

Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee Inquiry into Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis

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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Cover coal wagons with lids
- Greatly improve permitted standards of air pollution in the COAG agreement (of which various parts of the coal transport cycle are contributors) so that its effects on the new born and pregnant are mitigated . Air pollution monitoring standards likewise need improvement. Monitoring should reflect concerns about Anthracosis -mild 'black lung '.
- We believe we should achieve world's best practice in coal dust and air pollution tolerances.
- Prevent use of the most polluting, carcinogenic, unfiltered diesel locomotives in the towns and cities of Queensland with transition to electrified locomotives
- Measure the cost to community health of the coal cycle from beginning to end and make it public and consider who should foot the financial burden.
- Recognise the particular dangers of Ipswich underground station and of school children's special vulnerability to air pollution as well as possible effects on rail workers and the lung impaired travelling to Ipswich hospitals and nearby residents
- Recognise the particular dangers of those near the Port stockpile and cover this stockpile as well as those living or working closest to the line.

'Black Lung' seems have gone unnoticed due to poor monitoring. It may affect those in the transport process and routes, some working directly with coal trains and some merely proximate to it. In fact it does have a wide spread milder form called Anthracosis {1} much more widely spread in the community {2} but includes a spectrum of irritants. We note that US standards are lower than our standards in respect to occupational coal dust {3}

We think the monitoring of coal transport and stockpiling is also inadequate and insufficiently monitored and the general standards used by COAG are inadequate as Adrian Barnett shows {4}

We would hate those most exposed to this *mostly* non-occupation pollution suffer a similar, if likely a milder fate as that of the Queensland miners suffering Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis. Children are both more sensitive and breathe twice as fast.

Uncovered coal wagons are being hauled through townships, Ipswich, which is an unmonitored underground station (the only one in Australia, we think) and used daily by many children and adults. It is also hauled through Brisbane suburbs, now densely populated near the stations, thanks to government legislation. This public maybe at risk from this coal freight haulage

This haulage is done by old and dirty, unfiltered diesel locomotives, both engines and wagons emitting a plume of toxic chemicals including carcinogens. Coal dust itself contains highly toxic minerals, as well as irritating the respiratory system. This situation is unsuitable for the vulnerable, in the short term, exacerbating anybody's pre-existing respiratory conditions.

Veneering of wagon loads does not prevent all fugitive dust. The debris is stirred up by passenger trains in almost the same degree as the coal trains themselves but only one is the cause. There have been no independent studies of the effect of veneering. Again poor monitoring methodology may be an issue including the overall idea of self assessment.

The coal is stockpiled without a cover at the Port and left in wagons at a siding at Corinda for several hours.

All air pollution is now, world-wide, as a compared to any other agent is the cause of the most mortality and morbidity (5). Air pollution in general has been linked to problems in pregnancy and low birth weight by Prof Barnett in a Logan study and by the WHO including still births.

These medical problems occur at levels of pollution well below the agreed COAG standards, which need to be reviewed. This and issues of proximity and regularity of monitoring prevent the true story being told.

The volume of coal and train haulage traffic may soon be considerably increased.

With continual exposure there may be cases of this milder Black Lung amongst railworkers or those proximate to the line or other diseases. We don't know. That is the problem.

1 (anthrac- meaning coal, carbon + -osis meaning condition) is defined in Bioline as, "the asymptomatic, milder type of pneumoconiosis as caused by the accumulation of carbon in the lungs due to repeated exposure to air pollution or inhalation of smoke or coal dust particles" (1).

2 [Anthracosis of the Lungs: Etiology, Clinical Manifestations and ... - NCBI](#)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4386010/>

Wikipedia entry on Anthracosis fn Cotran; Kumar, Collins. Robbins Pathologic Basis of Disease. Philadelphia: W.B Saunders Company. [ISBN 0-7216-7335-X](#).

3) <http://theconversation.com/black-lungs-back-how-we-became-complacent-with-coal-miners-pneumoconiosis-57718>

4) eprints.qut.edu.au/79021/

by AG Barnett - 2014 - [Cited by 4](#) - [Related articles](#)

Nov 14, 2015 - Barnett, Adrian G. (2014) It's safe to say there is no safe level of air pollution. Australian and new Zealand Journal of Public Health, 38(5), pp.It's safe to say there's no safe level of air pollution. Associate Professor Adrian G Barnett, Queensland University of Technology

5) <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/feb/13/war-air-pollution-fought-cities>