

SUBMISSION

MOUNT THORLEY CONTINUATION PROJECT – 2014

This application, along with Warkworth Continuation 2014 is the same project that was rejected by the Land and Environment Court and the Supreme Court and shows that Rio Tinto and the NSW Government have treated our Law Courts with contempt as they have our small but vibrant Community of Bulga.

The State Government's determination to see this profiteering foreign-owned company achieve its goal is seen to be tainted with corruption. Only 2% of the NSW Government's revenue comes from royalties. Regional Development Australia – Hunter in its economic modelling found a smaller coal industry would have only a minor impact on the Hunter's economy.

The widespread Community and New South Wales decision makers should not be influenced by the coal industry's spin and should realise that a smaller coal industry would improve air quality, health and environmental impacts and bring benefits to other industries such as tourism. Fewer coal mines would make the valley more attractive to tourists. The Hunter is an extremely popular tourist destination and is also home to a range of agricultural pursuits, service industries and manufacturing.

Only 5% of Hunter Valley jobs are in coal mining. Only 25% of employees at Mount Thorley Warkworth mine live in the Singleton LGA and only a minute number of those are from the Bulga Milbrodale district. With the price of coal at an all-time low it is questionable whether MTW mine is economically viable.

A Survey by the Australian Institute - June 2014 found only 37% of Hunter residents considered the benefits of mining outweigh the costs, 83% do not want the industry to expand and 41% want it to decrease or be phased out. Despite this the mining industry advocates keep portraying the industry as vital to the state and regional economy.

The Hunter coal industry lobby is a powerful player in NSW and has the financial ability and political support to impart its message to the wider community, unlike smaller more environmentally responsible groups.

The World Health Organisation guidelines state there are no safe levels of PM2.5's or PM10's but the Planning Department has set an arbitrary number based on per cubic metre produced per day. Who are the health experts? The WHO or the Planning Department. Once again working in the interests of the mining industry.

No reliable noise measurements are taken by the mine. Monitors are strategically placed in positions of least noise. Many residents have noise monitors calibrated by the Planning Department Compliance Officers but mysteriously MTW monitors always measure less than the residents. We also suffer from the cumulative effects of Wambo, Warkworth, Mount Thorley and Bulga Coal's Glencore mines. This is one of the main reasons for this project to be rejected immediately. We are at saturation point. We must not be expected to endure more noise, dust and blasting. The EIS states the mine will not produce more noise when it is within 2.6kms of the village and with the loss of our protective Saddle Ridge this is just not feasible.

The lack of disclosure of exceedances and the department's failure to enforce consent conditions is making life intolerable for the residents of Bulga.

Blasting does not seem to be worth mentioning according to Rio Tinto but we see the dust clouds (also the orange clouds such as on 27 June, 2014 at 1pm) and we feel the house shake and see more cracks appear in our home. Our building is not on reactive soil as Rio Tinto consultants tried to tell us. It is built on sandy loam with mine subsidence standard foundations.

I am not an hydrologist but I have seen the colour of the water in Cockfighters Creek change since the coal mines moved into the area. I have also spoken with a local Wonaruah man who stated the lack of mullet in Cockfighters Creek is proof the water is polluted as mullet are a very sensitive fish. MTW was fined \$46,000 for illegally discharging mine water via Salt Pan Creek into Cockfighters Creek and destroying a natural wetland at the Newport property, on the way.

Why is the NSW Government allowing our Aboriginal and European Heritage to be destroyed by this destructive industry?

The visual amenity from our home is depressing and to drive to Singleton, where we must travel to shop is even more depressing, driving between Rio Tinto's Warkworth and Mount Thorley mines. Shopping in Singleton is very expensive. Essential commodities such as groceries and petrol are far more expensive in Singleton than in other towns. Everything is priced for coal miners who mostly travel to Maitland, Newcastle or even Sydney avoid the high prices. Pensioners and non-mining residents cannot afford to travel, some do not drive anymore so they are the people paying the exorbitant prices for their goods. This is a negative social impact on the wider Singleton Community.

Wallaby Scrub Road was surveyed by Sir Thomas Mitchell in the 1820's when Bulga was first settled and is part of the Great North Road. To offer a \$200,000 donation to the Convict Trail Project group borders on bribery. This road is in very good condition and is used by many people travelling north as far as Queensland. It is also used by numerous coal miners travelling to work further up the valley. Do Rio Tinto not even care for their own fellow industry workers? Bulga Rural Fire Service Community First Responders use Wallaby Scrub Road in times of accidents and emergencies. This road must not be closed. If it is not closed the extension cannot go ahead. Another reason why the project should be rejected immediately.

Professor Glen Albrecht provided evidence in the Land and Environment Court of solastalgia – loss of place. We know this is true – we feel it. The constant pressure of coping with noise, dust, blasting and the disgustingly depressing visual amenity and knowing our home is being devalued more everyday has taken it's toll on our health and finances. What should have been a peaceful retirement has turned into a nightmare. A constant fight to preserve our Community and it's lifestyle.

We have no faith in Rio Tinto after been constantly subjected to their lies.

We have no faith in the NSW Government or the Planning Department. To change the SEPP while awaiting the outcome of the Supreme Court decision making the economics the key consideration in assessing projects displays the favouritism of the government towards the foreign mining giants.

The Government has changed the "like for like" ruling on offsets allowing Rio Tinto to offer land at Putty and Merriwa as offsets. This is clearly in breach of the original meaning of offsets.

The fact that this company has been allowed to apply for this same project when it has been rejected by two Courts, discrepancies in the hurriedly produced EIS, changes to the SEPP when the Court process was not finalised and the amendment of the "Deed of Agreement" by Minister Hazzard implies these changes were all made to allow ease of approval for Rio Tinto.

The blatant and arrogant ongoing non-compliance with conditions of consent continues unabated with \$1,500 on-the-spot fines no real deterrent.

The Planning Assessment Commission must reject this project.

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