



Fitzroy Basin Association

Report on Mining Forum

Introduction

Mining is a significant land use in Central Queensland and is the biggest single contributor to the Queensland and regional economy. As an industry existing cheek by jowl with agriculture, mining draws criticism from that industry for, among a range of issues, what landholders perceive as favoured treatment from government. The industry is also considered favourably by many landholders as it has been instrumental in the development of many services not previously available to landholders in remote locations. A forum held in May, conducted by Central Queensland University's Institute for Sustainable Regional Development, investigated various aspects of social and economic impacts of mining, which are many and variable in beneficence.

In this environment of mixed emotions, FBA honoured a request to conduct a forum in which landholders and representatives from the mining industry could work toward a greater understanding. FBA staff worked with the Queensland Resources Council (QRC), staff from government agencies involved in regulation of mining activities, and mining company representatives to develop an appropriate agenda and format. The forum was conducted at the Emerald Memorial Club on 18th October 2006 and was attended by 110 people from the mining, agricultural, and government sectors.

Assumptions

To ensure that participants would see value in attending the forum, organisers made several assumptions:

1. Regulatory requirements of mining proponents throughout the life of a mining venture (from exploration through to surrender following rehabilitation) are not necessarily well understood by affected landholders and thus opportunities for input into conditions may be lost.
2. Communication and the lack of communication are at the seat of much of the discontent between the two sectors.
3. While conflict between the two sectors may be seen by some as a conflict between non-complementary uses, for landholders the issue is much deeper. For many landholders affected by mining, this use of land disputes their spiritual and cultural connection with the land. This is particularly so for those with generations of association.
4. Cumulative impact of mining on natural assets is not well considered in application processes
5. There are many good stories regarding cooperation between landholders and mining companies

Objectives

Objectives of the forum were to

- Bring landholders, regulators, and the mining industry together to hear each other's "world view"
- Provide an overview of the process required of mining companies in their progress from initial exploration to surrender to enable others to be involved wherever appropriate and possible
- Open lines of communication and provide an initial platform from which other activities or processes might develop
- Hear some of the good stories
- Attempt to identify where issues lay with respect to process, policy, or communication difficulties

Methodology

The forum was conducted as a facilitated series of short presentations to present the world context of mining, regulatory processes, and the impact of mining on agriculture and natural assets. Landholders presented case studies of how mining had affected their businesses and their lives, encompassing good news and not so good news regarding interaction with mining as an industry and particular mining companies. The last session of the day was a discussion regarding policy and process implications of learnings from earlier sessions. (See Appendix 1: Program) This was particularly relevant to reviews of policies and Acts currently underway. This session also attempted to elicit any steps participants felt could provide improvements to current situations.

Presentations

Presentations are available on the FBA website at www.fba.org.au. People gave their time, energy, and intellect most generously to provide very straightforward presentations and participated very openly in discussions. Some presenters answered some very difficult questions and did so in a manner that neither betrayed their organisations nor ducked the question. FBA is most grateful to presenters and participants alike.

Feedback

Feedback was mostly very positive and supportive of the forum having being held. Eight participants responded, mainly from the mining and government sectors.

All respondents felt that the forum met their objectives at least in part. Some felt that too much was presented and that times allocated were too short – others thought that more depth would have been good. Feedback should be considered in development of any future strategies.

All respondents, written and verbal, felt that it was very important to keep the ball rolling now that the debate has been opened. QRC, in particular, has made offers to assist in any ventures arising from the forum.

Possible strategies for the future

Strategies listed below are not in order of priority; nor is it assumed they have any prioritised ranking. They are not mutually exclusive and are relevant to different sectors in the discussion.

These strategies are put forward as possible follow-up activities and do not represent commitment from any possible participants.

Option	Lead	Participants	Resources
1. A series of topic-dedicated seminars: groundwater issues, rehabilitation, etc	QRC	Landholders, AgForce, Government regulators, mining companies, QRC	In kind from participants
2. Work with QRC and mining companies to increase their understanding of landholders' issues associated with mining	AgForce	AgForce, QRC, mining company representatives	AgForce/QRC
3. QRC and landholders, perhaps through AgForce or individuals with an interest, to work on developing a "code of practice" for communication between landholders and mining companies throughout the life of a mining venture	QRC	QRC, mining company representatives, AgForce, landholders	In-kind from participants
4. Facilitate landholders input into reviews (those current and those in the future) of policies, regulations, and Acts relevant to mining particularly to increase consideration of cumulative environmental impacts of mining	FBA	AgForce, landholders, regulators	FBA/AgForce, regulators
5. Continue to work with government to address cumulative impacts of mining	FBA	FBA, Government agencies, QRC	

Conclusions

The forum met most objectives but failed to adequately address the issue of cumulative impact and the lack of a regulatory framework in which to deal with it. It is imperative that FBA work with sectors associated with the issues to ensure that impetus gained is not lost.

Full notes have been prepared; however, given the difficulties of verifying these notes with all participants, they have not been circulated. However, the notes form a record of discussion for future planning.

Appendix 1: Program

**FITZROY BASIN ASSOCIATION
CO MINING FORUM**

Wednesday 18th October, 2006

Emerald Memorial Club, 10-12 Opal Street.



TIME	PROGRAM	PRESENTER
8:30am	Tea/Coffee	
9am	Welcome to Country	Lindsay Black
	Housekeeping, Introduction	Peter Dunne
	SETTING THE SCENE	
9:15am	General State of the Industry –Global to Local	Peter Smith
	International / National / State drivers	Peter Roe
	Current & Future Extent of Mining Mining Tenure – Types of tenure and how are they allocated?	Phil Ferenczi Ken Goodwin
	Questions for the panel / discussion	
10:30am	MORNING TEA	
	MINING CYCLE	
10:50am	Environmental Regulation of the Mining Industry – Assessing a Mining Project – Environmental Authorities Process – Commitment to Rehabilitation – Surrender of EA & tenure at end of mine life How and when community can be involved	Damian Pearson & Melissa Wells
	Obligations, rights and responsibilities	Andrew Palmer
	Review of Mineral Resources Act – terms of reference – improvement to the impact assessment process	Bevan Bailey
	Social/Economic Factors Information from the previous Forum in Emerald	John Rolfe
	ISSUES	
12:00pm	Rehabilitation – Landforms – Final Voids – Post mine land use	John Merritt Michael Rodgerson Discussion
	Biodiversity - Mining and Biodiversity project	Frank Ford Geoffrey Smith Discussion
1:00pm	LUNCH	

1:40pm	Rivers & Floodplains	Shane Flint Charlie Wilson Discussion
	Subsidence	David Gullo Col MacPherson Discussion
	Groundwater	Brendon Swaffer/David Bridgeman Col Hughes Discussion
	Cumulative Impacts	Peter Dunne Melanie Harris Don Cook Discussion
4.00- 4:30pm	Close	