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## Coal: nails in the global coffin

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My book *Rich Land, Wasteland* is subtitled *How Coal Is Killing Australia* because that's the reality I discovered, but the underlying truth, much-ignored in Australia, is that coal is killing our entire planet (Munro 2012).

I began locally; perhaps I had been naive in thinking that it was government's role to care for its people, but I felt driven to act, for my grandchildren's sake, when it finally sank in that the New South Wales (NSW) government was ignoring the accumulating adverse impacts from unbridled coal mining on the air and water, health and futures, of the people and places of the Upper Hunter Valley – and was planning to increase them.

In this once-rural part of the valley, where they had coped with only a few mines 'to keep the lights on' for us all, the industry boasts that the 50 km between my grandchildren's hometown of Singleton and north to Muswellbrook is taken up with open-cut mines, giant holes and bare overburden mountains, so many and so close that the area is visible from space, not a scar, but a running open sore, ever-expanding, ever-polluting.

State strategic land use plans saw the industry's expansion in this oversaturated region as unavoidable, because 'there is an ongoing demand for our coal' – 84 per cent of Hunter coal is exported. This is thermal coal to be burnt elsewhere for energy, which I would suggest is likely to be banned and phased out worldwide