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Did you know?

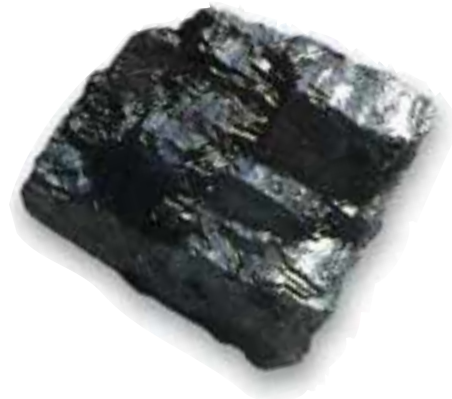


The thickest seam of coal anywhere in the world is the 233 metres of brown coal which occurs at Loy Yang in Victoria.

Coal mining and export employs many Australians directly and indirectly. Thousands of workers are employed in the coal mines, at preparation facilities, on railways and at ports. In recent years large machines and workplace changes have increased the productivity of Australian coal mines supporting a vibrant export industry.

In addition to those employed directly in the coal industry, many other Australians are employed indirectly, such as in the transport sector. A number of new towns have been established in regional areas to service the mines developed since the 1960s.

Opencut coal mining does disturb large areas on the mining lease, but modern rehabilitation techniques now return this land to productive use or native ecosystems. Underground mining can cause subsidence at the surface but careful planning, regulation and monitoring minimises damage and compensation is available to those affected. Burning of coal, and other fossil fuels, adds greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. On-going research and the adoption of clean coal technologies in all facets of coal mining, preparation and use are continuing to significantly reduce greenhouse emissions.



Coal Overview

Coal is an organic sedimentary rock made up of the altered remains of mainly plant material. Coal, oil and gas are called fossil fuels because they are all formed from the remains of once-living organisms. These fossil fuels provide most of the energy required for human activities. Our present lifestyle depends on abundant and relatively cheap coal, oil and gas.

Most of the coal mined around the world is used for electricity generation in power stations, for steel making or for other industrial production. Power stations are often built beside their feeder coal mines to reduce transport costs. Most of the world's coal production is used within the country in which it is mined.

Australia is the world's largest coal exporter. It is one of the few countries in the world where more of the coal that is mined is exported than is used in the country. In 2002, coal exports of more than 200 million tonnes earned over \$13 billion for Australia. These exports contribute enormously to Australia's balance of payments, offsetting the cost of imports. Taxes and royalties paid to government by mining companies and their employees contribute significantly to the welfare of all Australians.

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