

[An email from another mine-affected landholder in response to the news that farmers rights to their homes and improvements were being removed by the Minister for Mines (29th May, 2008)]

We are now immediate neighbours to a coal mine. They don't want our place but they have caused so many problems, many that we didn't predict.

The noise from the machines wakes us up and keeps us awake at night. The dust and diesel is more than just farming dust, the roads are all falling to pieces from the trucks that go past day and night and some houses are cracking from the blasting. I almost forgot the lights that are there all night. At times they [the trucks] are a serious threat to motorists going past as is the dust. People here have had broken windscreens from coal coming off the trucks.

We also had the threat of a rail line going through our place which has now gone to some other poor person's place. To get coal from A to B requires transport so it must always be asked – how??

Water is such a precious item here these days, but they can pump it like there is no tomorrow and they do. They get fast approvals. They get approvals one at a time and therefore people don't realise the full extent of the mines or where they are going. Queensland seems to be behind NSW in some of their rights from people already there.

The social structure is forever broken in this district as 64 homes were bought out in the little town plus farms surrounding it. I lost a really great friend who was the glue of the district and who wrote the local newsletter.

Of course, no one even counts the drama that comes not only to the ones that are bought up but the ones that are left. There are so many sick people now in our area. I am asthmatic but there are other who now have asthma and other problems from headaches to more serious problems.

This is all before they burn the coal and add to climate change. Watch Al Gore and talk to Tim Flannery.

Some suggestions are – try to keep together as they will try to divide and conquer. They have all the skills to negotiate with all types of people and they will have you all summed up from the start. The promises will come thick and fast but if they are not in writing they will mean nothing at the end of the day.

I can't tell you strongly enough to keep a record of ALL dealings with the mines. To put dates on the phone conversations and to keep the best notes that are possible of all conversations. Make sure you ask if the person has the authority to speak and make decisions and promises on behalf of the company. This is not always the case of the person doing the PR exercise.

They have a huge budget for legal expenses that ordinary people can't match. Money talks and farmers are left in the dust. They pay for the best legal people and don't ever think you can match them but they don't have your local knowledge and that is important. Passion can win but it is hard fighting. Remember that everyone on their side is just an employee of the company even if it is outsourced.

All the best.

[Remember BHP have applied for 'limited open cut mining' within the Carroona lease. Experience shows they do not know the meaning of the word 'limited'.]