

Laird Family Response

To Application #10_0138 Maules Creek Coal Project

October 11, 2011

Summary

We the Laird Family of Maules Creek vehemently oppose the development of Maules Creek Coal Project in Leard State Forest. We believe the development of this mine will forever decimate the rural community of Maules Creek and reduce the Laird Family Property to an uninhabitable place. We believe the toxic pollution and destruction of the landscape will reduce Maules Creek to a wasteland.

History

The Laird Family have lived and worked on “Roslyn” Maules Creek since acquiring it in 1877 through Free Selection of Crown Land was made possible as a result of the *Robertson Act 1861* (NSW) (NSW Government Land and Property Information n.d.)

William Bagnall Poole Laird (from now referred to as Bagnall) and his wife Susan Laird established the property, raising their family until Bagnall passed away in 1930 and his wife Susan in 1934. Bagnall and his wife are buried on “Roslyn” in the family cemetery.



William Leslie Fitzgerald Laird (from now referred to as Leslie), eldest son of Bagnall and Susan, was born on “Roslyn” in 1897. Leslie worked and lived on “Roslyn” all of his life.

Leslie and his wife Dora raised six children on “Roslyn”, and lived on the property until their passing in 1981 and 1959 respectively. Both are buried in the family cemetery located on “Roslyn”.



William Bruce Laird (from now referred to as Bruce), son of Leslie, was born on “Roslyn” in 1933 and was the eldest of six children. Bruce has lived and worked on “Roslyn” his entire life. He married his wife Wilma in 1961 and they have raised six children. “Roslyn” is currently being run by two of Bruce and Wilma’s sons, Andrew and Richard.

Both Bruce and Wilma still live on “Roslyn” in retirement. Their wish is to remain on the property for the rest of their lives.



Laird Family Cemetery –“Roslyn”, Maules Creek

Andrew and Rick have lived and worked on “Roslyn” all of their lives and have raised their families on the property. Andrew has two children with his wife Wendy and Richard has five children with his wife Tracey.

It has always been the intention of Andrew and Rick to work and further develop the property until their children were old enough to continue the tradition of Laird’s on “Roslyn”.

This, however, will not be possible should the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project be approved.

It is the firm belief of the entire Laird family that approval of the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project will most certainly mean the end of the Laird Family in Maules Creek as the families will be forced to move away to a safer environment. This forced move will have a devastating emotional impact, causing the fragmentation of the family unit, as well as a huge financial cost in loss of earnings and the forfeiture of lifestyle.

This property has been in the family for 134 years and five generations.

This proposal and its resulting consequences has caused and continues to have a devastating impact on Mr William Bruce LAIRD (Bruce) who has lived nowhere else for his entire life (78 years).

There are three generations living on “Roslyn” at this time, should the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project be approved the proximity of the property to the Project will mean that the families will be forced to leave. The Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project will be directly responsible for the fracturing of the family unit and the forced abandonment of the Family Home of 134 years.

In recent years Richard and his wife Tracey purchased “Middle Creek South” (part Middle Creek) which includes a house built in the mid to late -1800s. This historical house, originally built as a small timber home, over the years was expanded upon by two pioneering women who also helped to develop the Maules Creek Area. When Richard and Tracey purchased the property it was in a state of disrepair. They purchased the property with the intention of restoring the house and creating a home for their family.

Richard and his wife have spent a great deal of money renovating and restoring this historical house. The boundary of the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project is 5 kilometres from this house.



“Middle Creek South” House - Today

Richard and Tracey have approval to erect a 10kw/hour Solar Installation. They have decided however not to begin this installation as the location of the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project is too close to their home and they are not prepared to continue with the financial outlay to improve their property when it will essentially be unliveable should the mine be approved.

Richard and Tracey have five children; two are currently attending Fairfax Public School and one who will be attending in 2013. The two older children are currently attending high school. If the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project were to be approved, the children attending Fairfax Public School would be exposed to unacceptable levels of Air and Noise pollution. Richard and Tracey feel that should the project be approved, they would have no choice but to not allow their children to attend the school as the risk to their health would be too great.

