

PAC MEETING 18 DEC 14

WARKWORTH CONTINUATION PROJECT

My name is Phil Carroll and [REDACTED] I have two degrees in engineering including a Master's of Science from Texas A&M University in the US. I have lived in many places around Australia and have travelled and lived overseas. I graduated from the Royal Military College in Canberra and served as an officer in the Australian Army for 20 years, the latter part involved in capital acquisition dealing with large companies. I have run my own small business which employed up to 15 people and any one time for nearly ten years, and now work in the mining industry. As such, I consider myself reasonably well educated and experienced.

In the Bulga Community there are many other similarly experienced and educated people from the fields of education, the medical professions, management, mining, trades and agriculture. All reasonable people capable of logical and rational thought with a strong sense of natural justice and how a "reasonable person" would view a wide range of topics.

So why then are we expected to believe there is no dust problem when everything we own is now covered in dust when it never used to be? Why when we can plainly see dust clouds billowing up from the mine and dust flicking up off the road from the cars in front?

So why then are we expected to believe there is no noise problem when we can't get to sleep of a night because of the clanking and revving of equipment being operated in the mine, especially when two years ago we would never hear any noise at all?

So why then are we expected to believe that a huge mining enterprise converting large tracts of the beautiful Hunter Valley into giant holes and moonscape, spewing dust and noise 24 hours a day seven days a week has no effect on property values and saleability for properties in adjacent areas? Why are we expected to believe it is normal to have to wait several years to sell a property, if you can sell it at all, and to have to cut the price massively to have any hope of doing so.

So why then are we expected to believe that this project is good for all of NSW when the area most affected by the development, BULGA, gets absolutely nothing from the deal?

So why then are we expected to believe that living next to a mine is okay when more than 99% of their own workers would rather travel up to an hour and a half each way to get to work than live two kilometres away in BULGA?

So why then are we expected to believe noise from the mine won't get louder when Saddleback Ridge, a natural barrier to noise, is destroyed and operations move closer to BULGA when every other noise in the free world gets louder the closer you get to it?

So why then are we expected to believe it is okay for the noise to be louder if the wind blows toward BULGA?

So why then are we expected to believe that, just because computer modelling says so, noise and dust paths are so selective they can affect one property but not another immediately adjacent?

So why then are we expected to believe there is an effective noise attenuation program being implemented on mine vehicles over the last year when the noise from these vehicles is now the most prominent thing we hear?

So why then are we expected to believe it is okay to close our roads with no local compensation for increased inconvenience and trip times? Why are we expected to believe it is not okay to relocate a road because of the damage a 30m wide strip might do to the Warkworth Sands area, yet it is okay to dig up the whole area to mine coal?

So why then are we expected to believe that an 1800Ha land offset miles away from BULGA in the Goulburn National Park is reasonable protection against the damage that mining does locally to the district?

So why then are we expected to believe that the mine is concerned about our welfare when they accidentally call you back unaware (as happened to my partner at the end of October this year), and openly mock our concerns and deride community members when they think we are not listening? Why do they not come up to our homes, live in the area, understand our issues and take steps to resolve them?

So why then are we expected to believe this is now two projects when clearly Warkworth Mine needs Mt Thorley Mine to load 100% of its' washed coal onto trains for delivery to port, to process one third of its' raw coal output, and to dump significant amounts of overburden.

So why then are we expected to believe the "Community Consultation" process is effective when it only results in providing the company with an opportunity to come up with pat answers that don't require them to do anything to community concerns instead of generating real solutions to real problems?

And, finally, so why then are we expected to believe there will be any other result from this approval process when the NSW State Government has constantly failed to protect the people it is elected to serve, has disregarded not one but two Court decisions against this project, has changed legislation to allow the project to be resubmitted, and has changed the approval process to prevent any independent legal review of the decision. Why was the company able to advise its' employees a week before the NSW Planning Dept announced it would recommend the project go ahead that their jobs were safe and that project approval would be resolved by Christmas time?

Anybody with even a miniscule amount reason or intelligence would not accept any of the above yet Government seems to think the people of BULGA will if you treat them like scared little children who believe everything will be all right if you just keep telling them so.

WELL, NO WE DON'T! REASONABLE PEOPLE WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY OF THIS AND NEITHER WILL WE.

The next major issue is the complete lack of benefit this project has to the residents of BULGA.

If this project was in central Australia the mine would offer the local community jobs and improved facilities and amenities and the community would be grateful for the opportunity to have such a business in their district. Property demand and prices would actually go up.

If this project was in SYDNEY protection of the local population would be paramount. Sound walls would be mandated to shield the locals from excessive noise and dust, houses would be double glazed and insulated to reduce noise and dust impact, green zones established, voluntary acquisition of property would extend around the entire boundary of the project, greater restrictions would be placed on operations and operating hours. With proper protections in place and the opportunity for local jobs, property demand and prices could actually go up.

Because the project is in BULGA there is no offer of jobs and amenities, there is no protection of the local population, and the property market has collapsed effectively trapping those currently living in the area for the next twenty years. Long term health issues caused by dust, continuous noise, and distress at not being able to resolve your situation are all well documented and will become real problems for the Government as a result of the approval of this project in its' current form.

Voluntary acquisition for all properties in the district is the only solution left to restore balance to this process. People live in BULGA because they want to live in BULGA. The atmosphere and surroundings are second to none and many have come here to escape the type of environment that is exactly being forced upon them now. They will generally not leave the district unless forced to. When voluntary acquisition applies to all then either two things will happen:

1. What the mine and Government is saying "That there will be no problems for the local community as a result of this project" is true and life will go on in BULGA as normal.
2. The impact of the mine worsens and the residents of BULGA take up the voluntary acquisition option and try to find another place elsewhere to rebuild their lives.

Voluntary acquisition places greater responsibility on the mine to take care of the communities they impact and, if they fail to do so, leaves them with a bunch of worthless properties they cannot sell instead of the local residents who did not vote for this project and who many of them moved to the district on the 2004 approval understanding the mine would not encroach further onto BULGA.

Throughout the entire approval process for this mine the two things that cause me the most resentment and which need to be rectified are:

1. The farcical manner in which the people of BULGA have been treated, and the general lack of respect shown; and
2. The lack of any opportunity presented to the village of BULGA, the single most vulnerable and affected area directly impacted by the mine.

The NSW State Government and mining have missed a golden opportunity to work with the community and develop a template for how mining and rural communities can co-exist and thrive. Instead, they have condemned BULGA to the same fate as other villages unlucky to be in the path of mining that no longer exist. They both should be ashamed and I only hope that history judges them accordingly...

If the village of BULGA is to be sacrificed for some Machiavellian concept of "Greater Good", then the only option left that provides any form of natural justice for the residents of BULGA is for the PAC Committee to mandate voluntary acquisition of all properties in the BULGA district at terms and conditions no less favourable than those already made to others in the area.

Phil Carroll

