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## **COMMUNITY KICK STARTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT TO STOP COAL AND GAS UNDERMINING HUMAN HEALTH**

Community groups have decided to take up the challenge of assessing the impact of coal and gas mining on human health in north-western NSW, citing the failure of governments and companies to do anything meaningful about assessing the serious health risks.

The Maules Ck Community Council is working with the University of NSW to develop a community led Health Impact Assessment of coal and gas mining in the Gunnedah Basin, and will be developing a steering committee and inviting people to participate.

The North West Alliance will be holding a forum in Gunnedah on the 4th August called "Undermining our Health" which will provide information about the health impacts of coal and gas mining, and will be followed by an art exhibition opening on the same theme.

"We have watched with dismay as the very serious threats to human health from coal and gas developments are virtually ignored during the planning approval processes" said Phil Laird, spokesperson with the Maules Ck Community Council.

"We have asked governments and gas companies to do proper health impact assessments and cumulative air quality monitoring but it has all fallen on deaf ears.

"We decided that if the community wants to protect itself from the negative impacts of coal and gas mining then we were going to have to do the assessments ourselves.

"We are now working with the University of NSW to develop a health impact assessment that is driven by the community. It is in the very early scoping stages and we are keen to maximise community involvement" he said.

"There is evidence from around the world of the damage that coal dust causes to human health including lung disease, cancer and kidney disease" said Nicky Chirlian from Liverpool Plains SOS.

"Recent symptoms of nosebleeds, headaches and nausea amongst people living in gasfields in Queensland has also rung alarm bells in our region about the health risks of gas drilling.

"We are encouraging people to come along to our health forum which will be held on the 4th August at the Gunnedah Town Hall from 2.00pm-4.00pm."

"We will be having a number of interesting speakers and a question and answer about the proposed health impact assessment. This will be followed by an art exhibition opening titled 'Don't Frack My Landscape: Don't Mine My Lungs' by Jayney Carter.

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