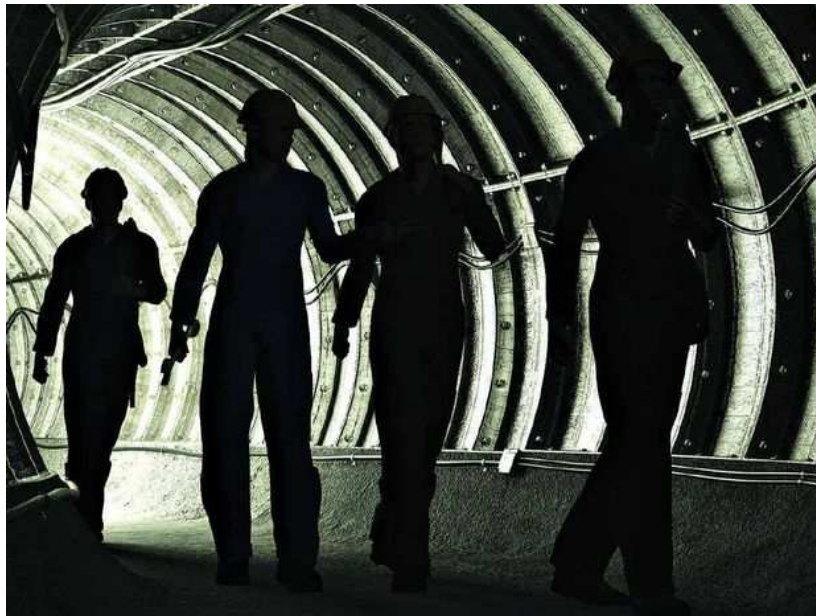


Senator: Queensland black lung review 'pretty useless'



Emma McBryde | 7th Mar 2016 2:29 PM Updated: 5:56 PM



The review examines screening of black lung in Queensland miners, but a Queensland Senator says it neglects the cause of the disease and prevention measures.

A SENATOR has described the Queensland Government-commissioned review into the re-emergence of the black lung as "pretty useless".

Six miners in the State have been diagnosed with coal worker's pneumoconiosis - the first time the condition has been diagnosed in 30 years.

Sen Doug Cameron told two mining companies that appeared before a Senate health committee in Brisbane that it was pointless not to deal with the condition's cause - coal dust.

Two companies that have had workers diagnosed with coal worker's pneumoconiosis, Anglo-American Coal and Vale, agreed they would support a review into dust levels.

The current review headed by Monash University Professor Malcolm Sim is looking into the medical screening system, the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme, set up to ensure miners have their health checked periodically.

The review is also going over miners' x-rays for signs of the condition.

Mines Minister Anthony Lynham also announced in January an investigation into regulatory changes, as part of the mine safety legislation review already underway.

"This Sim inquiry is pretty useless if it does not deal with the issues of the cause," Sen Cameron said.

"And the cause is dust mitigation and dust monitoring."

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union also backed a review into dust suppression.

But Queensland Resources Council chief Michael Roche refused to back expanding the current review or instigating a new review into dust levels without first viewing Prof Sim's interim report.

The interim report will soon be submitted to the government.

Prof Sim and his colleague working on the review, Associate Professor Deborah Glass from the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health, agreed that dust levels needed to be investigated.

ADVERTISEMENT

Mobile Plant, Trucks & Equipment AUCTION
MOSTLY UNRESERVED
 BID ONLINE & ONSITE View The Full Auction Catalogue sbauktion.com.au
 SMITH BROUGHTON AUCTIONEERS

JUST IN

AUDIO, PHOTOS: Driver's car stranded in flood water

Police search for missing Fairfield woman Janice Moulis

Port Curtis worker drove high on ice, changed woman's life

Gunman takes his own life after killing man in Sydney

Senator: Queensland black lung review 'pretty useless'

VIDEO: Speed, alcohol ruled out as factors in horror crash

"I absolutely agree the main focus is to control dust in coal mines," Prof Sim said.

He said he believed his medical review was to be the first in a series of phases investigating the black lung's re-emergence.

Prof Glass said prevention was much better than "identifying after the fact".

"Prevention needs adequate control and you can control much better by air measurements in the mines rather than looking for cases of disease... 30 odd years down the track," she said.

"Most other countries have lower exposure (of dust) than we do."

Department of Natural Resources and Mines Director-General James Purtill told the hearing that eight of Queensland's 10 underground mines did not comply with regulated dust levels in 2015.

Mr Purtill was not sure how many miners worked at the eight mines, but said Queensland had about 5000 underground miners.

Anglo-American Coal, which runs Moranbah and Grasstree mines, and Vale, which runs Carborough Downs Mine, admitted dust levels at their mines had at times exceeded the regulated levels.

Mr Purtill said all of Queensland's underground mines were now compliant.

Both companies have implemented real-time dust monitors at their underground mines since the re-emergence of the black lung.

They said the government had never fined them for breaching regulated levels.

Mr Purtill said one of the main issues causing the recent rapid increase in dust levels was a change in mining techniques.

Sen Cameron was shocked Mr Purtill and the mining companies' senior officials had not heard of a 2011 University of Wollongong paper warning of the increase in exposure levels from improved longwall mining equipment.

Sen Cameron asked Mr Purtill why the mines safety and health commissioner and chief inspector did not attend the hearing and if they would be available on Wednesday to speak with the senators by teleconference.

The committee will hold a hearing in Mackay on Tuesday. - ARM NEWSDESK

More information for radiologists needed

MONASH University Professors Malcolm Sim and Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists representative Dr Richard Slaughter told the Senate health committee that radiologists needed to be given more information when checking miners' x-rays.

They said radiologists were sometimes unaware people being x-rayed had backgrounds in the mining industry, and were simply directed to complete "pre-employment x-rays".

RANZCR on Friday published a register of 35 radiologists experienced in screening for pneumoconiosis.

Patients can access those clinical radiologists at 64 locations that are detailed on RANZCR's website, ranzcr.edu.au. - ARM NEWSDESK