

The Environment and Communications Committee would be grateful if you could provide an answer to the attached questions on notice.

Can you provide an example(s) of a mining EIS for a project / proposal in Australia which represents the 'gold standard' or best practice for EISs?

Can you provide an example(s) of a mining project or proposal in Australia which represents the 'gold standard' or best practice with regards to the management and monitoring of the environment and water resources affected by that mine?

These are both very tricky questions - as whose gold standard should I apply - my own, a companies' view, a communities' or a governments'!

I will assume my view. While I have reviewed numerous EIS reports for mining projects across Australia, I have rarely found any which meet a consistently high or gold standard.

1) Gold Standard Mining EIS

The best example I am aware of is the former Big Hill open cut gold mine proposal of the late 1990s. This was done as a Victorian only EIS (or Environment Effects Statement or EES in Vic), and was quite a thorough EES - however the community opposed the project since it involved mining extremely close to residences and removal of heritage and other aspects. The then newly installed Bracks government of late 1999 rejected the EES and thus the project never proceeded - though I note that the Stawell gold mine is now re-considering the potential development of the Big Hill open cut.

Another more recent example, at least for groundwater issues, is the proposed Cobbora coal mine EIS in NSW - I have only briefly looked at the groundwater sections of this and it seemed to be very thorough scientifically - much more so than I usually observe on such aspects. It presented what appeared to me, at a brief review, to be a quite good baseline study of groundwater issues.

2) Gold Standard in Environmental Monitoring & Management

Perhaps surprisingly, I think the Ranger uranium mine is the best I've seen on monitoring, management and transparency - it has extensive company water monitoring as well as check monitoring by the federal Supervising Scientist group and the NT regulator. Although there are issues with various aspects of Ranger's surface water and groundwater monitoring regimes, it is certainly the most advanced and comprehensive of any mine I have seen across Australia.