

Director, Mining Projects  
Department of Planning & Environment  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Submission to Government regarding the Mount Owen Continued Operations Project

Date: 10/02/15

Peter York  
1702 Sandy Creek Rd  
Muswellbrook, NSW 2333

PROJECT NAME: Mount Owen Continued Operations Project  
APPLICATION NUMBER SSD5850

Dear Sir,

I am writing in support of the Mount Owen Continued Operations Project.

Mount Owen mine is considered an industry leader in Mine Rehabilitation and this should be considered as part of the project assessment. Rehabilitation is an area of continual improvement. Although practices have improved dramatically over the past decade, there is always scope for enhancing the resilience, diversity and sustainability of rehabilitation areas.

This requires industry leaders to demonstrate, by example, the validity of new techniques and practices that can lift industry standards. In 2002, Mount Owen recognised the opportunity and established connections with the University of Newcastle – Centre for Sustainable Ecological Restoration (CSER) to form the successful 'Ravensworth State Forest Vegetation Complex Research Program' (RSFVCRP).

The Research Program's scientific goal was to identify the best growth media for the establishment of native forest communities in spoil and pasture soil, and to test secondary and tertiary treatments such as inoculation with soil microbes.

Over the course of the research program, Mount Owen has progressively integrated research findings into the rehabilitation program, and use rehabilitation monitoring as inputs into the research program following completion of yearly rehabilitation. Industry leading outcomes directly implemented from the start of the RSFVCRP include the separate stockpiling of subsoil's as a topsoil replacement medium. This has resulted in reduced seeding rates and the elimination of fertilizer application. Based on the implementation of the outcomes of this program, Mount Owen has become the benchmark site for native forest rehabilitation within New South Wales.

This was recognised in 2009 when Mount Owen was recognised as a 'Highly Commended' restoration site by the International Society for Ecological Restoration, as part of their Global

Forest Restoration Project. <http://www.globalrestorationnetwork.org/countries/australiannew-zealand/australia/>

This highlights that Mount Owen long-term efforts to rehabilitation practices are significance and Mount Owen is making a difference to environmental sustainability in the region.

The outcomes of the research and trials at Mount Owen has contributed significantly to the Hunter Valley mining industry's understanding of rehabilitation methodologies to help mines achieve successful reforestation of their overburden dumps.

In August 2012, Mount Owen's rehabilitation works culminated in the University of Newcastle's publication of 'Establishing Native Vegetation: Principles and Interim Guidelines for Spoil Placement Areas and Restoration Lands'.

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/Resources/Research%20Centres/CSER/Master%20Document%20-%20Establishing%20Native%20Vegetation.pdf>

<http://www.singletonargus.com.au/story/720610/spotlight-on-vegetation/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-11-01/mine-affected-land-research-published/4346346>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-18/birds-indicators-of-connectivity-in-hunter-valley/4965508>

This represents a significant milestone for Mount Owens rehabilitation program and clearly demonstrates Mount Owens methodology as leading practice. The rehabilitation outcomes at Mount Owen have been a focal point for a number of mine tours over the years involving various industry, community and indigenous groups. For example, in 2012 the NSW Minerals Council chose Mount Owen to conduct mine tours for community groups as part of the Upper Hunter Valley Mining Dialogue. A number of the tour groups commented on the success of the rehabilitation at Mount Owen.

In the spirit of continued research, Mount Owen has also been undertaken studies on threatened spotted tailed quoll. The research program which commenced in 2012, has recently been published and presented at a number of conference s during 2014 these include.

- The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.
- Australian Wildlife Management Society.
- New South Wales Minerals Council Environment and Community Conference.

The project showed that the spotted tailed quoll will utilise rehabilitation areas as part of its home range. This is a significant achievement as it shows that the rehabilitation at Mount Owen has habitat values for threatened species.

Glencore is also recognised as an industry leader in air quality management by the New South Wales Minerals Council and recently received an award for its dust forecasting system which is used on a daily basis at Mount Owen.

<http://www.singletonargus.com.au/story/1818428/glencore-receives-environmental-award/> .

I ask the New South Wales Government to approve the Mount Owen Continued Operations Project based on the environmental outcomes already being delivered at Mount Owen Mine.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter York