

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **Black Lung report welcomed, but more is needed for victims**

The CFMEU today welcomed the findings of the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into Black Lung disease, but said there were matters for Government which still needed to be addressed urgently including the need for a Black Lung Victims Fund.

CFMEU Mining and Energy Division Queensland District President Stephen Smyth said the report's recommendations to lower the legal dust limit and put in place a more independent monitoring and compliance regime were key to ensuring the safety of workers in the future.

"This is great news and we look forward to all sides of politics coming in behind these recommendations. Mining companies have proven they cannot be trusted with self-regulation so anything which removes their responsibilities and puts that in the hands of an independent statutory body is a good thing."

"We need these reforms implemented as soon as possible in next sitting period and locked down prior to the next state election."

But he noted that more than 20 Queenslanders had already been diagnosed and the legacy impact of decades of neglecting the issue meant that number was likely to skyrocket over the coming years, meaning a victims fund was urgently needed.

"There are a very large number of miners, many of whom are dying right now, who are getting no compensation at the moment because the limitations and shortcomings of the workplace compensation regime.

"These workers, like Percy Verrall who was the first known case in Queensland and has done so much for Queenslanders to get this issue on the radar, are currently languishing with little or no support. They can't wait much longer for the Black Lung Victims Fund to be established.

He said the union also supported in principle the recommendation to have a tripartite group look at health screening, but that needed to be done by independent assessors and not medical professionals aligned with coal companies.

"Trust has been ripped away by an industry that failed to detect multiple cases of the disease and that trust needs to be rebuilt."

"Our members and their families deserve nothing less than the best system in the world for assessing the health of their loved ones."

The CFMEU will provide comprehensive feedback to the Government once we have reviewed the report's findings in detail.

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