

Doctors for the Environment Australia Policy Statement on Coal Mining and Combustion and Health

Preamble:

The production and burning of coal is the major driver of global carbon emissions and therefore climate change. Australia is the world's 4th largest producer of coal exceeded by China, USA and India.

Australia is the largest exporter of coal in the world, 243 Mt in 2011 with most going to Japan. The export of coal is expected to double or treble over the next few decades with many large new mines coming into production

In terms of domestic emissions per capita Australia leads the world. If we include exported coal, emissions per capita become much greater. James Hansen the respected US climate scientist has said *Coal-fired power stations are death factories. Close them.*¹

On this basis Australians must qualify as the world's undertakers.

In defining its policy DEA is mindful of the fact that coal mining and combustion is a major cause of death and injury throughout the world. The local pollutions from mining and combustion cause cardio-respiratory and other illnesses whilst the global use of coal causes sickness and loss of life through climate change impacts.

POLICY

On health grounds, DEA opposes the development of new coal mines in Australia and the export of coal.

DEA supports the urgent phase out of coal fired power stations and their replacement with renewable energy sources. This should commence with the most polluting power stations.

We oppose the use of any form of subsidy for coal mines and coal exports.

We propose that all externalities be included in the cost of coal- specifically, health and environmental impacts.

We support increased environmental monitoring including ambient air studies for all existing mines and power stations. This monitoring should be performed by an independent Authority with a transparent public reporting requirement.

We propose that all new development be subject to an independent national health impact assessment process.

DEA proposes the establishment of a National Council for Coal and Health to oversee independent research into the health impacts of coal mining and combustion.

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¹ <http://solveclimate.com/blog/20091124/why-we-must-phase-out-coal-emissions>