Calls for action on the health impacts of coal

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed a new report on coal and health in the Hunter Valley as further evidence of the need to transition away from coal use for energy on health grounds.

PHAA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Michael Moore said: “This latest report from the Climate and Health Alliance illustrates the dangers of coal for local communities and for the world, due to their effects on the local communities and contribution to global warming.”

The report comes on the heels of a statement from the world’s public health associations, released on behalf of the 1600 delegates from over 100 countries attending the World Congress on Public Health in Kolkata last week.

The Kolkata Call to Action includes a call for a “rapid phase out of coal for electricity production” and “greater investment in renewable energy technologies as a significant investment in global health and healthy communities”.

It includes a warning against nuclear power and gas extracted using fracking.

“This statement demonstrates the overwhelming consensus among public health professionals worldwide that burning fossil fuels is no longer compatible with a healthy environment or society. The local health hazards from coal, and its huge contribution to global warming, require coal production to be phased out and energy production to shift to renewable sources,” said Mr Moore.

Mr Moore said the recommendations of the Coal and Health in the Hunter: Lessons from one valley for the world report in calling for a ban on new coal licences, so that coal production in the region can be peak and decline, was justifiable and necessary for both local and global community health.

“The Hunter community is an example of a community that has been forced to accept risks to their health as a result of living near coal mines and coal fired power stations. The Hunter Valley is only one region of the many worldwide for whom health is being sacrificed for our energy needs.

“Coal is also a major driver of global warming and its continued use is incompatible with the urgent need to limit global warming to curb the dangerous impacts of climate change on the spread of disease, displacement of communities, extreme weather, food security and social cohesion.

“The good news is that many safer, healthier alternatives exist. It is time the NSW Government invested in supporting the Hunter Valley region to move away from coal – and working with the communities there to develop alternative industries to maintain their economies,” said Mr Moore.


The full text of the 2015 Kolkata Call to Action can be found at: http://www.wfpha.org/images/events/150216_Kolkata_Call_to_Action_FINAL.pdf

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