

I am 65 years of age and have lived almost 64 years in north Queensland. I owned a Nature Refuge outside Mackay and decided to sell up and move interstate when the whole social fibre of Mackay became nothing but a money grubbing mining town. The coal mines were coming closer to Mackay and there was a New Zealand mining company that was exploring all up the Pioneer Valley where I lived. Nature Refuges are not safe from mining as I have discovered after trying to prevent mining on Bimblebox Nature Refuge which has a small population of the endangered Black-throated Finch. The Draft TOR for the Waratah Coal power house is open for public comment even while the proponent has not received his permit to mine the Nature Refuge. How can this be so? Does Mr. Palmer already know that the permit will be rubber stamped against all the evidence of the increasing carbon from coal mining.

I moved to Victoria and the people in my valley are astonished at the change to the climate here. We are getting more severe winters and summers with much damage to crops.

Today's ABC programme has scientists warning of the huge losses of our native species from climate change and vast areas of Australia are burning. Clearing native vegetation, including endangered species, using offsets to allow the mining companies access to all areas, and using the unproven carbon sequestration technology is all leading to greater warming in these areas and the loss of biodiversity.

Our Government must stand up to the mining companies which rule our country and move now to a more green, sustainable future. My Grandchildren will inherit a landscape almost devoid of the wonderful native species which inhabit our land. Our reef is dying from pollution from farming practices and toxic water pumped from the mines during the floods. With a permit allowing increasing rates of pumping into our rivers Queensland Premier Campbell Newman has just written off the Great Barrier Reef. How does our reef stand a chance with the massive increase of shipping predicted to traverse this area when the Galilee Basin is virtually destroyed by coal mining.

The people in mining towns are not being listened to by the Government Health Department when they complain of their health problems, particularly in Tara. Instead we are told that as there were no baseline studies on health before the coal seam gas started then the problem doesn't really exist. Coal seam gas leakages and coal dust will fill our hospitals with innocent victims and as our hospitals cannot cope now because of shortage of doctors, lack of funding and nurses we may as well declare most of our mining towns unlivable. Methane Gas also leads to global warming and yet our Government has done nothing to stop mining companies from undermining rivers which are now bubbling with this destructive gas. Even more rivers such as the Hunter River are being proposed to be undermined.

Australia will indeed be an unrecognisable land in the near future. It will be littered with stranded infrastructure and toxic voids. These voids are now allowed under all the EIS's and are of no benefit to our wildlife as they contain toxic water from coal waste and salt coming up from below. The whole of the Bowen Basin is beginning to look like a moon scape with the number of mines and no consideration given to regional consequences to the environment. Tourists avoid the roads through the mining areas as they are devoid of the pleasant landscape they once drove through and the accident rate is horrific. Each new mine is only looked at for its footprint on that site and even that is totally ignored with the allowance of offsets for what they destroy.

How can you offset the Bowen Basin or the Galilee Basin? Australia is no longer a great country. It is just a money grubbing nation which cares nothing for its people or wildlife. We must get back to basics and listen to our scientists and learn to live a different, less consumer driven lifestyle.

Regards,
Maureen Cooper