



NZ Climate & Health Council

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Doctors support healthy and just transition for coal communities

The Health group OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council has welcomed today's launch of the report 'Jobs After Coal' by Coal Action Network Aotearoa (CANA).

"This report dispels the myth that coal extraction is necessary for jobs and economic security in New Zealand" says Dr Rhys Jones, Co-convenor for the Council. "But most importantly, this report reminds us of the risk of runaway climate change from continuing unrestrained fossil fuel exploitation."

While CANA's report shows that coal has helped us on our development path in the past, coal's economic role now in creating jobs has been overstated. "Neither our energy system nor our economic prosperity depend on it anymore", says Dr Jones.

"New Zealand's prosperity and wellbeing depend on stable employment – and a stable climate", Dr Jones says. "As CANA's report reminds us, we face a fast shrinking global carbon budget to keep a stable climate for humanity. But because coal has the largest climate impact per unit of useful energy, we will quickly use up that carbon budget if we continue to burn fossil fuels. The world's expert climate scientists tell us that we need to rapidly move towards a low or zero emissions economy if we want to avoid overheating the planet before 2050."

The Council says that CANA's analysis highlights also the occupational illness, injury and high fatality rates and generally poor economic well-being of mining communities. In addition, coal damages the wider environment and human health from pollution impacts – including burning our exported coal in China and India where people suffer some of the worst air pollution in the world.

Finally, CANA's report shows New Zealand needs a planned or managed transition in partnership with mining communities to ensure sustainable jobs where the profit stays locally. "Coal is a boom and bust industry inflicting sudden job lay-offs on communities", ends Dr Jones. "Our communities deserve better than this. They deserve economic development that creates real jobs that last and protect health and well-being."

"CANA, the Council and many others are calling for 'just transition' to a healthy future for coal communities – before it's too late".

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The Coal Action Network Aotearoa (CANA) 'Jobs After Coal' report was launched at Victoria University Wellington today. It is available on the CANA website at

http://coalactionnetworkaotearoa.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/jobs_after_coal_may2104_low_res.pdf.

OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council

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OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate & Health Council are senior doctors and other health professionals concerned with climate change as a serious public health threat. They also promote the positive health gains that can be achieved through action to address climate change. See:

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