

Coal elimination treaty needed urgently

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Credit: Unsplash - Dominik Vanyi

A new proposed Coal Elimination Treaty could make a major contribution to preventing dangerous climate change and save millions of lives, according to two UNSW Canberra academics.

Professor Anthony Burke, who worked on the proposal along with Dr.

Stefanie Fishel from the University of the Sunshine Coast and a Visiting Fellow at UNSW Canberra, said that the treaty being proposed is a "supply-side" mechanism to eliminate what is the world's largest single source of greenhouse emissions within a decade.

"Global [climate](#) governance needs new ideas that can drive faster action and while the signing of 2015 Paris Agreement was a great success, it is not achieving a fast-enough reduction in emissions," he said.

Coal has been the source of 80% of global [greenhouse emissions](#) since 1870 and constitutes 40% of annual world emissions now.

The threat of worsening climate change is a major factor to proposing such a treaty and is reason for needing urgency on such action.

According to Professor Burke this urgency in acting is a key issue as there are between 18 months and seven years of current emission levels before the 1.5C global heating threshold is breached.

"Beyond that lies a terrifying future of runaway climate change. Apart from the prospect of even worse fires, one of my biggest fears is that one or more of our northern cities, such as Townsville or Cairns, will be destroyed by a Category 5+ cyclone, which are becoming ever more common. Dangerous [climate change](#) is a major threat to everyone's security," he said.

The research outlines three possible models for a treaty with Professor Burke stating that the ideal [model](#) should be a protocol of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, but its consensus voting rules are likely to block that path.

"The most viable model is to have the UN General Assembly sponsor a conference to adopt a [treaty](#), much as it did in 2017 with the new Treaty

on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. That model also means states who are reluctant at first can join later."

More information: Anthony Burke et al. A coal elimination treaty 2030: Fast tracking climate change mitigation, global health and security, *Earth System Governance* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.esg.2020.100046](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2020.100046)

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