

Submission to the Senate Committee Inquiry into the Impacts of Mining in the Murray Darling Basin

Organic Farming

Background

We operate an organically certified cattle, grain and vegetable enterprise in the Hodgson Creek valley, north-east of the proposed mine at Felton. This district is in the headwaters of the Murray Darling Basin. We have been accredited with ACO, the certifying arm of the BFA (Biological Farmers of Australia), for more than 10 years. In order to maintain our organic status, we are audited annually by a third party and we must guarantee that our produce is free from soil, water and atmospheric contamination.

As one of several organic farmers in the district it is of great concern to us the potential impacts Ambre Energies proposed open cut coal mine, petrochemical plant, and power station will have on our organic status.

Environmental Issues

We chose to farm in this region of the Darling Downs because of the inherently fertile soils, good supply of quality water, and clean atmosphere. These environmental conditions are considered ideal for organic food production.

Water

Adequate quantities of good quality ground water (bore water) are the life blood of this community. We use this water for stock and domestic purposes and our organic production depends entirely on access to irrigation water.

The process of open cut mining intercepts, contaminates, and interferes with the natural recharge of underground aquifers, which supply the bores. The interconnectivity of surface and groundwater and indeed between bores has been scientifically proven. Therefore, there is an unacceptable risk that the Felton Mine Project could compromise the quality and quantity of our irrigation water, and jeopardize our livelihood.

Atmosphere

Open Cut Coal Mines produce coal dust which is known to be detrimental to human health, causing respiratory and other chronic health problems.

For the health conscious consumer organic produce has a clean green image. This image will be destroyed if food is produced in close proximity to an open cut coal mine. As a result organic food production in this district will become unviable.

Conclusion

If the Felton Coal Mine project is approved it will become untenable to farm organically as we will not be able to comply with strict standards of food safety required by our certifying body ACO.

This project poses an unacceptable risk to quality food production and the contamination of the head waters of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The proposed open cut coal mine, petrochemical, and power station at Felton must not be allowed to proceed.

Submitted by,
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