

Phyllis

**Cobbora Coal Project No:10\_0001 Hearing 11.12.2012**

**Social Concerns in the Secondary Assessment Area of Mudgee/Gulgong Communities Mid-Western Regional LGA.**

An Analysis of the Cobbora Coal Project Environmental Assessment - Social Impacts Pages 451 to 467. Presented by Phyllis Setchell - resident of Mudgee

**Page 452**

**Construction Workforce**

The statistics presented implies that there will be low social impact at the construction stage. This is done by spreading the estimated figures over four regions. People are free to choose where they live. How many will choose to live in Gulgong or Mudgee is unpredictable. We are already experiencing considerable social impacts from the influx from other mines. If this project goes ahead it will add to these problems.

The EA says that 40% of the 550 construction workers are to live in surrounding towns: then why are they proposing to build a Temporary Workers Accommodation for 400 construction workers. Their figures don't add up! Will it be because the construction stage will keep going and they don't want to alert us to the ongoing and escalating social problems of TWA's?

**Operations Workforce**

Their prediction is that 65% - 70% of the workforce "could" be sourced within the region IF there are "effective training programs". The EA then contradicts these statistics by a confusing reference to a 50% figure.

As for "effective training", the state government is cutting funding to TAFE. Hence, most of the training will be through RTO's which are profit framed driven and therefore do not provide effective training to unskilled job seekers. Once again those who are already marginalised in our communities will be left behind.

**Workforce Residential Distribution**

**Construction Workforce "Village"**

All the studies and reports reveal that the negative social impacts of temporary workers accommodation villages are considerable.

I notice the EA doesn't use the word temporary. We all know that the village with all its social problems will be there much longer than the construction stage of this project because the mine will expand and keep on expanding.

### **Page 453: Operations Workforce**

The two scenarios on page 453 predict the numbers of workers possibly relocating to Mudgee/Gulgong.

Mid - Western LGA may have 10% of the workforce but on the other hand may have 30%.

All the statistics presented look at first glance impressive on paper. However these figures are misleading designed to minimise the impact. It is well documented that coal mining is a destructive force on the social fabric of rural communities.

### **Page 458: Secondary Assessment Area: Stakeholder and Community Consultation**

Community information sessions were held at Dunedoo, Wellington, Gulgong and Dubbo. Note none were held in Mudgee yet on two occasions representatives from CHC were invited to attend community information meetings but they declined.

### **Page 460 Population Demographics**

There is no mention of the significant tourism and hospitality Industry in the Mudgee area. Why? Is it because this project will write these industries off the map? Leaving many families without a source of income

### **Page 461: Education**

The NSW Government are making cuts to school education how can it be said that there will be enough places to absorb the increase? What about children who need specialist educational services. These are already stretched. Where will the extra funding come from?

The report states that childcare centres have waiting lists then goes on to say "there may be some strains on existing childcare services". No! There **will be** strains, even if the numbers are small.

### **Page 462: Health**

The redevelopment of Dubbo base Hospital is only in the planning stage. As these changes usually take years the current difficulties in delivering services to the region are likely to continue and be worse with the increase in population.

The Gulgong community are very concerned about the loss of their hospital and are worried about the future.

Mudgee health services will also find it difficult to meet any increase. The EA states that Mudgee/ Gulgong are under the recommended number of GP's by nine. For our community this project could have a significant detrimental impact on availability and waiting times.

### **Pages 463 -464: Housing**

Hotel, Motels and Caravan Parks in Mudgee have for many years been fully booked when there are special events. The current mining expansion coupled with this new project will cause bed shortages. I disagree with the statement on page 463 that accommodation is sufficient.

I can speak from the experience of being a landlord in Mudgee. Since the increase in mining the rents have in fact risen, the only downturn was recently when the mines cut back. This project will have a flow on effect causing rents to rise and increasing the burden for families on low incomes.

The stats page 464 giving the possible new dwellings that could be built is dependent on the tradespeople being available. Most I know are opting to work at the mines where they get larger pay packets.

