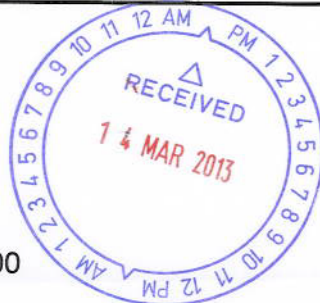


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Senate Enquiry
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Inquiry into the Impacts on Health of Air Quality in Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a personal view of the dust that pervades the Hunter Valley and what I believe its the effect on the health of residents living here.

My wife and I moved to the Hunter Valley four years ago to retire into what we thought was a quiet country area with a lot of wineries and bushlands. However it is apparent that the view that most people have of the tranquil Hunter Valley is anything but true. In addition to the 24 hour noise we have the incessant problems of dust not only in the air but depositing onto our external furniture, over vehicles and into our lungs.

The mining companies deny that the dust is as a result of open cut mining activities and that ploughed fields cause most of the dust. A drive around the upper Hunter Valley on a windy day after dry period will identify the dust source as being from the open cut mines and the thousands of square metres of non-rehabilitated areas and overburden stockpiles.

The frustrating part of all this is that the various government departments and the NSW Mineral's Council all discuss the problem but there appears to be no solution for the dust that is produced by open cut mines.

I read the various reports that have been produced by the University of Newcastle and by the World Health Organisation and both of these institutions state that there is no safe level for dust and particular the levels of the PM2.5s. Thus the max levels of Total Suspended Particles (TSP) as decreed by the government environmental protection agencies offer no guarantees of safe air.

There must be no dust produced by industry that is injurious to health. That should be the starting point.

Reports from the air quality monitoring stations through this part of the Hunter Valley show that there are numerous exceedences of dust level that are injurious to health and yet approval for new mines and expansions to existing open cut mines goes on unabated.

Since coming to the Hunter Valley I have suffered a heart attack and my wife has recently contracted breast cancer. Of course we are unable to relate these directly to the environment in which we live as there is no proof of the relationship. However we read research that shows a relationship between environmental factors and heart disease, cancer etc.

We are continually cleaning our external furniture to remove the dust and our drinking water tanks have deposits of black sludge requiring regular emptying and cleaning. The black dust from the open cut mines deposits onto our roofs and then is washed by the rain into our drinking water tanks.

My granddaughter who lived with us in the Hunter Valley for the first 15 months of her life developed asthma and ongoing problems with upper respiratory infections. She left with her mother after 15 months seeking cleaner and healthier air. The Hunter valley should be the perfect place to bring up children but it is not.

The Environmental Protection Agency seems powerless or unwilling to enforce the maximum or nil dust levels and to me, the Mining lobby groups have more clout with the monitoring and protection agencies than do the residents. The EPA is supposed to protect us not to protect the mining interest's bottom line.

I look forward to hearing the outcomes from the Inquiry and trust that residents in the Hunter and elsewhere will benefit from the due consideration to be given to the various unprejudiced reports on dust and its effect on health.

Yours sincerely,

John Krey