

# Caroona Coal Project Stakeholder Feedback

Date: February, 2010

# Stakeholder Interview Process

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- Futureeye conducted the interviews in October 2009.
- Each interview was summarized in a transcript and sent back to the stakeholder for sign-off to ensure views were captured accurately.
- Stakeholders nominated whether they would prefer their comments to be attributed to them in the internal report to BHP Billiton, the public report, both or remain anonymous.
- A public report was compiled. Stakeholders were again asked to verify quotes attributed to them.

- There is a high degree of uncertainty about the supply of water in the region.
- The Namoi Catchment Water Study is seen as a critical step to defining whether a mine operation is feasible in the region.
  - The study is widely seen by stakeholders as the integral piece to determine whether the Caroona Coal Project should proceed in the region.
  - There is a degree of uncertainty as to whether the study will provide credible outcomes which will provide adequate assurances.
  - Some in the community want the water study to deliver more holistic outcomes.
  - A concern was raised by the community that BHP Billiton's current drilling methods may cause aquifer cross-contamination and result in damage to vital water resources.
- There is a tension around water access and distribution in the region.
  - Stakeholders are divided across the issues of irrigator and non-irrigator allocations of water.
  - Tensions have been exacerbated by probability of more cut backs to water allocations.

# Communication and engagement with the community

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- Stakeholders want to ensure BHP Billiton is responsive to stakeholders concerns throughout the development process.
- There are people within the community that do not trust the information provided by BHP Billiton.
- Many stakeholders would like BHP Billiton to provide more information to the community.
- Stakeholders are keen to ensure that BHP Billiton adheres to the company's policies and standards and that these are effectively communicated to the community.
- Stakeholders would like to see accountability mechanisms in place to judge the company's performance as a good corporate citizen.
- Stakeholders are seeking improvements in for BHP Billiton communication style.
- The role and purpose of the Community Consultation Committee (CCC) is not well understood.

- There is a perception by many stakeholders that the exploration licence approval process is inadequate.
- Stakeholders have a desire for regional cumulative impacts to be understood before mining exploration, not after.
- There are concerns about the equity of the current planning process with respect to mining and prime agricultural land.
- There is tension over access to private land for the purposes of exploration. Some claim that the failure to resolve the issues are the fault of BHP Billiton.

# Community Development

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- The Community Development Fund has been well received by some people, yet others feel it has resulted in division in parts of the community.
- Many stakeholders commend the Fund's investment in large scale infrastructure and are calling for support for projects that reflect the long-term needs of the region.
- Some stakeholders believe farmers should be compensated for any actual losses due to the impacts of mining.

# Indigenous Issues

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- Indigenous stakeholders have great uncertainty about the impacts mining will have on the landscape and their sites of cultural significance.
- Walhallow stakeholders have an unfavourable memory of the Werris Creek project due to a perception of a lack of respect and understanding towards Aboriginal heritage and their connection to the land.
- The Walhallow community recognises the potential benefits of the Caroon Coal Project to them as a potential lifeline to its currently stunted employment levels.

# Socio-Economic Impacts

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- There are social impacts to mining. For some stakeholders this is about the possibility of a new 'feel' to the Caroon and Quirindi areas or a situation where some benefit more than others.
- There is fear of not being able to capture the benefits of mining such as local purchasing, jobs, retail leakage and local employment.
- Stakeholders perceive the most tangible off-set to the impacts of mining on the region is employment.
- Stakeholders fear a boom/bust impact from mining.
- There are concerns about the legacy of the mine and life of the town after the project closes.

# Direct Mining Impacts

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- A common concern amongst many stakeholders is that there may be cumulative impacts associated with mining that are not currently planned for.
- Stakeholders have great uncertainty about the potential for subsidence and how it could impact community infrastructure and water resources.
- There are stakeholders concerned about the management of impacts on biodiversity.
- Respondents emphasise the need for infrastructure planning.

# Regional Planning

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- There is a strong desire for a shared regional vision along with a plan that delivers on that vision.
- If the mine is approved, the community would like this to be the 'best planned region ever.'
- Stakeholders recognise the importance of industry diversity in the region.
- There are concerns about the impact of climate change including concerns that the current use of regional assets will change as the climate changes.



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