

# Risk too high, Roberts tells shire councillors

By EMILY BARTON

COASTWATCH member Richard Roberts has urged Eurobodalla Shire councillors to reject cyanide processing at Majors Creek, because of fears it will contaminate the shire's water supply.

Addressing the council meeting on February 23, Mr Roberts said the Unity Mining proposal was one of the "most important issues to come before council".

"If anything goes wrong at the mining site, there will be adverse implications for the Eurobodalla's water supply," he said.

"The water pumps may have to be turned off on the Deua River if there is a catastrophic failure at the site."

Mr Roberts said the on-site tailings dam would contain not only cyanide but also heavy metals.

"While the cyanide will break down over time, the heavy metals take much longer," he said.

"That is why accidents, worldwide, have caused devastation over vast distances."

The mine site sits on top of a ridge at Majors Creek, about 40 kilometres from the shire's water pumps on the Deua River.

Mr Roberts urged councillors to visit the site.

"There is nothing to stop the contamination getting into the Deua River, once it leaves the mine," he said.

"Majors Creek is the headwaters of the Deua River, the river (from which) this shire draws 70 per cent of its fresh water."

He denied the company was an "efficient and responsible" mine operator.

"There have been nine incidents at the company's Tasmanian Henty Mine, where cyanide levels exceeded prescribed limits," he said.

"On at least one occasion, they were fined. Unity Mining's performance at Majors Creek looks equally unimpressive."

"There is no mining at the site, but in the six months the company carried out earthworks, there were six breaches of conditions of operation."

"So far, fines and legal costs are apparently over \$200,000 for these breaches."

He said the company should process gold off the site.

"They are permitted to do that," he said.

"This is the wrong company in the wrong place."

## Collapse claims untrue: Unity

By CARMEN McINTOSH

THE *Bay Post/Moruya Examiner* put Coastwatchers' concerns to Unity Mining managing director Andrew McIllwain this week.

He said it was "rubbish" that Unity Mining did not have adequate funding to cope with a catastrophe at the mine.

"We will not start the project if we don't consider we've got the resources to complete and operate it appropriately," he said.

"Unity has the resources and the capability to manage any risks and the community can have confidence in us building and operating the project."

Mr McIllwain said the NSW government required the company to lodge a \$3 million environmental bond for the project.

On claims the tailings storage dam would not only contain traces of cyanide but also heavy metals, such as lead, cadmium, copper and arsenic, Mr McIllwain said the only metals to be found in the tailings facility were those dug up from the ground in the mining process.

He denied processing with cyanide produced byproducts.

"The management of the tailings facility is such that it's kept in a wet environment. As a consequence, it's not acid-producing and it contains trace elements that are naturally occurring in the ground," he said.

"When you pull up the ore, that has the trace elements in it."

"We do a full spectrum analysis. I think we look at 57 different elements in what we sample of the ore body."

"We report how much mercury might be in there - there's none - but we analyse for those sorts of things."

Mr McIllwain recognised previous breaches of sediment control during heavy rain at the site in 2013, when the initial earthworks were being carried out.

However, he rejected claims from several speakers at Sunday's protest that the box cut at the mine had collapsed and sediment dams had failed.

"There has been no geotechnical failures in the box cut," he said.

"There are sediment dams on the site, none of which have failed."

"There was inadequacy in some of our protection back in February 2013, and that has all been subject of the EPA prosecution."