

Farms



Water and irrigation will be heavily impacted by coal mining in the Leard.

Whitehaven Coal and Idemitsu have secured over 50% of high security water allocations. This means over half the water will go to mines – instead of other important uses in times of drought.

The use of water for washing coal and spraying roads to keep dust down, is predicted to cause a 10m drop in hard rock aquifers, and a drop of at least 2m in the alluvial aquifer levels. This decrease could be too much for many farms to continue.

Mining activities can release many naturally occurring heavy metals and poisons to be released and can contaminate the aquifers. This puts the groundwater at risk of being unusable for farming and irrigation purposes.

As the roads are graded with rubble and waste from the coal mining it is feared by locals and ecologists alike that the water running below the surface will be contaminated with damaging chemicals.

This fight was started by local farmers, and many have heeded their call for help and traveled hundreds of kilometres at their own personal cost to help.

Community

The health of the community and cost of living in the local area will face serious impacts from increased coal mining.



The Maules Creek mine will emit over 18,000 tonnes of coal dust in the mining process. That does not take into account the dust created during the transport of the coal all the way to Newcastle for export.

Coal dust is linked to serious respiratory illnesses and has been linked to increased levels of childhood asthma. Tens of thousands of people die worldwide every year of illnesses linked with coal.

A recent study found that rental prices in coal mining towns can soar almost 400% over a ten year period. This and other cost of living impacts can cause a two tiered society – whereby those who work on the mine on high wages can afford all they like, whilst others go without.

Often, small businesses cannot compete with the high wages found on the mine-sites, and staff shortages occur leading to business closures.

The effects of coal harm communities at every stage. Places as far as Newcastle and even communities in China and India (where the coal is likely to be exported to) will suffer.

Culture and Diversity

The Gomeri people, the traditional owners of the Leard, are facing the destruction of sacred burial sites and places of great cultural significance to them.

Already, several sites have been destroyed leading to much pain and grief within their community.

The Australian constitution gives citizens the right to practice their religion or culture. However, Whitehaven Coal have locked the Gomeri people out of the forest, and away from many of their sacred sites – denying them the right to practice their culture freely.

The Leard Forest Alliance is a group of farmers, environmentalists and others that are working together to stop coal mining in the Leard. The Alliance have signed a Protection Treaty with the Gomeri. This outlines a mutual understanding that the Leard needs to be protected.

The campaign has seen farmers, scientists, school teachers, medical doctors, veterinarians, students and even a 92 year old World War 2 veteran arrested taking direct action to stop work in coal mines in the Leard.



All of these people have come at their own expense, and take time away from their work to take part in the campaign.