

Submission to Inquiry into the impacts of mining in the Murray Darling Basin

To: Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

From: Ian Cox\

Background

I am a farmer on the Haystack Plain of the Darling Downs of Queensland. I have been a farmer all my life but am also qualified as a carpenter. I have experience in manufacturing and have two sons who both farm. One son is a qualified, practising fitter and turner and both are fifth generation farmers.

My wife and I are graingrowers on some of the most inherently fertile and productive ground in Australia, and indeed the world.

As a farmer and father, my concerns are for the future of farming and food production and the impact this will most certainly have on my grandchildren and society at large. The loss of any of our very scarce 2-3% prime agricultural lands of Queensland can only cause great hardship in the future.

Submission

Mining the Murray Darling Basin of Queensland has huge implications for the life of the Murray Darling River system in the future. The Haystack Plain area of the basin is one of the very few inherently fertile, highly productive areas of this State and indeed Australia and should be mined only as a last resort. This country has stood the test of time and proved it can produce vast amounts of food and all without irrigation because of the soil structure and because it has only a .02degree of slope. It is a flood plain which is ill suited to any sort of disruption which can only have detrimental effects upon the plain and the river system.

Any form of mining has the potential to destroy the very quality of this country that puts it into the prime agricultural land category. Rehabilitation of this type of country has never been done in Australia and to damage this land while there is still at least 300 years supply, according to the Queensland Premier, to be found elsewhere in the State is disgraceful. Not only will it severely curtail our food production in this area but the downstream consequences of a mine mishap would be irrevocable. What happens in this part of the basin impacts all the way to the ocean as can be seen by the over issuing of irrigation licences in the past.

There is no question of mining and farming being able to co-exist in this instance. It is simply not possible. One cannot broadacre farm and mine on the same piece of ground that is a flood plain with .02 degree of slope. Any interference is unacceptable. There has been much time, effort and money spent by Landcare to ensure that this country works to its greatest capacity. The farmers of this area farm in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. We are all well aware of our obligations to

ensure that this land is looked after in a manner that will ensure the production of food staples for the next 100 – 1000 years.

Mining is a short term industry that leaves behind a degraded and often useless landscape. There are no guarantees about the handling of the toxic wastes produced and their disposal and all too often there aren't even any measures to cope with a mining event that can cause environmental devastation and billions of dollars in damages and human hardship for many years into the future.

Summary

Our prime agricultural areas throughout the Murray Darling basin need protection through legislation and while this is coming to fruition, a moratorium should be established to ensure no loss of this land due to any form of mining.

Thankyou for your time.