



COLTON MINE PROJECT - MARYBOROUGH

THE FACTS

The Colton Project has been through a lengthy environmental assessment process mandated by Queensland Legislation. This has included a process where “objectors”, like Lock the Gate, can have their position fully investigated by the independent Queensland Land Court. This process has involved significant expert and scientific evidence about particular topics.

The Lock the Gate assertions have already been tested in the Land Court. On the 15 December 2016, based on this extensive scientific evidence, the Queensland Department of Environment & Heritage Protection issued the Project an Environmental Authority taking into account the Determination of the Land Court together with its long history and experience of conditioning coal mine projects.

Claim #1

The Colton Project is “Smack bang in the middle of a biodiversity corridor.”

Existing infrastructure features around the Project such as the Bruce Highway, Northern Coast Railway Line and Torbanlea, not to mention the Mary River itself lie within the Bioregional Terrestrial Corridor and present a much more significant barrier to connectivity than the Colton project, which includes a buffer of remnant vegetation around the mine.

The Project is surrounded by a buffer of Wallum type remnant vegetation (minimum buffer distance of two km around the mine). This surrounding vegetation ensures the connectivity of the corridor will be maintained.

Claim #2

“The Colton project is located on and adjacent to world heritage properties.”

The Project is not located on or adjacent to any world heritage properties.

The closest world heritage area to the Project is Fraser Island, which has its western boundary approximately 33km downstream from the Project potential discharge point.

Hervey Bay, with similar urban storm-water runoff inputs as Maryborough, is much closer to the world heritage property, at approximately 15km from the western boundary.





Claim #3

The Colton Project will “Dump untreated waste...some 985 million litres per annum straight into Mary River System”

The Site Water Management System has been designed to keep separate mine affected and unaffected – meaning rainwater surface runoff, water on the site. Mine affected water will be used in the mining operation and not released from the site.

Water quality will be closely monitored and managed on site, with treatment options considered if required.

Controlled releases of water will only be discharged when it meets the quality criteria in the Environmental Authority, and flow within the Mary River meets the flow criteria allowing discharge.

In the unlikely event of an unplanned overflow from the Worked Water Dam (like in a significant rainfall event), it would be directed to the mine pit. If the overflow was large, this could potentially result in interruptions to mine operations, but due to the relatively large in-pit storage capacity, would be very unlikely to result in any effect on the receiving environment.

The Mary River receives inflows from a number of other sources, including agricultural and urban developments, together with stormwater runoff from the cities of Maryborough and Gympie. Compared to any potential controlled discharges from the Colton Mine, this runoff is of greater volume and with few if any quality controls.

See Land Court Reasons for Judgement at <http://www.sclqld.org.au/caselaw/QLC/2016/073>

Claim #4

“The Colton Projects Environmental Management Plan allows the dumping of wastewater up to 5.8% of daily river flow “as much as a billion litres of wastewater a year” (22 times greater than originally stated).”

Modelling undertaken for the Projects impact assessment is carried out on a “worst case scenario” basis, and doesn’t reflect typical operating conditions. The 5.8% figure reflects a potential “worst case scenario” for discharge of water to the Mary River.

If releases were made whenever they are allowed under proposed conditions, the median ratio of mine release to freshwater inflow from upstream into the estuary would be 0.8%.

In reality, the behaviour of the site water management system and the magnitude and frequency of releases to the Mary River will be highly dependent on the weather conditions experienced over the project life.

Generally, release will not be required during periods of low streamflow.

The Site Water Management System is designed to retain mine-affected water on-site, with releases only potentially required during and after significant rainfall events which would generally coincide with high streamflow.

Discharge from the mine water management system is only permitted during specified river flow conditions, and when the water meets specific quality criteria.

Discharge criteria were also raised in the Queensland Land Court, who found no reason to alter them in the final Environmental Authority, stating that “evidence provided to the Court establishes that the quality requirements imposed for the discharge of water into the Mary River are such that the release does not pose a threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage”.

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Claim #5

“Mary River is home to Pacific humpback dolphins and a stopover point for migrating humpback whales.”

