



CLIMATE AND
HEALTH
ALLIANCE

MEDIA RELEASE

1 September 2011

Expansion of coal must stop, health groups say

The Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) has spoken out today in support of community concerns regarding the environmental and health effects of new coal mines being proposed in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

“Coal is a health hazard,” Fiona Armstrong, CAHA Convenor said.

“There is long standing and well established evidence that the mining, transportation, and combustion of coal are all extremely hazardous to human health.

Research from Europe published in the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* estimates that 24 people die for every TWh of coal combusted,¹ from the harmful effects of the airborne particulates, nitrogen oxide, and toxic metals such as mercury and lead released.

“The reality is – coal kills,” Ms Armstrong said. “In addition, the mining of coal exposes workers and local communities to dangerous coal dust, and it is a dangerous occupation in terms of health and safety.”

“Coal mining and the combustion of coal for electricity carries serious health risks, including cancer, heart and lung disease, and stroke.”

The Alliance’s comments come as Victorians rally in protest against a coal mine being proposed by Mantle Mining for the Bacchus Marsh region in central Victoria and during a legal challenge to prevent the approval of what would be one of the largest coal mines in the Southern Hemisphere near the town of Wandoan in southwest Queensland.

“There is no doubt that the mining of coal leads to otherwise avoidable deaths, and these deaths increase according to the amount of coal mined and the amount burned for energy generation,” Ms Armstrong said.

It is estimated the one billion tonnes of coal reserves from the Wandoan coal mine would generate 1.3 billion tons of carbon emissions over 30 years and destroy 11,000 hectares of farmland. The resource base for the Bacchus Marsh mine is estimated at between 1-2 billion tonnes of coal. New mines are also proposed for the Gunnedah Basin in NSW.

“The use of coal for electricity generation, whether in Australian or exported overseas, is not only directly harming human health, but it is driving climate change – which also poses serious and increasing threats to human health,” Ms Armstrong said.

“It is time Australian governments acted in the interests of the citizens they represent and not in the interests of large corporations by ceasing to grant any further approvals for coal mining. Community health and wellbeing must come first.”

CAHA members include: Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW); Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM); Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS); Australian Hospitals and Healthcare Association (AHHA); Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA); Australian Institute of Health Innovation (AIHI); Australian Women’s Health Network (AWHN); Australian Nursing Federation (ANF); Australian Psychological Society; Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN); CRANA^{plus}; Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA); Doctors Reform Society; Friends of CAHA; Health Consumers’ Network (Qld); Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA); Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP); North Yarra Community Health (NYCH); Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH); Women’s Health in the North; World Vision.

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¹ Markandya, A., and Wilkinson, P. Energy and Health 2: Electricity generation and health, *The Lancet*, Sep 15-Sep 21, 2007; 370, 9591.