



Coastwatchers

Eurobodalla's environment group

Newsletter 5 July 2015

Dargues Reef Gold Mine, Update

About six months have passed since Unity Mining Ltd submitted its draft Modification application, regarding the Dargues Reef gold mine, to the NSW Department of Planning. The proposal seeks permission to process gold using cyanide on site at Majors Creek. Previous permission was for Unity to take the ore off-site to Bendigo or Parkes. The Modification application has still to be released by the Department, for public exhibition.

It is understood the Department circulated the Draft Modification to various government agencies for review and comment. It is also understood that the government agencies responded within the specified timeframe, and those responses were forwarded to Unity Mining.

Unity Mining in turn has to address these departmental responses. Coastwatchers understand it has not yet done so, despite the CEO of the Mining Council of NSW recently writing letters to local papers saying the Modification was already on public exhibition. Those letters were withdrawn and amended. It must be assumed that the modification will not be placed on public exhibition until all issues are addressed by Unity in a satisfactorily manner.

Coastwatchers will be notified by the Department of Planning by email the

day the Modification is placed on public exhibition, and Coastwatchers members will in turn be contacted by the Association.

After public exhibition, the proposal can be determined by either the Department of Planning, or the NSW Planning Assessment Commission. The latter is preferred.

To enable the matter to be determined by the NSW Planning Assessment Commission, there must be at least 25 Objection Submissions received by the Department of Planning. The Association will be making a submission, as will other groups in Majors Creek and Araluen. But members are also urged to make their own submissions. Details will be on the Department's website after the Modification is placed on public exhibition.

The Coastwatchers will be targeting the impacts and risks arising from this development should cyanide and heavy metals leak or escape from the mine site. The impacts could effect

1. The aquatic environment downstream from Majors Creek to Moruya.
2. Rural and domestic users of water from the Deua River and its tributaries.
3. The Eurobodalla Shire's water supply, particularly in the event of a catastrophic failure at the mine site.

Coal Mine Failure

Accidents do happen. Despite assurances from miners that their mines are fail-safe, accidents continue to happen. That is why Coastwatchers is so concerned about the Dargues Reef Gold mine.

Just days ago, coal miner Centennial Coal, had a collapse of a retaining wall at its Clarence Colliery in the Blue Mountains. Tonnes of toxic mineral waste have contaminated the Wollangambe River, and there is a real danger it will cause major damage to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, whose boundary is only 2 kilometres from the spill.

The EPA is investigating, and may take legal action. Apparently Centennial Coal has a poor track record with 84 breaches of their pollution licence over 14 years. Sounds familiar!

Coastwatchers 2015 Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Coastwatchers Association, will be held in the Meeting Room at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens south of Batemans Bay, on Saturday 12 September 2015, commencing at 2.00 pm. Members are asked to attend and consider standing for positions on the Executive Committee.

Meroo Lake Targeted by the Shooters and Fishers

Recently Coastwatchers and the Friends of Durras hosted a visit to the South Coast by the Director of the National Parks Association Kevin Evans, who was accompanied by two scientific officers from the NPA and the Nature Conservation Council. The South Coast

conservationist Mike Thompson was also present. The aim of the trip was to visit various National Parks including Meroo and Murramarang.

Meroo Lake is of national conservation significance, for its naturalness, threatened species habitat and the abundance and diversity of frogs and other species. There are only a small number of areas within NSW, which support populations of endangered green and golden bell frogs. The lake supports the largest frog population in the Shoalhaven region. Importantly, Gambusia and chytrid fungus, are absent from the Meroo Lake frog population, possibly as a result of the lake's salinity.

A number of studies, including the Healthy Rivers Commission Coastal Lakes Inquiry in 2002, have assessed Meroo Lake as being of very high conservation value. The lake was recommended by the Healthy Rivers Commission for the highest level of protection. In particular, the protection of the high conservation value fringing wetlands, which straddle the lake bed and adjoining-low lying areas, provide habitat for nationally listed threatened species.

The NSW Shooters and Fishers Party are attempting to have the lake-bed of Meroo Lake removed from the National Park. They claim that access to and fishing in this lake has been compromised since the bed of Meroo Lake was added to the National Park. This is not the case, as access to Meroo Lake and fishing, have not changed.

The inclusion of the lake-bed of Meroo Lake in the National Park, implements the Governments Statement of Intent for the Healthy Rivers Commission report into coastal lakes. It gives recognition to the conservation values of the area and brings the lake-bed and the surrounding NP under a single management plan administered by a single authority.

Executive Committee 2014-15

A number of members have enquired about the current membership of the Executive Committee. They are:

President	John Perkins	0427 009 044
Vice President	vacant	
Secretary	Richard Roberts	44716004
Treasurer	June Mills	44743902
Members	Reina Hill	44728566
	Candice Wirth	0420420892
	Sophie Hall Aspland	0488223409

The constitution provides for the Executive Committee to comprise the four Office Bearers plus 3 other members. The Executive Committee aims to meet on the second Wednesday of every second month. Future meetings in 2015 are 12 August, 14 October and 9 December.

