

11 November 2016

CWP Inquiry
Sub No. 021

Research Director
CWP Select Committee, Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

By email: cwpsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Re: CWP Select Committee – Submission by the Black Lung Victims Group

We write on behalf of the Black Lung Victims Group, which has been formed to support and advocate for coalmine workers now suffering from a disease that Australia had supposedly eradicated.

There are at least 30 workers like us with black lung disease in Queensland and many more unconfirmed. We are innocent victims suffering from this disease because of the failure of mining companies and government regulators to ensure a safe workplace over many decades. We worked in the mines, we know how bad the dust is and we know what to do to reduce it. We are the ones with most at stake who are suffering from this disease and we would like our voices heard.

We have come forward because we believe it is the right thing to do, but many are too frightened to come forward for risk of losing their job – and everything with it – with little hope of compensation because there is no scheme to support them and the workplace compensation system is stacked against them – as it was for asbestos sufferers before reforms were made.

We came to work, not to die, and now we are seeking your personal and urgent intervention because we need to do more now rather than later. We are calling for:

1. A victims' fund through an industry levy of 10c per tonne on all coal produced in Queensland to support victims and changes to workers compensation so that the system protects and supports black lung victims;
2. Reductions in legal dust levels in Queensland to 2.5mg per cubic metre; and
3. Introduction of independent and transparent dust reporting and monitoring, including giving Check Inspectors the right to conduct spot checks on any mine, at any time, without notice; and recorded dust levels reported publicly (identified, by mine) on a public website.

Sadly, we have lost confidence these changes will happen without intervention.

These might be difficult steps, but we need change and help now. Please hear our calls – the current Government inherited this crisis and now has the opportunity to resolve it where others have failed.

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