

**Committee Secretary
Environment, Communications and the Arts – Standing Committee**

Re: Impact of Mining in the Murray Darling Basin.

I am an individual commenting on and expressing my own views in relation to the effects of mining, observed and experienced in and around my local community of Tara in the Western Darling Downs in South West Queensland which forms part of the Murray Darling Basin. My comments and observations are as follows:

1. Adverse effects of mining on local communities are experienced as a direct result of increased heavy vehicle traffic. In our community the majority of roads are graded dirt roads. The increase in heavy vehicle traffic significantly degrades the standard of our roads, affects the water flow off into rivers and creeks in our local area, which eventually flows into the Murray Darling. Dams in those areas watered by the mining company are also affected by runoff from the watered roads. Settling of contaminated dust on roofs of residences in the area also threatens the health of residents as well as contaminated dust particles circulating in the air.
2. When the mining companies create roads or upgrade existing roads and use water to dampen the dust, the water used has not been clean water in that it has exceeded the limits set by the EPA. In our area, polluted water from mining holding dams for their wastewater has been used which has been shown to be polluted with high levels of salt. A representative of the mining company concerned, when approached, stated "it is only salt – it might make you sick but it won't kill you". Is that the attitude taken by all mining companies and the impact of salt on our health and our land? Woe betides the Murray Darling basin if that is so.
3. There has been an increase in injured and dead wild life as a direct result of exploration and other mining activities in our local area. Employees have been seen chasing off local emu populations in their breeding areas in which mining activity is taking place. This has forced the abandonment of nests, eggs and young hatchlings. Some eggs have been rescued but many more will have been lost as a direct result of mining related activities. The results on other wildlife have been just as devastating.
4. Farmers and their families are being intimidated and coerced by mining companies to give up their land for open cut coal mines, pipelines to go through their properties and for other exploration and mining related activities on their farming land. The Government will not allow (sometimes and when it suits them) mining related activities in national or state forests and heritage listed lands, but they will allow farmers to be intimidated and their farming land to be taken over for mining related activities. This should never be allowed. The population should not be intimidated and coerced into signing any agreements with anyone resulting in their land being taken over for profit by Government or business. This is totally immoral and equivalent to legalized theft of property.
5. It is my belief that in securing our country we need to consider our ability to feed ourselves for extended periods in the event of hostilities directed against us by other nations who covet our land mass as well as our minerals and other natural resources. We have already lost significant land area around the Murray Darling that was once farming land due to degrading environmental conditions, which we have failed to address appropriately. The granting of mining leases over farming land seems to be a direct threat to our ability to produce sufficient food to feed our population in the event of hostilities directed against us. It also makes us

dependent on importing food products from nations that do not have the same high standards of food production thereby putting our health at risk. Once dependent on importing food from other nations we run the risk of being held to ransom. Mining of farming land is a threat to our own national security in that it leaves us open to economic takeover by a hostile nation and reduces our ability to feed ourselves.

It is considered that:

1. There should be no mining related activities in or around population areas and certainly not in residential areas.
2. There should be no mining on land that is used to produce food, or which could be used to produce food, and that any such land should be protected from any future mining activities.
3. Mining has been shown to have an adverse effect on the environment, our animal populations and our communities. Higher standards and more stringent controls must be applied to any mining activity to effectively protect the Murray Darling, our native fauna and flora and our communities.
4. The security of our nation should always be a priority and never put at risk simply for profit by either Government or business.
5. Government should never condone legalised theft of our land. Our rights to land ownership and all that implies should be protected by Government. Presently, many landowners impacted by mining generally feel that Government at all levels has betrayed them and that it is now '*Government by Business for Business*' instead of '*Government by the People for the People*'.

It is recommended that:

1. Mining in residential areas not be allowed and that significant and effective buffer zones be established if mining is allowed.
2. Mining become a regulated industry and that the regulating body be a Federal Government responsibility.
3. Mining activities be reduced and that cleaner options for the production of energy be identified, researched, developed and implemented for the benefit of the nation as a whole.
4. That Government come back to the basics of '*Government by the People, for the People*' and looks to protecting our rights and securing our country for the future.
5. That Government takes urgent and appropriate action to protect our communities, our farming lands, our flora and fauna and our waterways in particular the Murray Darling Basin from the adverse effects of the mining industry.

Submitted by:
VE Somerville

21 August 2009