

GAS WATCH 220.

100 official “health alerts” for dust levels in the 239 days of this year.

For almost half this year the people of the Hunter have been breathing air which is damaging their health.

Again suspicion arises that the coal mines are polluting in the dead of night.

Yesterday the wind was light, the dust during the day was within acceptable levels, even into single digits (5.1 micrograms of P₁₀ dust particles per cubic metre at 2 pm).

But in the wee small hours the dust levels went from safe levels to “HAZARDOUS” levels.

3 am – 173.9 micrograms of P₁₀ dust particles per cubic metre (anything over 100 is “hazardous to the health”).

4 am – 109.6.

5 am – 134.2.

As Dr. James Whelan, the spokesman for the Hunter Community Environment Centre said today “It’s time for the Premier to take personal responsibility for the Hunter’s declining air quality.”

And one of the actions Premier Barry O’Farrell can take is to ensure that when dust levels exceed 50 micrograms per cubic metre, that the associated coal mine is automatically closed until acceptable levels are reached.

The second action he can take is to appoint inspectors to ensure that mines comply with dust suppression, particularly at night.

And a third action he can take is to ensure that there is no further increase in the cumulative dust levels from coal mines and get rid of the drive by Minister Chris Hartcher to have the size of the mine as the paramount consideration by the Department when considering whether or not to approve a new coal mine.

Minister Barry O’Farrell should also be telling Minister Hartcher and Minister Hazzard to give security to agriculture in the Hunter and enact the CSG exclusion zone law immediately. We have been waiting for the fulfillment of that promise since 19th February this year, and still nothing.

If O’Farrell doesn’t ensure that the exclusion zone legislation is passed by 7th September, the Federal coalition may well suffer at the polls. You’d have to think seriously whether or not you could support the Federal coalition if the O’Farrell Government can’t be trusted on a State level.

**HUNTER VALLEY
PROTECTION ALLIANCE**

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