

The Hon. George Souris
Member for Upper Hunter
98 Bridge Street
MUSWELLBROOK NSW 2333

Dear Mr Souris,

Re : Coal Dust Emanating From Uncovered Coal Trains

I am writing to seek your support and advice regarding the problem of coal dust from uncovered coal wagons.

I have become aware of the detrimental effects of coal dust suffered by residents in our district whose dwellings are close to rail lines, particularly Werris Creek and Quirindi. Coal dust has been shown to cause or exacerbate a wide range of illnesses, to contaminate tank water with heavy metals and other toxic substances, and to soil washing, children's playgrounds etc. Discussions with other environmental groups indicate that this is a widespread problem throughout NSW. As you will be aware, the Upper Hunter has a 25% increase in cancer rates and very high levels of breathing-related illness.

Are you aware that whilst it is a legal requirement for all loads being transported by road to be covered, there is no such requirement for coal wagons? Why is this so when the resulting toxic pollution by coal dust is well-known and obvious to anyone living near a rail line or downwind of washing plants or storage facilities? I believe there is an automatic covering system called Coltarp which is used by coal trucks and could presumably be adapted for rail wagons.

Please will you look into this so that all train loads are covered as soon as possible to protect the health and wellbeing of all Australians from this toxic hazard.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely