

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

18.12.2010

Dear committee Secretary,

Re: Murray-Darling Basin Plan

I represent a community of concerned citizens who has, for nearly 20 years, defended its complex water resource at the Gateway to Central NSW on the Eastern edge of the Murray-Darling Basin against an increasingly rapacious coal industry.

Like generations before us, we benefit from fresh groundwater sourced from over one hundred springs in the Ilford/Running Stream/ Mt. Vincent area and we are committed to preserving this invaluable resource for generations to come.

Our primary concern is the permanent damage that coal mining would do to our shared water resource.

Coal mining disrupts and often destroys the natural flow of aquifer systems through both open-cut and long wall operations and the impacts of this are not only experienced locally but all the way downstream from the mine. Further contamination of the water supply occurs through washing the coal for export markets.

Surely on this, the driest inhabited continent on Earth, water is more valuable than coal?

On behalf of our members, I urge you to consider the long-term food and water needs of the citizens of Australia above the short-term financial interests of largely foreign-owned coal companies. Currently the NSW Mining Act over-rides the state Water Act. This is a ridiculous situation. You can neither eat nor drink coal, nor does it produce food. Water should be given precedence at all times.

Please ensure the elimination of fast track planning processes for the coal and gas mining industries in all State legislative Acts and give priority instead to State Water Acts.

The other major issue is that having created a water market with no restrictions, water ends up with the highest bidder (which may be an international speculator or foreign owned mining company), not the best food producer. We are holding the food and water security of our nation to ransom.

Yours sincerely

Jolieske Lips
President
Running Stream Water Users Association