

Senate Committee on Workplace Exposure to  
Toxic Dust and Silicosis

15/03/06

Dear Chair,

This submission is simply intended to illustrate problems with coal dust in some suburbs of Newcastle by presenting the problems that I face as a resident of Tighes Hill. I also work from my home.

Tighes Hill is a suburb quite close to Newcastle Harbour. Several Coal Loaders are located between Tighes Hill and the Harbour. Two problems arise:

- airborne coal dust regularly coats the external walls of my residence and can be found on furniture which would be regularly dusted. Further evidence is found on fruit from a tree in my garden which requires scrubbing to remove the accumulated coal dust.
- the second problem arises from the fact that residents and those who work in the area can't help but ingest the airborne coal dust as they breathe.

The joint problem is that of pollution and health. It is both an OH&S issue and one of community health.

Several observations may be pertinent to finding solutions:

- I note that the coal train wagons used to rail coal from the Hunter Valley mines to the Harbourside Coal Loaders are uncovered leaving the finely ground coal exposed to the atmosphere. Clearly, one probable source of the problem and one readily rectified.
- the transfer of the coal from rolling stock to ship requires careful analysis to identify the problem processes and develop a regulatory framework by which Coal Loaders would be required to operate.

I make this submission to your Committee to highlight a local problem that would find parallels elsewhere in Australia.

Yours sincerely,



Ian C. Shepherd