Aboriginal Land Claims

There are currently thousands of Aboriginal Land Claims outstanding over NSW Crown Land.

The NSW Auditor-General has estimated that it would take the NSW Government 122 years to clear the backlog at the current rate. In a bid to address the backlog, amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, were passed in 2014 to allow the State and Land Councils to negotiate voluntary agreements without having to follow the current determination process. The use of these agreement arrangements came into force on 1st July 2015.

Tesla Agrees to Lithium Home Battery Production

The US electric carmaker, Tesla Motors announced on 1 May 2015 that its trials of household sized rechargeable lithium-ion batteries in the US had been successful, and that it would proceed

with its construction of a \$5 billion gigafactory outside Reno in California. The factory will open in 2017.

Tesla envisages a worldwide market for its product called 'Powerwall'. It is intended to focus on the residential and business sectors. The CEO of Tesla Elon Musk, said that a 7kWh system would retail in the US for \$US 3,000, while a 10kWh system would retail for \$US 3,500.

Sales of the 'Powerwall' system will commence this year in the US under a division of Tesla Motors called 'Tesla Energy'. Exports will follow in 2016.

Tesla envisages the system will allow electricity consumers currently on the grid to disconnect, and those in remote areas to move away from other energy sources such as diesel.

Tesla is not alone in developing these products, and will face a highly competitive market. General Electric in the US, LG Chem in South Korea, Daimler (was Mercedes Benz) in Germany, Samsung and Panasonic are or have developed similar systems. Then in Adelaide there is Zen Energy Systems. Origin Energy and AGL are currently undertaking battery trials in Australia.

Tesla electric cars are slowly being introduced into Australia, and the number of charging stations is increasing, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne.

Meanwhile in South Australia, contracts have been announced for battery installations in 9 key government buildings, which already have solar panels. This includes the SA Parliament building and the Arts Centre.

The SA Government intends to expand this to about 150 buildings including schools. It hopes Adelaide will become the first carbon neutral city in the world.

Broulee Community Outrage with the Eurobodalla Council's Lack of Consultation

At the Eurobodalla Shire Council's meeting on 23 June 2015 there were 9 speakers objecting to the decision of Council to expand the development density of a section of Broulee land from about 300 dwellings to 500, without consulting the community.

Some described it as an outrage, a day of shame, or as arrogance never seen before from the Council. The public gallery was full to capacity with few standing spaces left. The feeling in the chamber was angry, and the Councilors and staff received a very strong message.

The land in question is bordered by George Bass Drive to the west, Train Street to the north, Broulee Road to the south, and the existing urban development to the east. The land has been in private ownership, and for decades has been zoned for future urban development. Its area is about 36 ha.

A number of years ago, National Parks put a stop to development on this land because of the presence of the endangered Bangalay Sand Forest and other endangered fauna. In 2011 Council commenced the preparation of the Broulee Biodiversity Certification Strategy as a means to overcome the development impasse. After 3 years and extensive public consultation, the Strategy was signed off by the Planning Minister in September 2014.

Many in the community were still opposed to the development, believing that the area should remain as natural vegetation. However, Council pushed hard, because in fact it had a significant conflict of interest in supporting the Biodiversity Strategy for the Broulee urban land. The embargo on development also impacted on Council

land to the north of the airport. Council has a medium to long-term plan to expand the airport runway presumably to attract larger planes and more tourists. Many in the community scorn this proposal. Even the existing airline servicing Moruya would not contemplate jet flights. It would be far more efficient to increase the frequency of flights to Moruya using existing planes, than lengthen the runway.

Consultations then commenced with the private landowners in late 2014. The matter was finalized around mid 2015, but there was never any further consultation with the community, regarding the development Strategy and the rezoning proposals.

The Broulee Mossy Point Community Association said in a recent Newsletter: *"Among other things this new Planning Proposal seeks to further rezone this area to allow for R3 Medium Density Housing and to reduce the lot size to 450m². These changes would enable the developers to yield 500 new dwellings. This would result in an increase of 40% to the size of Broulee, which they estimate will increase the population from 2300 to 3700 (a 60% increase)."*

The Community Association has organized a special meeting on Thursday 16 July 2015 at 7.00 pm in the Broulee Public School to discuss this matter. Council staff will be present.

Then on Saturday 18 July there will be a community information session between 10 am and midday, again with Council staff present and again at the Broulee Public School.

In the meantime the Council has forwarded the Draft Concept Plan to the NSW Government for a 'Gateway Determination'. Council will then undertake formal public consultation on the planning proposal. The Community Association believes that by that stage the door will have closed this will be too late to seek amendments..