

Submission to The Inquiry into The Impacts of Mining in The Murray Darling Basin.

To: Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications & the Arts.

From: Scott Cooper

Haystack Rd. Coal Comittee.

Background.

I am farming a property north of Warra which has been in my Family for the past 104 years, which makes me a fourth generation farmer. I have been farming it for some 15 years, ever since I left school. These properties are affected by a Mineral Development Licence, MDL 383 which is held by Tarong Energy. Tarong intend to sell the Licence for an open cut coal mine.

Haystack Rd. Coal Committee(www.coal4breakfast.com.au) was formed to protect prime agricultural farm land for future generations, so this farming land can keep producing food for many generations to come, after all that's what it does best!

Submission.

If this area is mined it will cause water diversions within the head waters of the Murray Darling Basin, as well as damage to the underground water systems which could never be returned to their nature state. This could cause problems for neighbouring properties, eg; less overland flow to fill dams or a concentration of water potentially leading to soil erosion or excess flooding making country less productive.

The Brigalow Jimbour Floodplain has surface grades of only 0.02%,so as I see it any mining activity even Coal Seam Gas will affect the surface, disturbing the flow of water across the floodplain to the creeks and rivers. It will also cause ponding or poor drainage making the production of food less viable.

And while we're on Coal Seam Gas there's the problem of what to do with the water that is extracted to obtain the gas. The water in the existing bores is an extremely high salinity water (EC - 6.22,Class 5),with a Hardness of 690 ppm (CaCO₃ equiv.) and a pH of 7.86 - slightly alkaline. If this water is allowed to concentrate on an area of land it turns the soil into a hard barren mess that won't grow anything and won't allow water to infiltrate it just runs off ! Then what happens to the water table when all that water is removed at a great rate, it must affect someone else's bore water level when you take out more water than the rate it takes to replenish it. Then if this water makes it 's way into the river systems not to mention the damage to the soil on the way to the river!

This country is so naturally flat and fertile it lends itself very well to crop production and though work that the Brigalow Floodplain Group has done is well drained.Once you dig up the soil in massive quantities it cannot be laid back the same way and I believe will never be able to produce as it always has.

If Haystack is taken out of production the flow on effects to the towns that service us (machinery,mechanics, welders, accountants) and all the people that work in them, may be worse off. After all agriculture is what founded these businesses and mining may give them a boom for a while, but once the mine is gone there will be no more farming therefore no on going business to sustain them. Where as if farming remains they will have a consistent flow of business. Warra has had a coal mine before and had a boom then with 3 hotels

(pub's), butcher, baker & numerous tea rooms but now Warra is back to where it was. Though it must be noted that the mine then was quite small and did not affect any farmland. Once mining and farming are finished in the area there will be more people pushed into the SE corner putting more pressure on water supplies. No one will want to live out here if mining proceeds.

Last year the area affected by MDL 383 grew enough wheat to make 68 million loaves of bread, enough feed grain to produce beef for sausages to go 1.5 times around Australia and enough barley to produce 7 million stubbies of beer!

Professor Julian Cribb said demand for food will rise 110% by the middle of the century. He also said by 2050 we will need two planet Earth's to sustain us, therefore we must grow our food on our most efficient land available.

The Murray Darling Basin directly supports 3 million people and feeds approx 20 Million people off 14 % of Australia.

1.02 billion people are going hungry throughout the world.

Summary.

With the current reserves of coal, 300 years worth according to Premier Anna Bligh at last year's rates, it seems unnecessary to mine prime ag land that will provide us with good quality food for many years to come. We need this land to feed Australia and the world. I don't think it is worth the risk of destroying it for maybe a 25 year gain and as I said before I don't believe it will produce food again after mining is over. Because at the moment there doesn't seem to be a way to get at the coal without upsetting the surface or risking the underground water supply, which we depend on. By upsetting the surface, subsidence etc, the area will be less productive and may even be non viable possibly hindering water flow to the Murray Darling system. Seeing we have such a valuable natural resource in the farmland it is probably better left alone.

Thank-you to the Senate for giving us the opportunity to be apart of this inquiry.

Scott Cooper.