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COAL RESEARCH ASSISTANCE BILL 1977

Date Introduced: 1 November 1977  
House: House of Representatives  
Presented by: The Right Honourable J.D. Anthony, M.P.,  
Minister for National Resources

Short Digest of Bill

Purpose

The Bill establishes a Coal Research Trust Account to finance scientific, technical and economic research concerning coal and its derivatives.

Background

There is already significant work being done in many areas of coal research by a variety of Commonwealth and State departments, authorities and universities, as well as in private enterprise. A report entitled *Coal Research in Australia 1976* prepared by the National Coal Research Advisory Committee shows that work in hand includes the following broad areas with many specific related projects:

- Production of synthetic oil and chemicals;
- Environmental aspects of combustion;
- Mining research;
- Coal preparation;
- Assessments of resources;
- Gasification of coal;
- Safety;
- Upgrading of low quality coals;
- Increased utilisation of low grade coals.

Some of the authorities and concerns involved are: C.S.I.R.O., Broken Hill Pty. Co. Ltd., State Mines Departments, State Electricity Commissions, Universities, The Joint Coal Board.

In addition to the support of coal research within the C.S.I.R.O. the Australian Government has for many years financed and administered a scheme for applied coal research. Grants have been allocated to projects yearly on the advice of the National Coal Research Advisory Committee. The Committee consists of a small number of senior officers from government departments and industry nominated by the Minister for National Resources. However, the funds available are comparatively limited—\$0.4 million in 1976–77.

*Coal Research Assistance Bill 1977 (Bills Digest 137, 1977)*

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Recent reports of the Advisory Committee stress that a much more extensive research program is essential because of the vital role to be played by coal in satisfying Australia's future energy requirements.

Total expenditure in Australia on coal research was \$9.5 million in 1976–77.

Together with the *Excise Tariff Amendment Bill (No. 2) 1977* this Bill gives effect to the Treasurer's statement in the Budget Speech that to finance increased coal research the Government will levy 5 cents a tonne on coal produced in Australia in the next three years. According to the Budget Speech this will provide an estimated amount of \$3.4 million in 1977–78.

### Provisions

Clause 3 gives a wide definition of "research" to embrace scientific, technical and economic projects. It covers work incidental to research including training, publication of material and dissemination of information and advice.

Clause 4 establishes the Coal Research Trust Account.

Clause 5 states that one-third of excise on coal is to be paid into the Trust Account as from 17 August 1977. The clause also provides for payment of other moneys which are connected with the purpose of the Account. It contains in sub-clause 5(2) the necessary appropriation from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of moneys equivalent to one-third of the excise, to be paid into the Research Account.

Clauses 6, 7, 8 and 9 specify the working arrangements for the Account and its supervision by the Minister as follows:

- a) Authority for expenditure;
- b) Appointment of research advisory committees to make recommendations;
- c) Agreements in connexion with research work;
- d) Annual reporting on the operation of the Act.

4 November 1977

Defence, Science and Technology Group  
LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICE

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