Andrew and Wendy’s children are older and are attending High School.

Every Laird child from William Leslie Laird (born 1897) to the children of Andrew and Wendy Laird and the children of Richard and Tracey Laird has attended Fairfax Public School (the last to begin school in 2013). The Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project, if approved, will signify the end of the tradition of Laird Children completing their Primary Education in the Idyllic setting of Fairfax Public School.



Bruce and Will - Drought Feeding 2008

The Property

“Roslyn” has been the owned by the Laird Family since 1877. This is however, more than just a property. This is a home, a business, a way of life. The property is able to support three families and is regarded as one of the best properties in the region. “Roslyn” is made up primarily of highly productive fertile soils including heavy black soil. This property has consistently produced excellent cropping results as well as being able to support a fine herd of Angus Cattle.

“Roslyn” farming history includes many award winning crops, most recently NSW Farmers Wheat Crop competition and also the State winner of Barley Crop competition. During the devastating drought of 1995 “Roslyn” was the only property in Maules Creek to have any crop survive to harvest. This is testimony to the quality of the land and the care and excellent farming practices of the current generation of Lairds.

Maules Creek, with the Nandewar Range to the North, provides an ideal environment for growing Dryland Cotton. The area is protected from hot northerly winds and has a reliable rainfall average of 600mm p.a. leading to higher than average yields. The 2011 crop out-yielded other crops to the north and west of the ranges.

“Roslyn” has over 1200 acres of Heavy Black Soil consistently producing high yielding and high quality crops.



Andrew, Richard and Will Laird



Feedlot on Roslyn



Phoebe, Caitie, Will and Richard - Canola



Wheat on Roslyn 2008



Richard and Will Laird – Wheat on Roslyn



Dryland Cotton 2011



Dryland Cotton 2011



Dryland Cotton 2011



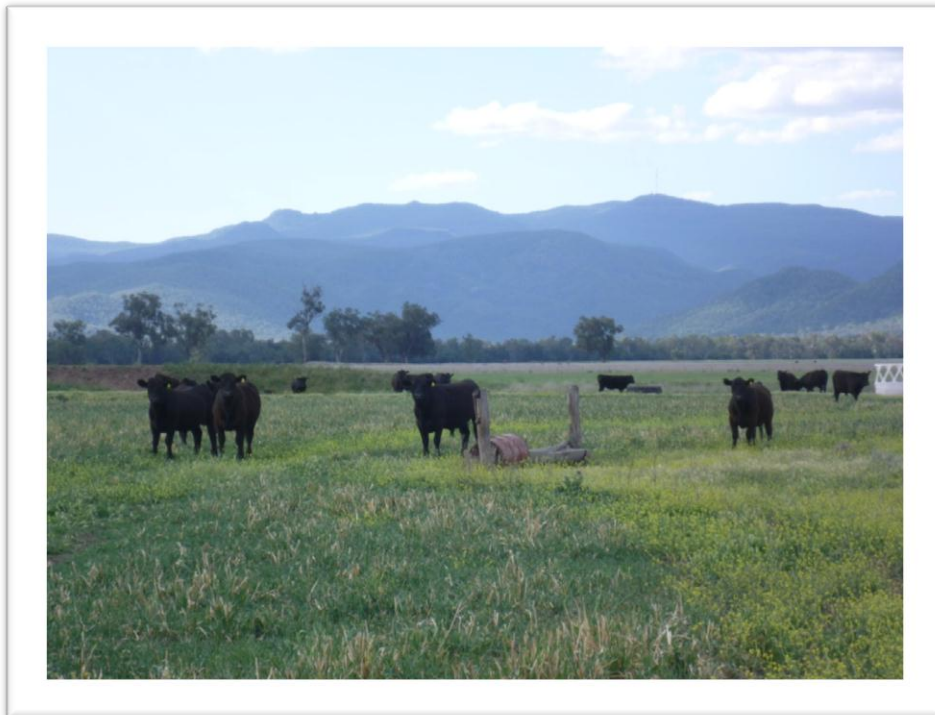
Bruce, Phoebe, Caitie, Will, Wilma and Max Laird 2011



Cattle on Roslyn 2011



Cattle on Roslyn 2011



Cattle on Roslyn 2011

If the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project is approved the loss of “Roslyn” and the degradation of the Prime Agricultural land would be a tragedy.

The Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project has already caused tremendous stress within the Laird Family. The family members are feeling a sense of Loss; Loss of Family Home, Loss of inheritance for their children, Loss of Identity and most of all they are feeling Powerless to prevent the destruction of their Family.

This mine will cause this family to be fractured.

Environment

Maules Creek has a unique topography, which lends to the idyllic lifestyle and fertile farming land. The Nandewar Mountain range to the North of Maules Creek area acts as a wind break and causes an inversion layer within the valley.

Air Quality Assessments indicate to us that the cumulative dust level from Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project and the existing Open Cut Mines (Boggabri Coal and Tarrawonga Mines) will mean that we will suffer greatly from exposure to the harmful dust particles including PM_{2.5} dust. Studies show that PM_{2.5} Coal Dust has a catastrophic effect on the health and wellbeing of those who inhale it.

Evidence is beginning to emerge about the devastating effects on Coal Dust on human health. It has been shown that Coal Dust contributes to four of the five leading causes of mortality; heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic lower respiratory diseases. Pollutants produced from Coal Mining, including nitrous oxide and very small particles known as PM_{2.5} have been proven to adversely affect lung development in children leading to pulmonary diseases. (Alan H.Lockwood, Kristen Welker-Hood, Molly Rauch, & Barbara Gottlieb, November 2009)

There is an emerging pattern in the Hunter Valley particularly around the town of Singleton of clusters of these diseases. Local Physician, Dr Tuan Au of Singleton, NSW, has begun a study into the effects of Coal Air Pollution has on the health of local residents after noticing a disturbing number of children presenting to local practices with asthma and other respiratory diseases. This study is predicted to take five years to complete.

Richard's daughter has Asthma and one of his sons has shown signs of developing Asthma as well. With the increasing evidence proving the harmful effects of Coal Dust and the climate of Maules Creek, where the prevailing winds originate primarily from the South-West and are trapped in the Maules Creek Valley by the Northern Mountain Range of the Mt Kaputar and Nandewar Ranges producing an inversion layer, we believe the risks to our health and the health of our children are extreme. We would not be able in all consciousness allow our children to be exposed to this danger.

Current estimations are that Aston Coal 2 will be extracting 10.8 million tonnes of Coal a year and in achieving that will be moving

With the cumulative effect of Aston Coal, Boggabri Coal and Tarrawonga, there will be approximately 143.8 million tonnes of dirt being moved to extract the approximate 20.8 million tonnes of Coal per year.

We believe that should the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project be approved, our idyllic home will become an intolerable and dangerous place to live.

We have genuine concerns about the underground water issues. On "Roslyn" there are four bores used for household and stock water. The main bore on "Roslyn" is only 175 feet deep into Water Bearing Sandstone. This bore is the main water source for the two houses on "Roslyn" as well as water for the Feedlot.

On "Middle Creek South", 100% of water for household and stock is derived from a bore situated near the "Middle Creek South" House. While we are not aware of any data showing our water supplies will be damaged we are very worried that the depth of the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project will cause a detrimental effect on water levels in

the underground aquifers. If the groundwater is impacted by this Coal Mine we will have No Water Supply for three households.

Noise Pollution will also become insufferable should the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project be approved. The application states that the Mine, should it be approved, would be operating 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Current conditions in Maules Creek are so peaceful and quiet that the only sounds that can be heard are the sounds of animals, birds etc. and the distant, but infrequent, sound of a car passing on the Maules Creek road. At night there are no sounds at all and sleep is undisturbed. With the development of Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project we will be forced to endure the noise from the operations. The blasting that has been done by the existing Boggabri Coal and Tarrawonga Mines has already caused distress and disturbance in the community. The notion that blasting and Mine Operation Noise will be a great deal closer to our homes is causing distress and anxiety. Sleep disturbance is just one issue that we have real concerns about.

