

Australia rejects moratorium on new coal mines

October 27 2015



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Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull dismissed calls Tuesday for a moratorium on new coal mines urged by influential citizens and Pacific leaders who say they contribute to global warming.

Sixty-one prominent Australians, including rugby union's David Pocock and Nobel Prize-winning scientist Peter Doherty, wrote an open letter to world leaders calling for [coal](#) exports to be on the agenda at upcoming UN climate talks in Paris.

"Australia's coal contributes to climate change, with its global health impacts," they wrote in the letter published Tuesday in The Sydney Morning Herald.

The letter comes after the president of the Pacific state of Kiribati, Anote Tong, urged a global moratorium on new coal mines and coal mine expansions to keep [global warming](#) below dangerous levels.

Low-lying Kiribati, like many other Pacific nations, fears it will disappear beneath the waves without drastic intervention from major climate change contributors.

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Turnbull dismissed the prospect that it would scale back its industry.

"I don't agree with the idea of a moratorium on exploiting coal. With great respect to the people who advocated it, it would make not the blindest bit of difference to global emissions," he told reporters.

"If Australia stopped exporting coal, the countries to which we export it would simply buy it from somewhere else."

Turnbull replaced coal advocate Tony Abbott in a conservative party coup in September, but has said there will be no change to Australia's climate policy.

With its heavy use of coal-fired power, Australia is considered one of the world's worst per capita greenhouse gas polluters and the proposed emissions reduction targets it is taking to Paris have been criticised as inadequate.

Turnbull, who plans to attend the Paris talks, said coal plays a large role in global energy production and would likely do so for a long time, but he stressed the importance of having all energy options open.

The government's incoming chief scientist Alan Finkel said it was critically important that Australia reduce its carbon emissions.

"My vision is for a country, a society, a world where we don't use any coal, oil, or natural gas because we have zero-emissions electricity in huge abundance," Finkel said, standing alongside Turnbull.

"But you can't get there overnight. The best way to get rid of coal is to introduce alternatives that deliver value at a reasonable price rather than just arbitrarily turning it off."

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Citation: Australia rejects moratorium on new coal mines (2015, October 27) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-10-australia-moratorium-coal.html>

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