



Coastwatchers

Eurobodalla's environment group

**SUBMISSION TO THE
COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
AND
BIG ISLAND MINING PTY LTD**

TITLE OF REFERRAL

**Proponent: Big Island Mining Pty Ltd,
Majors Creek Road, Majors Creek NSW
Dargues Gold Mine
Third Modification**

REFERENCE NUMBER: 2015/7539

The Coastwatchers Association Inc.
PO Box 521
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ABN 66033550939

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1. COASTWATCHERS ASSOCIATION INC.

The Coastwatchers Association Inc. is an incorporated association based at Batemans Bay NSW. It represents community members on the South Coast of NSW, who have concerns about local environmental issues. The Association has successfully represented its members for 30 years. Its' principal aims are:

To take action to protect the natural environment and preserve the integrity of ecological systems in the Eurobodalla and Shoalhaven areas of New South Wales

To oppose the unnecessary destruction and degradation of natural systems, unbalanced development, and pollution.

The Association opposed the 2010 Development Application to develop the Dargues Reef Gold mine by Big Island Mining Pty. Ltd., then a subsidiary of Cortona Resources Limited. The Association also opposed the Modification to the Development Application by Big Island Mining then a subsidiary of Unity Mining Pty Ltd, in 2015 and again at the Planning Assessment Commission in 2016.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

In 2010 and again in 2015-16 when the miner was preparing its' environmental assessments, the NSW Government only required an assessment covering the impacts and consequences in a small immediate area around the mine site. No consideration was required of the social, environmental and economic risks in the event of an accident or spillage into the downstream river system.

The NSW Government's failure to require any analysis of the impact of a discharge from the mine site into the downstream river system was reprehensible. In particular, there has been no assessment on the impact of any flora and fauna downstream, particularly in the Deua National Park.

Not only was the NSW Government totally unconcerned about downstream impacts on any flora or vegetation, but it was totally unconcerned about its own listed endangered and vulnerable species in the Deua Valley region. There has been also no assessment on the impact on the communities and agriculturalists downstream. There has been no assessment of the impact of a spill on the water - supply of the Eurobodalla Shire.

Yet in Australia and oversea spills and dam failures occur on a regular basis wiping out all flora and fauna in the path of the spill and sludge, whether critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable or otherwise.

The mining site is located in a very sensitive environmental location. It is at the headwaters of a river system, and that system passes through the Deua National Park down the Deua River to the ocean. The river system falls from near 700 meters above sea level at the mine site over about 60 km to the ocean, a very short distance, with no natural impediments to halt any flow or spillage. It arrives at the Eurobodalla Shire's water pumps that supply 85% of the Shire's drinking water after only 45 km, and those pumps will need to be switched off in the event of a spill.

The Association has not confined its comments to the narrow area that the NSW Government agreed to around the mine site for Environmental Assessments. The Association has considered the entire Deua Valley, because that is the area where any discharge will have its major impact, because that is where the pristine flora and fauna are located. That is why much of the area is a National Park.

4. COMMONWEALTH ENDANGERED AND VULNERABLE SPECIES

The Association has consulted with the **NSW Office of Environment and Heritage**, as well as the Eurobodalla Natural History Society, to determine the species mix resident in the Deua Valley from the mine to the salt water. The Commonwealth Endangered and Vulnerable species have been separately identified from the OEH data.

The Association has attached the Species list from the NSW OEH. That list contains the details of common names and scientific names, State or Commonwealth listings and the number of recordings. This list was compiled over a 50 year period between 1965 and 2015

The Commonwealth Critically Endangered (CE), Endangered (E) and Vulnerable (V) species identified as existing in the Deua Valley below the mine are:

	Classification	Recordings
Stuttering Frog	V	4
Green and Golden Bell Frog	V	3
Littlejohn's Tree Frog	V	10
Australian Bittern	E	4
Hooded Plover	V	5
Eastern Curlew	C E	44
Swift Parrot	E	7
Regent Honeyeater	E	20
Spotted tailed Quoll	E	67
Koala	V	7
Long Nosed Potoroo	V	2
Grey-Header Flying Fox	V	36
Smoky Mouse	E	1
Hastings River Mouse	E	1

Monaro Golden Daisy	V	1
Araluen Gum	V	90
Monga Tea Tree	V	32
East Lynn Midge Orchid	V	1
Dense Cord Rush	V	11
Chef's Cap Correa	V	40
Araluen Zieria	E	3

In addition, to these species the **Eurobodalla Natural History Society** provided the following information of recordings of particular species in the Deua Valley. They are all on the NSW Vulnerable list. However, the Spotted Tailed Quoll, was also recorded on the Commonwealth Endangered species list.

16 Glossy Black Cockatoos	The Deua is a very important habitat for this species. Normally the Society records 2 to 3 birds at any one location. However, 16 is the highest number of this species they have ever recorded in the one area).
Gang-gang Cockatoo	Recorded regularly throughout the year.
Little Lorikeet	Recorded in 2015.
Powerful Owl	Recorded regularly.
Olive Whistler	Recorded in 2015.
Scarlet Robin	Recorded regularly during the Autumn and Spring.
Spotted-tailed Quoll	Recorded in 2013.

In addition, Platypus were recorded in the Deua River in 2015.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The Coastwatchers Association Inc recommends to the Australian Government that the project NOT be approved under the Environmental Protection and Conservation Act 1999, given the potential catastrophic impacts of the Dargues Reef Gold Mine on the Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable flora and fauna downstream from the mine. Spillages and Tailings Dam failures are a worldwide characteristic of mining, especially mining at the top of a 700 meter escarpment whose river system runs through the Deua National Park, and is the source of the Eurobodalla Shire's water supply.