### **Page 464: Emergency Services**

The EA does not adequately address the impact on emergency services. The whole issue is glossed over with a summary of what is available. Yet we as locals know that services are already working under a lot of strain, under staffed and under resourced.

As stated page 464 Rural Fire Brigades are mainly volunteer-based. When the local population is decimated by this project where will the volunteers come from? This will put even more pressure on our town based emergency services.

### **Page 465: Youth Services**

The inadequacy of existing youth services is acknowledged but no solutions or promises to address the impacts which will take place.

As a person who has worked with families I am concerned about the following impacts on our young:

- The Fly/Drive In Fly/Drive Out and the long working hours are leading to an increase in family breakdown.
- Long Term: what is the future for the young? Climate change. Economic Instability. Loss of community. Unemployment. Food Shortages

### **Page 466: Community Infrastructure and Services**

To try to show that community infrastructure and services "will not be under pressure" from this project the EA makes the comment that population is declining. This contradicts their own statement on page 461 in relation to Mudgee.

Again they contradict themselves in the very next sentence by promising to update the Council and Service Providers when there will be increases in the workforce so

these providers can respond to increased demand. If there was no impact, "no pressure" why make this commitment? Community facilities and services certainly will be under pressure! Where will the money come from to provide these extra resources? Neither from the mining company nor the State Government.

### **Page 467 Voluntary Planning Agreements**

It isn't good enough to say that the Social and Public Infrastructure issues will be addressed at a later date through the VAP process. Past experience shows this does not happen. If CHC's parameters are to be based on recent comparable agreements why were these not included? We need a commitment to funding from CHC for roads not a proposed funding. These issues need to be worked out now before the project is approved.

The actions of CHC representatives towards the residents of the Laheys Creek and surrounding areas have already caused an enormous degree of social upheaval. Their approach has pitted neighbours against each other and is destroying the local social fabric. Therefore I have no confidence that they will address any social concerns adequately as they arise.

### **Page 467: Cumulative Impacts**

#### **Health, childcare/youth services, community facilities and housing**

At last the EA acknowledges that Mudgee/Gulgong Medical and Childcare Services and will put under strain by the cumulative effect. But then it says this will ease in 2020. But where is the logic in this statement? The project does not end in 2020! The EA does not explain "How" the strain will be eased!

#### **Positive Outcomes Questioned**

I would like to comment on the statement "the principal effects of the cumulative mining projects will be to arrest the rate of population decline and provide well paid employment, both of which are positive outcomes."

Firstly: For all those families forced to move out of the district due to mining it is an insult to say that "mining arrests the population decline". In fact mining increases the population decline. These families do not see having to leave as a "positive outcome".

Secondly: "well paid employment - a positive outcome". At the end of the day a good pay packet is not a positive outcome when it comes at the cost of poor mental and physical health and family breakdown due to the long hours that miners are these days expected to work and be away from families. Well paid employment is no substitute for family and community security. The well paid employment will be for the few causing social divides in the community to widen. Not a good outcome!

**Page 468 More positive outcomes questioned:**

The EA says that the project will be “Creating 6.5 indirect jobs from each job it creates”. What about the existing jobs that support the agricultural and hobby farms that are being eliminated?

The promises of: provision of jobs for young people; improved infrastructure and services; employment and training for locals; meaningful employment for aboriginal communities; supporting local business are empty wishful thinking. Past and present experiences demonstrate that very few of these ever eventuate and if they do they are so minimal that they do not offset the social damages done to rural communities.

As for diversifying the region this project will contribute to making the area a Monoculture of mines, leading to mines, mines and more mines as far as the eye can see.

The justification that this project will provide more and diverse jobs, strengthening the regional economy is short sighted. The project has a life span of 21years based on extracting a non-renewable product. It will leave in its wake an unproductive wasteland. Where will the jobs be then? How will that strengthen our regional economy?

Promises of “Preserving local council’s rate base” are impossible dreams. I can see a future when the impact of this project will mean that our community will be paying more for: Scarce water supplies, increase in infrastructure costs, expensive rentals, repairing roads....the list goes on.

**Page 468: Sensitivity Analysis**

The report predicted an incoming population of 272 to Mid-Western Regional LGA. It goes on to say “Even where capacity is currently stretched, this will cause no noticeable decline in service levels”.

Every new project and expansions of existing mines gradually adds more and more cumulative pressure to our community.

Also as I said before these population figures may not be a true picture of what will eventuate?

**Page 469: Monitoring and Consultation**

The promise of “ongoing participation in meetings and public speaking requests” are empty words as the CHC turned down two invitations to speak at public meetings in Mudgee with stakeholders.

## **Issues not addressed in the Social Impact Section of the EA**

The impact on Mudgee's town Water supply is not even mentioned in this part of the EA. Surely if we have to face major water restrictions this would be a social impact.

The Cudgegong River is a significant part of our social life providing places to enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, walking and picnicking.

The Mudgee wine and tourism industry relies on having a secure water supply to survive. We locals benefit socially in many ways from these industries. All of which will be lost to our community should the river dry up.

The impacts of all the extra traffic on Mudgee/Gulgong are already causing stress to the community. These social impacts are inadequately addressed in the EA.

The social impacts of Trains are not even mentioned. The extra pressure on the Hunter rail corridor means that coal may be railed through Mudgee. We will face lengthy delays at crossings, noise and dust.

## **Conclusion**

The EA fails to predict with any consistency or accuracy the extent of the social impacts. The impacts have been understated.

This project will result in long term environment and consequently social costs and should not be approved.

Phyllis

## Quotes re: The Social Impacts of Mining Camps on Rural Communities

### **1. The Queensland University of Technology Study on the social impacts of Australia's mining boom, 2010**

"Professor Carrington said that the study found Australia's mining industry was generating alcohol-fuelled violence, prostitution and mental health illness.

Her investigation carried out at mining sites in Western Australia and Queensland found that the camps were "catastrophically" denigrating nearby towns and turning them into dangerous crime hot spots.

Professor Carrington said although the latest study was carried out in Queensland's Bowen Basin, one of the country's largest mining regions, the results were relevant to all mining communities.

"Those projects disrupt the natural equilibrium of regional cities," Professor Carrington said.

"They have dense social networks, they have high rates of volunteering and community participation – what we call social capital – so of course, when strangers and very large groups of strangers [arrive] it disrupts the whole equilibrium of how that community functions."

The survey found that contrary to common assumptions that mining activity boosted local economies; many businesses were suffering and even closing down due to "fly-over effects" and an inability to compete with mining industry wages. Also, the non-resident workforce was not spending as much money in the local community as expected – except on alcohol and fuel.

There were also stark problems for non-resident workers and their families, caused by absent fathers and husbands and a lack of community engagement.

"The guilt that these men feel is quite profound," Professor Carrington said.

"They can't contribute to the community they live in, they can't contribute to the community they work in, so they're in a terrible position and it's not their fault."

The study, which surveyed nearly 600 people who either lived or worked in mining communities, including non-resident mining workers, showed people supported new regional mining projects when they included less than 25 per cent of non-resident workers, and significantly reduced thereafter."

Read more: <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/fifo-workers-destroy-regional-communities-expert-20110621-1gd1f.html#ixzz1o6UNgs24>

### **2. watoday.com.au Sunday March 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 – Further quoted from the Queensland University of Technology Report**

"The study found that the rate of violence was 2.3 times the state average in WA."

"These (communities) are in a David and Goliath struggle, these are little people in a community that have very little voice, that are watching these massive, powerful, big mining companies build these work camps on their door steps,"

A study of these communities in Australia published in **The British Journal of Criminology (Fenech 2010)** revealed that a lack of entertainment options other than alcohol for fly-in, fly-out mine workers often led to:

- a spike in violence
- a higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases and
- mental health problems.

