For media enquiries or to speak to health experts regarding coal and health, contact Fiona Armstrong convenor@caha.org.au or 0438900005.