



Office of the Mayor

19th October, 2011

The Secretary,
House of Representative,
Standing Committee on Regional Australia.

Dear Sir,

Re: FIFO Workforce practices

First let me thank you for the time extension to allow our submission to be considered.

The West Coast Scene.

Unlike Western Australia and its remote mines, the West Coast of Tasmania has its mines in or adjacent to its towns and communities. Workers tend to drive in and out rather than fly in and out and travelling times to their home towns are anything from two to four hours away.

To the West Coast community this results in a financial and social loss as the wages are exported out of the West Coast and the families of the workers live in other areas and do not assist in maintaining our social, educational and recreational numbers.

Many clubs such as Rotary, Lions and many sporting and local organizations now have difficulty in attracting new members. From a Council perspective the West Coast is resource rich but rate poor.

There should be a review of the impact of rosters on our community that would demonstrate the community damage caused by a drive in drive out workforce.

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Conclusion:

To rectify the erosion of community standards, social and economic disadvantage of a regional mining municipality I believe that –

1. A percentage of mining royalties should come back to the municipality.
2. Mines should operate on an 8 hour shift roster or,
3. The taxation Zone Allowance should be increased from a paltry \$57.00 to \$10,000.00.

Either of these three options mentioned would improve the social and economic capacity of the West Coast.

Note: I have sent via surface mail our previous submission on this issue presented to the Tasmanian Legislative Council inquiry and a copy of "A struggle for Time".

Yours faithfully

DARRYL GERRITY

WEST COAST COUNCIL

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Office of the Mayor

26th May, 2008

Legislative Council,
Mining Industry Regulation Inquiry,
Parliament House,
HOBART 7000

Dear Ms. McLeod,

The Legislative council inquiry into the mining industry is opportune and welcome as there is a need for community concerns to be addressed. The West Coast Council has been pro-active in many issues emanating from this resource industry. The prime issues we believe that the inquiry should also focus on are:

1. Mining work hours.
2. Transport.
3. Workplace Standards.
4. Environmental issues.
5. Training.
6. Cost shifting.
7. Community issues.

1. Mine work hours.

The West Coast Council was actively involved some five years ago in giving evidence to the Kathryn Heiler report 'The struggle for Time' which highlighted unsafe work practices due to the longevity of mine work hours. It was considered that a five on, five off shift roster was the maximum allowable in the interests of safety, productivity, social, health and sustainable communities.

A recent thrust to increase rosters has prompted the West Coast Council to write to the former Minister for Workplace Health and Safety, the Hon. Steve Kons MHA, outlining our concerns; we have attached this letter for your perusal and wish that our letter and 'The Struggle for Time' be considered by your inquiry.



2. Transport.

Another issue causing concern is the mine to market area of transport. The West Australian mining boom and their development of transport infrastructure make our Tasmanian efforts look pathetic. No effort appears on the horizon to freight mining produce to port by rail, in fact road transport appears to be the only vision. As you would be aware West Coast roads are poor for this transport option and West coast weather condition during winter are historically poor, only one short passing lane exists between West coast mines and the Burnie port. It appears that the rail operator is also incapable of providing competitive transport rates and capacity. A public meeting in Zeehan some five years ago was called because of concerns of large vehicles using the main street and causing inconvenience, disturbance, poor amenity, safety problems, damage to adjacent heritage buildings and creating noise issues etc. Despite public concerns there has now been a study that anticipates approximately two hundred truck movements daily down Zeehan's main street. Tullah residents have also expressed concerns regarding pedestrians walking alongside the highway adjacent to large vehicles. All or most large non-perishable resource produce should be railed from the West Coast as a solution along with fast-tracking the Melba Flats to Zeehan rail extension provided for in Federal Labor's budget.

Besides the increased tourism traffic, mine workers from the North West Coast traveling to the West coast and the daily necessities trucked into this West Coast, there will be increased pressure from resource industries such as:

- Allegiance concentrates to Burnie
- Pine logs from Strahan to Scotsdale
- Salmon to Devonport
- Fish feed to Strahan
- Renison Bell tin to Burnie Port
- Mt. Bishcoff ore to Renison Bell
- Zeehan zinc concentrates to Burnie
- Que River to Burnie
- Lime, cement and fuel tankers

3. Workplace Standards

Besides our concerns over future applications to extend shift rosters we feel that mining safety issues require Government regulation rather than self regulation and that regulators need to be based on the West Coast or in the region. We also endorse fully the recent directions by Coroner Don Jones to the State Government after the recent deaths of miners on the West Coast,

4. Environmental Issues

The same should be the case for environmental regulation that self-regulation cease and that an inspector be placed on the West Coast.

5. Training.

Much has been made about obtaining experience employees for the mining industry but little has been done for localized training options. The West Coast Council has for some time called for a Mining School to be initiated but without success. A mining school could provide training in all mine machinery that could also be utilized for training road and Council employees. It is estimated that 70,000 mine workers will be required for the Australian mining industry over the next ten years.

6. Cost shifting.

Over the years mines have gradually diminished themselves of initiating and supporting many of our social, educational and recreational facilities such as swimming pools, outdoor and indoor facilities, ovals etc. and the cost of maintaining these facilities has come back to Council. Many employee and community subsidies previously given by mining companies have also been eroded.

7. Community Issues.

There has been a sense of loss by various communities over the demise of the 'old' mining companies and the arrival of the 'new' mining companies. The loss of town services such as electricians, plumbers, stores, appliance sales and subsidies have been recognized as a community loss. Various club memberships have declined due to the fly-in fly-out mentality and shift rosters impact substantially on sporting team participation. Wages are also exported with the transient nature of the workforce and commercial income downturn is evident.

Conclusion:

The Government is to be complimented on its initiative of its aerial Geo-technic survey that excited explorers but it is obvious that the Government is well behind the activity of the resource boom in the area of infrastructure and must seriously consider a catch up policy. It is also obvious that the winners of the mining boom are the companies involved, the Federal and State Governments and the losers are the mining communities and Local Government. The denial of rating equity besides the mining sector can also be applied to the aquaculture industry, Forestry Tasmania and Hydro Tasmania, their protective rating shield must be removed. We would be happy to give evidence if required.

Yours faithfully,

DARRYL GERRITY