The impact on the rural and remote communities that host fly-in, fly-out workers can be significant. They may have limited resources and infrastructure, and camps constructed within or close to them bring a whole range of social issues that present radical challenges."

### 3. Courier-Mail article: "**Queensland's fly-in fly-out mining towns crying out for essential services**"

By: John McCarthy From: [The Courier-Mail](#) November 08, 2011 12:00am

"The mining boom is crippling Queensland's coal towns.

According to a study for the **Isaac Shire Council Moranbah**, the influx of fly-in workers is pushing health services towards crisis. Isaac Mayor Cedric Marshall said the State Government had to come to the party. He said considering how much wealth was generated by the region, there was a good argument for more to come back to places such as Moranbah.

According to an analysis by **KPMG demographer Bernard Salt**, health and police services were drastically overworked. Continuing to mistakenly assert that non-resident workers do not place pressure on health care and other essential services is dangerous and short-sighted in the extreme.

**Moranbah residents** also took their concerns to the region's biggest miner, BHP Billiton, presenting a letter to the Brisbane headquarters of its coal division.

However, the company has consistently said it did not believe it should be funding services such as health facilities, although significant contributions have been made by the company, including a youth centre and a sports centre.



Moranbah resident Denise Robertson said she wanted the company's executives to see firsthand what the issues were.

The letter presented to BHP said the company used to provide quality housing for families and used to care more.

"Now our towns are dominated by camps of thousands of people while local families struggle with community services and facilities that are grossly inadequate," it said. "Our towns have the highest median rents in Queensland.

"The roads are dangerously jammed with mining traffic. Our kids have less sporting and recreational facilities than ever.

"There is little suitable family accommodation. Our social infrastructure is not coping."

A submission to a Federal Parliament inquiry from **Moranbah Medical** said the doctor to patient ratio was now one GP for every 2750 people. *The Queensland average is one GP for every 977 people.* Continuing to mistakenly assert that non-resident workers do not place pressure on health care and other essential services is dangerous and short-sighted in the extreme.

#### 4. Fly-in, fly-out fuelling violence: study

6-December-10 by AAP & Staff Reporters

"Work camps have a profound impact upon the patterns of violence in host communities," Prof Carrington told reporters.

"The other main cause of violence is rivalry between different groups of men, including between non-resident workers and locals and between contractors and crews, and rivalry over available women or sex workers," Prof Carrington said.

"High stress, job insecurity, long hours and isolation are catalysts for violent cultures to flourish."

Prof Carrington said young men from good families, with no history of violence, were among those ending up behind bars.

She questioned the fly-in, fly-out model, saying mining companies and governments should be trying to build healthy, attractive communities so people would instead chose to settle there.

A proportion of the federal government's proposed new mining tax should go towards that goal, she said."

**5. Anglicare Australia's 11th State of the Family Report published October 2011. Staying Power "Roof Over Head - the New Australian Dream"/ by Philip Shade writing about the mining camps says:**

"The large influx of workers into regional areas can create a community of 'fly-in, fly-out' people. This phenomenon can create difficulties for those who are part Of the fly-in, fly-out workforce, for the community where the workers are located, and for those left behind in the family home. Workers experience isolation from friends and families for the duration of their shift. Family and marital difficulties can flow from the isolation and change in routine for both parties. Mental health, depression and stress-related problems associated with the fly-in, fly-out workforce are common. Kennedy (2011) finds that some people working fly-in, fly-out become isolated and lonely, often having difficulties managing the house or family when they return Home.

A study of these communities in Australia published in the British Journal of Criminology (Fenech 2010) revealed that a lack of entertainment options other than alcohol for fly-in, fly-out mine workers often led to a spike in violence, a higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases and mental health problems.

The impact on the rural and remote communities that host fly-in, fly-out workers can be significant. They may have limited resources and infrastructure, and camps constructed within or close to them bring a whole range of social issues that present radical challenges for what may have been relatively small, quiet, stable communities for many years."

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