

Personal Submission Maules Creek Continuation Project

Near Neighbour, No Consultation

We live about 11km from Maules Creek mine and the proposed continuation project. As one of only a handful of close neighbours to the mine we have received absolutely no consultation or engagement about the proposed project. We note in some of the documents that our farm has a sensitive receiver number attached to it but we have found it impossible to identify what impacts we are likely to expect and have had no consultation on that. This is an outrage that near neighbours could be treated this way.

We frequently hear and feel blasting from Maules Creek mine and often see the massive dust clouds created and our night skies are polluted by a constant glow. And yet under the previous conditions of consent we were not supposed to experience any negative impacts. This process is a total joke.

Neighbours Gone, Community Shattered

Over the last 12 years of the operation of Maules Creek coal mine we have seen a mass exodus of our neighbours and friends. People have been bought out that were not in the footprint of the mine, some bought out because their family members were hospitalised by blasting gases, some bought out because they made complaints about dust, some bought out for their water licences. This region should have been identified as purely a mining zone with no hope for co-location with agriculture. This massive dislocation to our area is barely mentioned in the social impacts assessment and definitely has no mitigation or management measures to help for the future proposed expansion.

This hollowing out of our community, resulting in the loss of more than 70 families and the buying out of more than 70,000 hectares of farmland has had serious and multigenerational consequences. Our volunteering numbers are down, our sports team have dwindled, the School in Maules Creek has only 3 students left and the social fabric of our community has been destroyed. A company that had a social conscience would put in place measures to prevent and stop this major land buy out program.

The race to lease country back from the mines has become ridiculous with above market prices now being asked by the mines, almost as if they no longer want any people left on their lands. These properties are now being leased by people living outside the region with none of the negative affects we bare everyday.

Intimidation on Public Roads

Our cattle enterprises causes us to drove cattle along the public roads and traveling stock routes from time to time. We have noticed the intimidation of security vehicles that traverse these PUBLIC roads many times a day at a slow speed, stopping beside the road frequently. These are not roads owned by the mine, why should they be patrolled by security guards? This is a social impact also not mentioned in the social impact assessment.

Poor Neighbour with a Poor Record

Whitehaven has been a disgraceful neighbour. When our community was at the very bottom of its life, we personally watched as Whitehaven tore up the road sides to put in their pipelines having bought out neighbours for their water bores. We knew they had no

permissions to do it and yet the Department of Planning defended Whitehaven's actions and then a few months later gave them a tiny fine for building a pipeline without permission! The Department of Planning staff is complicit in the torture that Whitehaven put us through during the drought. At that time Whitehaven was also convicted of water theft! This is the lowest of the low act, it is not something that neighbours forget.

That is why we vehemently oppose Whitehaven being given permission for a network of pipelines between their operations. This one mine alone owns water licences in 7 different water sources. This is hugely dangerous for the other water users in the area, not to mention the critters and plants that need water to survive while this greedy neighbour sucks it all up and moves it around under darkness. This pipeline network will allow them to shift water around with little or no scrutiny and they have already broken the community's trust when it comes to water. **DO NOT ALLOW THESE PIPELINES.**

Ag Land Deliberately Downgraded

The agricultural impact statement (AIS) is based on an assumption that "the land ranges from moderate to low land capability, which is generally suitable for grazing production and occasional cropping". This is a complete lie. There are a number of properties now owned by Maules Creek that used to be extremely high value irrigation land. This land was not supposed to have been bought out (specifically at least "Marlow Downs", "Roma" and "Brighton") by the mines, was not supposed to have been impacted and were all high functioning, high value irrigation properties before Whitehaven purchased them. Now suddenly they are classed as moderate to low land capability. Interviews with these land managers are missing from the AIS.

The half a paragraph given to the cumulative impacts of more than 70,000 hectares of agricultural land being taken out of production states that the impact on agriculture is "minimal" in the AIS. This is a complete lie.

Post Mining Plan and Funds

Having put up with Whitehaven as a terrible neighbour for so many years, we are now resigned to the fact that the government will keep on approving whatever this company asks for. So our attention turns to the post mining future. We had hoped that would be in ten years time, but with this approval not even STARTING until ten years time, we won't see a post mine future for 20 years now it seems.

At that time our community will be non-existent, our groundwater depleted, filling mining voids for 1,000 years or more, coal dust will coat the country, we will have a huge footprint of directly polluted lands, vast tracts of treeplanted lands that cannot be used for other purposes and then a huge expanse of "buffer" lands that were once productive agricultural lands and now their future is unknown. No where in the reams of paperwork for this application can we find a plan for how this land will be turned back into something useful for society. Just a dead, polluted legacy when the market dives and the company goes broke.

We deserve a decent transition plan as part of this future-approval. We need a mapping project that allows community to co-design the future that our local people want, once these outside companies leave. Funding must be set aside as part of this approval to facilitate this, paid for by the company, not the government.

