



AT THE COAL FACE

- Coal is the dirtiest fuel. That's why Australia's per capita emissions are among the highest in the world: we use a lot of energy, and rely on burning coal to provide most of it.
- Almost half of Australia's greenhouse emissions come from burning coal.
- Coal damages the health of local communities. Coal mining and coal-fired power stations have been linked to asthma, lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke in nearby communities, according to a recent report by Physicians for Social Responsibility.
- Coal mining damages surrounding agricultural land and the water supply.
- Workers in the coal industry often face hostile employers, unsafe hours and dangerous working conditions.
- Australia's coal exports create more greenhouse pollution than all our domestic sources combined.
- 'Clean Coal' or 'Carbon Capture and Storage' technology, is a huge gamble – it is expensive and many experts say it won't work. Even worse, Greenpeace reports that the earliest possible date clean coal technology could be working on a mass scale is 2030, by which time it will be too late to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.
- According to the top NASA climate scientist James Hansen, the 'single most important action' needed to tackle the climate crisis is to reduce CO2 emissions from coal.



Hazelwood coal-fired power station Photo ©Greenpeace/Hunt



"I know lots of people who work in the coal industry – family, friends and people I went to high school with. Many of them know that we need to phase out coal in order to stop climate change. We have to support coal miners so they feel more confident asking for a transition out of coal that guarantees decent jobs and wages."

LHMU member Zane Alcorn



"On some days the coal station emits white 'fly ash' which is pretty toxic stuff, full of poisons. It'll eat through the paint on your car if you leave it on there." LHMU member Mary Smith – industrial cleaner at Port August coal-fired power station.

Climate Justice Factsheet



LHMU member Mary Smith is a cleaner at Port Augusta coal-fired power station.

“People here in Port Augusta are worried about the health impacts of the coal-fired power station. On some days the coal station emits white ‘fly ash’ which is pretty toxic stuff, full of poisons. It’ll eat through the paint on your car if you leave it on there.”

“Some retired power station workers get sick, but it’s hard to link back to their work in the plant – just like used to happen with asbestos.”

Mary would like to see a shift away from coal for health of her community and the environment.

“It would be better to switch to natural gas in the short term, and then to wind power. It’s cleaner and the only way to go really. This would actually create more jobs – in building and looking after the wind farms. But it takes time and investment. It won’t happen by itself overnight.”

LHMU hospitality member Zane Alcorn lives in Newcastle - the world’s largest coal export port.

“If we are going to have a transition away from coal, then workers in that industry must be confident they won’t just end up on the bread line. I think this transition is possible and necessary.

“Coal mining is a pretty tough job, with lots of people on 12 hour shifts. We need to replace these jobs with good clean energy jobs. New jobs in manufacturing wind and solar parts seems like a good solution to me.

“We have to support coal miners so they feel more confident asking for a transition out of coal that guarantees decent jobs and wages. We can’t just wait twenty years for clean coal or some such pipe dream because by then it will be too late. We have to start making deep cuts to our pollution now or this is going to get out of control.”

In the Liverpool Plains in NSW, a group of farmers and local residents have been blockading their land, to protect it from coal mining exploration. They know that coal mining will destroy productive farmland and fragile water systems.

LHMU member and Climate Connector Pat Haines lives nearby. “Living in the country you can really see the droughts and dryness with the changing climate – it’s terrible.”

“The coal companies have been trying to take farmers’ lands against their wishes – and that’s not right. People are entitled to their lands, and we need food more than companies need profits from selling coal overseas. Coal is a bit like asbestos – the worst effects on our children and climate won’t be known for years.”

Port Augusta coal-fired power station. Photo courtesy Royston Rascals

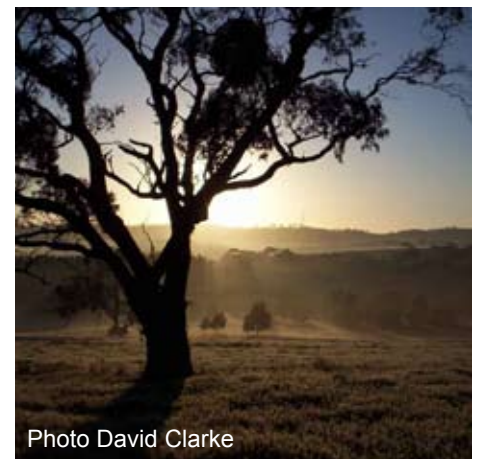


Photo David Clarke



Liverpool Plains farmers’ blockade against coal mining. Photo courtesy Caroonia Climate Action Group