NSW Government is putting the coal industry ahead of health

The Public Health Association of Australia has condemned the NSW Government’s plans to weaken environmental protections and wind back climate laws.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Planning Minister Rob Stokes are moving to amend NSW Planning laws removing the requirement to consider climate change impacts when coal mines and gas projects are being assessed for their environmental impact.

The changes would remove the requirement to assess or establish conditions to mitigate ‘downstream’ carbon emissions, that is, the emissions released over the life cycle of extracted coal, including distribution, storage and use.

“This is a retrograde move, especially given all we know about accelerating and dangerous climate change and its impacts on health,” said PHAA NSW branch president, Dr Patrick Harris.

“It will make it easier for polluting resource companies to have their developments approved.”

“During this week, as massive bushfires rage across the state causing devastation and increased air-pollution, the Berejiklian Government is putting the profits of the coal industry over and above the public interest and public health,” Dr Harris said.

“The amendments tip the balance in favour of international coal and fossil fuel industries and against health, social and environmental considerations.”

The NSW parliament is also reviewing the role of the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) in approving contentious and significant infrastructure projects such as new coal mines.

“The IPC works in the public interest which is fundamental to public health. It was established in response to persistent concerns about political corruption.”

“The plans not only accommodate the demands of the mining industry lobby, they reduce the independence of decision makers and expose the government to perceptions it is open to corruption from developers,” Dr Harris said.

The legislation to amend NSW planning laws is expected to be debated this week, as early as today Tuesday, November 12.

ENDS

For further information or comment from Dr Patrick Harris
Media contact: Toni Hassan 0426 207 726 thassan@phaa.net.au