

26th January 2013

Senate Committees: The impacts on health of air quality in Australia

To Committee secretary



The terms of reference of the enquiry,

A) Particulate matter, its sources and effects-

- Mining industry, coal fired power generation and heavy industry- is the main concern in the hunter of nsw or areas under cumulative impacts.
- It is important to raise the issue of a cumulative area impact; it is common practice now to look at an individual application to state, commonwealth or local council. The saturation point of the PM is not assessed in the larger scale, and the continue high levels and the effects on the population would be scene in the future generations in such areas of education in the IQ of the population,
- Increase demand on health services in all areas
- Lack of planning in our system to ensure balance of the environment to ensure economic sustainability
- Rehabilitation of the mining industry overburden dumps- what are the health impacts if used for agriculture or stock grazing
- Voids created by the industry especially mining, the leaching of contaminated water into the soils or overburden dumps and become airborne as PM, the health impacts on humans and the environment in whole but most important the food chain. If an area like the hunter in NSW will have up to 30 voids what is the cumulative impact to the health of the environment.

B) Those populations most at risk and the causes that put those at risk

- Near neighbours to mining as individual families, or small communities as villages
- From experience 500 meters is to close and has caused health issues, related to mining- so the distance must be identified in which noise, PM and blasting from the mining industry that does not cause any harm- as the industry can only mitigate it does not control the hazard from leaving its lease area.
- The cumulative impact of number of mines on a community- of large doses of PM a prime example is the villages in the Hunter- Camberwell, Broke and Bulga and the ones lost for ever more Ravensworth and Walkworth
- To many blasting activities in one area, producing large releases of PM, especially in the hunter in could be up to 50 blasts in 50km radius on one day, especially when a mine is allowed up to three blasts a day and this could depend on the size of the operation- what is the cumulative impact on the whole of the Hunter to health, is this the reason for high asthma and cancer.

C) The Standards, monitoring and regulation of air quality at all levels of government

- Australian standard on PM2.5 and PM1 needs to be done ASAP; there were submissions on this topic three years ago. Other international nations already have this apart of the government standard and yet Australia has been left at the gate too concern about the influence from mining and energy industry to protect them rather than protect the health of the citizens of this nation.
- National standard on monitoring of cumulative PM and monitoring network to identify danger zones in air quality which is not controlled by industry but national EPA.
- National standard for infringement penalty and closure of industry which don't comply.
- A change in the approval process related to offensive and hazardous industry, to ensure cumulative impacts on a region, this will become a three tier process local council, state and then Federal. This will ensure health of the area is not put at risk due to royalties for the state government which influences the approval process and stops the corruption which is been exposed recently in NSW. The mining industry will make an application on a project and it also has to meet a social licence from the community, what has happened in the Hunter is disgusting a death trap of which PM is in exceedances continually, so the State government process is bias to the industry but more important the last Ashton Coal project was approved by a PAC and yet the NSW health department remained opposed to the application.

On other aspects it is important we have a national EPA to govern our air quality and target the areas of concern, we have to be pro-active in the reduction of PM because the ripple effect will cost the nation millions in health and loss of environmental sustainability.

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