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Deputy Premier
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MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 15 May 2020

NSW CRACKING DOWN ON COAL DUST

Miners working in the NSW coal industry will soon be given greater protections on the job with the NSW Government set to implement a strict new exposure standard for respirable coal dust almost two years ahead of a nationally agreed transition date.

Deputy Premier and Minister responsible for resources John Barilaro said NSW is already the national leader in mine safety and introducing the new standard early was further evidence of its commitment to best-practice for the mining industry.

Mr Barilaro said lowering the coal dust respirable standard to 1.5mg/m³ from 1 February 2021 will help ensure the long-term health and wellbeing of coal miners and further reduce their risk of suffering coal workers' pneumoconiosis, otherwise known as 'black lung disease'.

NSW's current standard of 2.5mg/m³, in place since 2004, is already the most rigorous standard in Australia.

"Coal mining is vital to the economic prosperity of NSW and underpins the state's energy needs, and the NSW Government remains committed to ensuring the men and women who work in our coal mines go home safely each day," Mr Barilaro said.

"The decision to fast-track these more stringent standards for coal dust exposure was an easy one and is a great example of mine workers, mine operators and government working together to ensure we have robust frameworks in place to address this insidious disease."

In late 2019, national work health and safety ministers met and agreed to implement the new coal dust respirable standard in the *Workplace exposure standard for airborne contaminants* from December 2022.

Introducing the standard early was recommended by the NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council (MSAC), which is made up of key employers, unions and government, with the change to be supported by a campaign from the Resources Regulator called [Black Lung Disease: An ongoing focus in NSW](#).

The campaign includes a video and posters featuring MSAC Chair, the Hon. George Souris, Chief Inspector Garvin Burns and respiratory physician Dr Deborah Yates, and is designed to educate mine workers and mine operators of the risks associated with respirable coal dust.

The Resources Regulator is also working with MSAC on further guidance around dust which will be released over the coming months.

In February 2021, NSW will also be the first mining jurisdiction in Australia to implement an exposure standard of 0.1mg/m³ for diesel particulate matter, which follows almost a decade of NSW mining industry guidance advising mine operators to comply.

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