

After the birth of our son, my husband and I decided to leave Brisbane to build a life for ourselves on his family's property in Maules Creek. We did not want to bring up our son in a polluted, noisy environment surrounded by strangers who did not have the best interest for our welfare and the community at heart. We believed Maules Creek would offer a better life. A life where people knew each other and a sense of community was important and the sky was clear and the air was clean. Here, at Maules Creek on the family property, we could raise our son in a healthy environment. Our property was established in 1924 by my husband's great grandfather. Since this time East Lynne has been passed down the generations from father to son and is now being run by the fourth generation with our son, the fifth generation, already passionate about his patch of land and learning the ropes for when his time will come. Our son attends the local school, Fairfax Public School. He is the third generation of his family to do so. Fairfax Public School is a small one teacher country school that has been at the heart of Maules Creek for 101 years.

Our life sounds pretty good doesn't it? However I wonder how much this will change with the development of the Maules Creek Coal Project. I have concerns how this project will effect our health, our business, the environment and the community as a whole.

As a mother the health of my family and the community is of great concern. Air quality and noise modelling in the Maules Creek Community Council Environmental Assessment shows that there will be an inversion layer over Maules Creek for 41% of the time generally and 69% during winter. This will be a significant factor in increasing health impacts due to fine particulates and noise to the local people. This is of particular concern when you consider the close proximity of the school to the mining operations of Aston Resources. In addition to the reduction in air quality noise of the mine will be an issue. Noise from existing mining operations can be clearly heard on our property therefore the combined level of noise is a great concern. Studies have also shown levels of disease and violence increase in mining areas serviced by a high percentage of fly in fly out and drive in drive out workers. Danielle Cronin writing for the Sydney Morning Herald, 27 September 2011 reports that fly in fly out workers place an incredible stain on essential services, bringing in viruses from "far afield" and can accelerate the threat of highly contagious illnesses in mining communities. Whereas the national president of the CFMEU, Tony Maher, told the Sydney Morning Herald on the 6th December 2010 increased numbers of miners in small country towns previously occupied by families has resulted in an escalation in the level of violence and other social problems. Tony Maher goes on to say, "Mining companies are crushing the life out of these towns". I recommend the funding of a local health study to ascertain a baseline of community health and the ongoing monitoring of the community's health.

The community has already begun to suffer as farms are purchased for mining, zone of affectation and environmental offsets. These acquisitions have a negative effect on the community as existing families are removed from the area and new families can not enter. Thus resulting in less demand for the school and other forms of community infrastructure, less people to perform vital community functions ie Bush Fire Brigade and destroying the social fabric of the the community.

The operation of Maules Creek Coal Project will have a negative impact on our daily business as primary producers. The mining operations may have a detrimental impact to our water supply. The sheer quantity of material that will be removed and a pit depth in excess of 320m will cause a de-pressurisation effect which will impact on the water table. Springs, surface water run off and ground water in the area will be impacted. Likewise the mining operations could intercept aquifers in the Maules Creek/Back Creek area which could contribute to reductions in ground water supply. Our business depends on water, if we don't have water we have nothing.

The environment will suffer as a result of the Maules Creek Mining Project as the final void will act as a giant well filling with ground water, evaporating that water to the atmosphere setting up a cycle to permanently deplete the ground water in the area. In addition to this, the water in the final void will become a highly toxic lake that will contain heavy metals and salts. A major flood event like the one seen in Queensland last year could result in unplanned releases of this toxic water into the environment. I believe if this project was to go ahead the the final void must be filled in at the end of the project.

In conclusion I strongly urge Aston Resources not be allowed to proceed with the Maules Creek Coal Project. I believe the Maules Creek Coal Project will come at a “net cost” destroying the lifestyle and livelihood of my family and our community. Our family has formed a bond with the land that they have farmed for the the past 87 years through good times and bad times. It is a bond that they could never imagine breaking. Successive generations have made their mark here and it was always imagined future generations would have the same opportunity. If this is not possible due to the mining operations of Aston Resources compensation must be forthcoming. In my mind the arrival of Aston Resources in Maules Creek draws comparisons to the arrival of Europeans to the Americas. The new arrivals came with smiles on their faces, hand out stretched, offering gifts and riches, winning favour with the native people before driving them from their land, introducing disease and destroying their way of life and community. `

Karan, Peter & Matthew Todd