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Help us Make Black Lung History



11 August 2016

The Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk MP  
Premier of Queensland  
PO Box 15185  
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Premier,

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:

- An industry-funded victims' 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;
- A Royal Commission into Black Lung disease;
- Reductions in legal dust levels in Queensland to 2.5mg per cubic metre; and
- 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 from the top – from you.

These might be difficult steps, but we need change and help now, Premier. Please hear our calls – this should be the stuff Labor Governments are made of. Your Government inherited this crisis and now has the opportunity to resolve it where others have failed.

We seek an urgent meeting with you to discuss these issues as soon as possible and would appreciate your earliest possible reply.

Yours faithfully,

Percy Verrall, Keith Stoddard and Steve Mellor  
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