

6 December 2011

**Subject: Inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation
Amendment (Protecting Australia's Water Resources) Bill 2011 (Cth)**

I currently reside at Running Stream with my family. I am part of the fourth generation of the Sim family in this locality. Running Stream is a village situated on and near the Cherry Tree Hill/Mt Vincent massif which is a 1100 metre high basalt capped range with, unfortunately, an underlying coal seam. The area is of high importance to sustainable primary industries, ie farming, ecotourism and forestry.

The area is now part of the Inglenook Exploration Project by Centennial Coal. Centennial Coal is a subsidiary of Banpu Public Company Limited, Asia's largest independent coal group. (from their website)

Through the efforts of a local action group, the Running Stream Water Users' Association (RSWUA) Centennial agreed to conduct a water consensus in the area with the permission of individual landholders. This census studied surface and groundwater sources and was unobtrusive, ie no drilling.

The RSWUA have pushed consistently for a separate hydrological study to be conducted by Centennial to gain a greater insight into the aquifers below the Cheery Tree Hill/ Mount Vincent massif and to be able to quantitatively assess damage to the aquifers and consequently surface and groundwater sources if mining is to proceed.

Centennial to date are refusing to conduct a separate hydrological study of the aquifers above the coal seam and intend to undertake a hydrological survey in conjunction with their exploratory drilling ie down to the coal seam and below.

My family's concern is that this method will marginalise the hydrological survey and concentrate resources on the quantity and quality of the underlying coal seam. That the project is driven by overseas interests amplify my concern that the project is purely driven by commercial benefits at the expense of the aquifers and water resources within the local area.

I consider the fact that exploratory drilling down through the existing aquifers and through the coal seam, which may well be mined at a later date, is *intentional* damage to the local water resources and as such should not be permitted to occur if water resources are considered to require commonwealth protection.

Yours sincerely

Guy Sim
