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ALLIANCE

Senate Committee Report chronicles deadly risks of coal mining

Media release

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The health of all coal workers should be assessed and monitored as part of a comprehensive response to the Senate inquiry into the re-emergence of black lung disease in Queensland, the Climate and Health Alliance said today.

A report from the Senate Select Committee on Health tabled in Federal Parliament yesterday chronicles the devastating personal impacts for Queensland workers diagnosed with black lung disease; an entirely preventable illness that was believed to have been eradicated among Australian miners.

Also known as pneumoconiosis, black lung disease is a result of exposure to coal dust, either in workplaces or those living or working in close proximity to coal production facilities (mining and transportation).

The Senate report into recent cases in Queensland found both industry and government failures, with inadequate regulation of workplace exposures, as well as poor health monitoring procedures for people and workers at risk.

Climate and Health Alliance executive director Fiona Armstrong said: "This report reveals a shocking truth about coal mining: that as well as being environmentally destructive, it can also be deadly for workers.

"There must be a comprehensive national response to ensure no more workers are put at risk. This must include stringent regulations to prevent workplace exposure to coal dust, coupled with thorough health assessments and monitoring for all workers in the industry."

Ms Armstrong said coal was damaging people's health at a global level as well as on a local level.

"Burning coal for electricity is causing climate mayhem, which is destroying the planet and our health. New coal mines should be banned and existing mines should be rapidly phased out."