

**From:**  
**To:** [Community Affairs Committee \(SEN\)](#)  
**Subject:** Submission to inquiry - Impacts on health of air quality in Australia  
**Date:** Tuesday, 5 March 2013 2:30:22 PM

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All steps in the process of mining and use of coal produces air pollution that is known to be damaging to health.

Combustion products of coal include particulate matter including PM2.5 and PM10 as well as larger and smaller particles.

PM10 can be inhaled into the larger air passages of the lungs and are known to cause premature death, lung and heart disease.

PM 2.5 can be inhaled into the alveoli (air sacs) of the lungs where they are difficult for the lungs to remove. Only 50% on average are removed, the rest remain and cause inflammation and scarring over time.

Exposure to PM2.5 is known to cause:

- more people presenting to hospital with heart attacks, abnormal heart rhythms and heart failure.
- Worsen chronic lung and heart disease and cause lung cancer. Impaired lung development and respiratory deaths in children.
- impacts are worse on vulnerable populations including children, the elderly and those with existing heart and lung disease.

Sulphur Dioxide - triggers asthma attacks

Volatile Organic compounds which form ground level ozone when exposed to sunlight, resulting in respiratory symptoms and lung inflammation.

Currently there are no enforceable standards for PM2.5 in Australia, and PM10 levels are often not tested near sources of pollution. For example, the closest monitoring station to the coal power stations in Morwell and Yallourn is in Traralgon.

In Queensland, air quality monitoring should be considered criminally negligent. There seems to be no comprehensive or even effective intermittent monitoring in areas and townships affected by constant pollution of both air and drinking water.

We need enforceable standards for PM2.5 and improved standards for PM10 and TSP (total suspended particulates). These should be monitored closely around sites of coal mining and coal combustion. The information should be immediately available to the public including provision of alerts to which people can subscribe so that vulnerable people can take action to protect themselves.

I am personally concerned because I have visited areas affected by coal and coal seam gas mining and have spoken with very concerned, and very much ignored, local residents. I fear that our Government agencies have been captured by mining and fossil fuel corporations and corrupted into ignoring scientific advice and requests for fairness from citizens.

To protect the health of Australians, comprehensive plans should be commenced to transition away from fossil fuel energy use and promote the use of clean, renewable energy instead.

Sue Cooke Cooke