Dolphins; In Australia, the habitat of the Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphins extends to Exmouth Gulf on the west coast, across the Top End, and down the east coast into New South Wales. In Queensland, the estimated extent of the Dolphin’s habitat covers an area of 121,994 km².

There is substantial suitable habitat for the dolphin within the Sandy Strait wetland areas, and these habitat areas will not be impacted by the Project.

The Qld Gov would not have issued the Project’s environmental permit if it had any concerns about the impact on the dolphins

Humpback Whales; Australian populations of the Humpback Whale migrate between feeding areas in the Antarctic and breeding areas in tropical waters off north-east and north-west Australia. On their Southward migration, some humpback whales use Hervey Bay as a resting area, however the migration route is generally to the east of Fraser Island.

Hervey Bay’s volume of water is somewhat more than 25,000,000 ML and is tidal and subject to the Australian East Coast current.

The Colton Project is a significant distance from protected wetlands and Hervey Bay, and will have no measurable impact on threatened or endangered marine mammals, including the Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin and Humpback

Claim #6

“That New Hope plan to and will just walk away from the hole in the ground and leave the mess behind.”

The New Hope Group is totally committed to and is a nationally recognised, award winning industry leader in mine rehabilitation. With respect to rehabilitation the Company has a track record of going above and beyond what its Environmental Authority conditions require. <http://www.newhopegroup.com.au/content/about/rehabilitation>

This is demonstrated through its many projects such as;

New Acland Mine on the Darling Downs where it practices progressive rehabilitation and concurrently grazes cattle on rehabilitated mine land right up against the mine pit coal face. <http://www.newhopegroup.com.au/content/about/rehabilitation/new-acland-progressive-rehabilitation>

New Oakleigh Mine in the West Moreton region where a purchased existing mine has now been completed rehabilitated back to light industrial and grazing land. <http://www.newhopegroup.com.au/content/about/rehabilitation/new-oakleigh-rehabilitation>

Chuwar Mine in the Ipswich area which the company inherited two large 40 metre deep mine pits and proceeded to rehabilitate despite not being ‘obliged to do so. <http://www.newhopegroup.com.au/content/about/rehabilitation/chuwar-rehabilitation>

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Claim #7

“Wastewater from the Colton Project exceeds High Ecological Value (HEV) guidelines for metals.”

Scientific water studies have found that existing concentrations of many metals in the Mary River system from runoff from agricultural and urban areas around and upstream of Maryborough, are already well above the HEV guidelines.

It should also be noted that all the chemical elements cited in the video occur naturally in the ground and groundwater (naturally occurring chemical elements and other chemical qualities such as turbidity and discolouration are referred to as contaminants).

No processing other than washing natural earth and clay will be undertaken on the site, to cause concentration of chemical elements.

Three expert studies were undertaken for the Project with regard to discharge water quality concentrations and potential impacts.

The Mary River Discharge Investigation (Hydrobiology), the Mary River Dispersion Study (DHI) and the Site Water Management Assessment (WRM).

The specific conclusions of these studies in respect to any potential discharge of mine water were as follows:

- A major reduction in the naturally occurring chemical elements concentrations is likely to occur within the mixing zone near the discharge point due to the significant dilution capacity in the river.
 - The increase in in-stream (naturally occurring) metal concentrations as a result of a potential mine water discharge is not significant compared to the background concentrations.
- The low flow triggers applied to guide the potential release of water from the mine, and subsequently included in the Project’s Environmental Authority, maintain the water quality within acceptable levels.

For more detailed information on these studies go to <http://www.sclqld.org.au/caselaw/QLC/2016/073>

With its Colton project the company will apply the same progressive rehabilitation processes / practices as its Acland mine during mining operations.

It is common for open cut coal projects to leave residual final voids following completion of mining.

Over time, the final void/s will be allowed to fill with water and will remain as a permanent water body for local wildlife and/or potential commercial uses.

In addition to the above voluntary approach to rehabilitation, in Queensland the State Government requires that mining projects provide a bond, called ‘Financial Assurance’ that covers the costs of rehabilitation, before any site activities can commence. This bond is held by the government, to be used in the event that a company defaults on its commitments to undertake rehabilitation.

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