Community

We have to this point referred to the devastation the Approval of Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project will have on the Laird family. This development will have a devastating effect on the Community of Maules Creek. There has been talk that “only a few scattered families” exist in the valley. We are insulted by these presumptions – no-one has the right to decide what is and isn’t a worthwhile number of people. There may be a few families (and this number is decreasing every month with the encroaching developments of the Coal Mining Industry) but these families live in harmony and form a fantastic Community. We are able to guarantee should there be any crisis or disaster in this valley we would be supported by every single family in the valley if needs be. We would like to ask whether the reader is able to confidently say that they could certainly guarantee 100% involvement from their community. You will notice that during Community events, members of the Community are able to work together intuitively. The Community Members know each other and their expectations and work together to achieve a common goal.

It is difficult for us to convey the wonderful lifestyle we are afforded living in the Maules Creek Community. Imagine your ideal way of life; you are able to rely on your neighbours for any assistance, advice, encouragement, friendship required. You can guarantee you would not be alone in any time of need, and there you have the Maules Creek Community.

With the destruction of the ‘Community’ through forced land acquisitions and folk leaving the region for their health, the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project will result in the demise of the Maules Creek Community. There will be many fractured families and relationships. People of Bruce Laird’s generation are overwhelmed with a sense of loss for their life and their heritage.

Reports regarding the distance of Maules Creek Properties to the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Project are measured from the centre of the Coal Project area. Roslyn and Middle Creek South are just over 5 kilometres from the boundary of the Project. This needs to be acknowledged. In the not too distant future the impact of this Mine would be devastating on these two properties. The monetary value of the land will plummet primarily due to the proximity of the Coal Mine and the emotional and physical costs on the families will be unfathomable.

We challenge the reader to “put themselves in our shoes” and understand the devastating impact this would have on our lives. Begin to imagine what life would be like if you were powerless against the development of a ‘13 million tonne a year Coal Mine’, and all its infrastructure, 5 kilometres from your home. A Coal Mine that will be operating 24 hours a day. A Coal Mine that is permitted to be developed in a State Forest previously only permitted to be used for recreational purposes and preservation of protected flora and fauna identified there, five kilometres from the constant din of machinery and the constant intrusion of floodlighting. Five kilometres from the source of the most

harmful of pollution where your children and your family will be exposed to this pollution endangering their lives. We challenge the reader to acknowledge they would be happy for this to destruction of their lives to occur.

We challenge the reader to approve this mine knowing full well that the development will signify the end of a historical family property and the fracturing of a family unit, not to mention the devastation and fracturing of the community and risking the lives of the people of that community.

Please consider the consequences of this Application for Mining.

Conclusion

We firmly believe that if this Proposed Mining Application is approved we will be forced to leave Maules Creek.

Our family will be fractured and will be faced with a dreadful situation where we will be essentially losing our history, our generational home, our financial security and our lifestyle.

The Laird Family on "Roslyn" consists of three separate families. Should the Proposed Maules Creek Coal Mine be approved, we would hope to be adequately compensated.

To not compensate the family adequately, leaving them in a worse state than they are now would be inconceivable.

Should you require any further information please feel free to contact the Laird Family on the following telephone numbers;

Bruce and Wilma LAIRD	02 67944554				
Richard and Tracey LAIRD	02 67944595	or	0427 056 418 Richard	or	0428 156 147 Tracey
Andrew and Wendy LAIRD	02 67944587	or	0428 313 605 Andrew		

Works Cited

Alan H.Lockwood, MD FAAN, ScD MSN RN Kristen Welker-Hood, MPH Molly Rauch, and Barbara Gottlieb. "Coal's Assault on Human Health - A report from Physicians for Social Responsibility." November 2009.

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http://www.lpma.nsw.gov.au/land_titles/land_ownership/crown_land.