

Monday, 15 March 2021

Government announces independent assurance review of coal industry health surveillance scheme

The NSW Government has announced an independent quality assurance review of the coal industry health surveillance scheme in NSW.

The Resources Regulator's Executive Director Anthony Keon said the quality assurance review would build on NSW's comprehensive approach to health issues in the coal mining industry.

"The NSW work health and safety framework consists of the most rigorous coal dust exposure limits in Australia, legislated requirements for achieving minimum standards of ventilation, monitoring of airborne contaminants in the worker environment and prescribed worker health monitoring regimes for exposure to airborne dust," Mr Keon said.

"Coal mine workers receive periodic health surveillance every three years. Outside of the placement, medical assessments are undertaken for all coal mine workers prior to commencing employment and ongoing assessments are offered to workers after they leave the industry.

"However, the recent re-emergence of dust diseases, particularly in neighbouring mining jurisdictions shows that we cannot rest on our laurels and we must continue to be vigilant and review the way we do things to ensure NSW mine workers continue to have the best protections possible."

NSW has a long-standing tripartite approach to addressing health and safety issues, led by the NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council (MSAC), a ministerially appointed council that comprises representation from government, mining industry employers, unions and independent experts.

The independent review was a direct recommendation from MSAC and follows an earlier recommendation to bring forward [reductions in coal dust limits by almost two years](#).

MSAC Chair, the Hon. George Souris AM, said that NSW wants to stay on the front foot to ensure NSW coal workers continued to have the best possible support and protections.

"We don't want to wait until something goes wrong in NSW to act and this quality assurance review will focus on the coal industry health surveillance scheme to ensure it is continuing to provide robust and effective health surveillance for coal workers," Mr Souris said.

"The review will also provide assurance to the industry that the health surveillance system in NSW is effective in the early identification of health conditions that may affect workers and recommend any necessary changes to improve the scheme."

The NSW Government has released an [open tender](#) to source a suitably qualified independent service provider to undertake the review.

The independent reviewer will be required to provide a report to the NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council before the end of the year.

For further information about the NSW Resources Regulator go to www.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au