

Keith Stoddard, Steve Mellor and Tim Trewin
Mine Dust Victims Group
PO Box 2096
Wandal Qld 4700

18 October 2018

Keith, Steve, Tim
Dear Mssrs Stoddard, Mellor and Trewin

Re: Proposal to establish Coal Mine Dust Lung Disease fund

I refer to a letter you have written to all Queensland coal producing companies, proposing the establishment of a coal mine dust lung disease (CMDLD) fund through a levy on coal production.

Due to the industry-wide implications of your proposal, the Queensland Resources Council (QRC) believes that it is appropriate to provide a response on behalf of the coal mining industry.

Members of your group met with QRC's then Chief Executive, Mr Michael Roche and Director of Health and Safety Policy, Ms Judy Bertram around the middle of 2016 to discuss the problems being faced by some workers in accessing diagnostic services and fair compensation. I am advised that these discussions were pivotal to the QRC understanding the problems that the Workers' Compensation Scheme had at that time, in dealing with a latent onset disease like CWP.

As a result, the QRC wrote to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations requesting a review of the scheme by a multi-stakeholder Taskforce, to ensure it dealt effectively with any impacts on the future earning capacity of affected workers, and that it provided for the diagnosis and management of the disease in workers who had left the industry. Following that review the Scheme was substantially revised on 31 August 2017 through the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2017*.

The Taskforce also identified that further work might be required on the issue of return to work for workers affected with CMDLD, and discussions in that area have recently recommenced.

The QRC's position remains unchanged from the time we wrote to Minister Grace; all coal miners exposed to the risk of CMDLD require access to effective diagnostic services and they must be treated fairly if they are shown to have contracted an occupational disease. However, this needs to be done through Queensland's world-class

Workers' Compensation Scheme. A separate system would be inefficient in requiring new administrative arrangements for collecting and distributing the funds, and would raise the difficulty of how to deal with any excess money collected. A new fund would also require rigorous governance arrangements to demonstrate probity. The only efficient way to deal with this matter is to ensure that employers premiums under the existing Workers' Compensation Scheme reflect the costs associated with CMDLD, which is well trusted by stakeholders and should be able to accommodate the kinds of issues you have raised.

Finally, regarding your point that the levy could also fund research into best practice diagnosis and treatment of CMDLD, a mechanism to support such research already exists through the industry funded Australian Coal Association Research Program (ACARP). It is highly likely that any meaningful relevant research proposal forwarded to ACARP would be supported by industry and thus would be funded.

Yours Sincerely



Ian Macfarlane
Chief Executive