

25 August 2015

PRESENTATION TO EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

DARGUES REEF GOLD MINE, MAJORS CREEK

Mr Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Richard Roberts. I am here representing the Coastwatchers Association.

Exactly 6 months ago, I made a presentation to this Council regarding the imminent public exhibition of Modification No 3 by the Unity Mining subsidiary Big Island Mining, and urged this Council to oppose the modification.

Five months later, I have not deviated at all from that advice. In fact my position has hardened. This cyanide processing plant must never be approved and the toxicity it will harbour must never be allowed to hang over this community.

Clean water is a fundamental right in Australia, and cannot be compromised for the profits of a mining company. The existing fresh water supply must be secured and maintained, not just for today's community, but for future generations.

Unity has ignored the fact that the mining industry in Australia and overseas, is littered with catastrophic accidents whose impacts have extended for a 100km or more down rivers and lakes. These can be due to extreme weather events, earthquakes, design faults, bad management or poor implementation. Unity has not, and will never be able to demonstrate that they are exempt from such devastations. No miner can.

In the Coastwatchers submission to the Department of Planning, it has prepared an Appendix, which examines 30 major cyanide based toxic spills over the past 30 years. One in particular stands out.

In 2014 at the Mt Polley Mine in British Columbia, Canada, the 4 sq. km. tailings dam collapsed and released 10 million m³ of water and 4.5 million m³ of toxic slurry into Polley Lake. The spill flooded Polley Lake, and continued into nearby Quesnel Lake, and ruined what was the deepest fresh water lake in the world.

Mine safety experts called the spill one of the worst environmental

disasters in modern Canadian history.

Unity's modification application followed the classical textbook "creep" strategy, common in the mining industry. In 2010 there was a relatively straightforward development application, essentially to reopen the mine, with assurances that there would be no processing on-site. Cortona stated in 2010, that there were inherent dangers and risks with on-site processing using cyanide. They assured the community, there would never be on-site processing at Majors Creek, only off-site processing.

Then further modifications were lodged and approved. These modifications were a further stage of the "creep" process.

Finally, the miner introduced the modification to achieve what was most probably intended in the first place, and that was to have an on-site processing facility, using cyanide. The third modification also raised the possibility of transporting gold ore for processing from other mines. This would extend the mines life from 5 years to decades.

From the beginning of this planning process, the Coastwatchers have been highly critical of the NSW Government's decision to allow this application as a Modification rather than a new Development Application. The modification should never have been allowed because of the significance of the proposed changes, which dwarf the impacts of the original development application, and the critical need for a complete new EIS.

The impacts of a disaster on the landowners along the river, the fresh water supply of the Eurobodalla Shire, the Deua NP and the Batemans Marine Park, have been totally ignored.

In the past 6 months we have not been sitting twiddling waiting for Unity's submission to be released.

Together with our fellow groups from Araluen and Majors Creek we have engaged professional consultants to provide us with professional and objective assessments. This is exactly what this Council has done in association with Palerang Council, when they jointly engaged Dr Beck from GHD Consultants.

In recent times we have engaged an adviser to carry out a FOI request to review correspondence between Unity and the NSW Government. It is not appropriate to go into detail in this forum, except to say that the correspondence explains why there was a 5-month delay in placing this application on public exhibition, because of the major deficiencies in the original application.

As you will be aware from Dr Beck, and as we are aware, the application is still full of problems and deficiencies. It is a document, which is a great disappointment, and needs to be completely rejected.

I urge all Councillors to support the draft recommendations proposed by your General Manager and oppose this application. This action will protect the Eurobodalla Water Supply for all future generations.