

Submission

Total Cessation of water flow of George's River on the Woronora Plateau in 2010

The systematic destruction of sacred sites, artefacts and culture of the Wadi Wadi people aboriginal tribes of the Northern Illawarra by BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal and the mining industry.

**Mr Frank Sartor
Minister for Climate Change and Environment**

Tuesday, 8 June 2010

**From:
Kenneth Hall - President
Ben Nash – Vice President
Suzanne Hall – Events Organiser
Rachael Blandin De Chalain - Secretary**

Mr Allan Carriage – Tribal Elder Advisor Wadi Wadi People

Macarthur Bushwalkers / Macarthur Bicycle Users Group

**<http://www.bushwalking-cycling.com>
<http://www.georges-river-macarthur.com>**

The Macarthur Bushwalkers / Bicycle Users Group

Macarthur Bushwalkers is a Sydney based non-funded social bushwalking / cycling group located in Campbelltown / Camden NSW. The group aims to service the people of the Southern Highlands and Macarthur District of NSW and others who would care to join us in our outdoor activities

We are skilled in the use of maps, compasses and general navigation systems with one member possessing a military background.

We are a safety conscious, informal, no frills, and family friendly outdoors group. Our members come from all walks of life and all age groups.

We are joined by Mr Allan Carriage, tribal elder and representative of the Wadi Wadi people as an advisor. Allan is concerned at the wanton destruction to the rivers, creeks, swamps on the Woronora Plateau. Sites of great historical value are systematically being destroyed and erased by the mining industry with the blessing of the NSW government. This could be seen as a form of genocide.

Macarthur Bushwalkers goals are to:

Our guidelines are derived from RTA Road Rules, Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs, bushwalking and cycling clubs, overseas organisations and the experience of our members.

- Introduce the public to the benefits of exercise through bushwalking and cycling.
- Operate in a friendly social group environment.
- Protect the environment.

We have in recent weeks adopted two addition goals

- The publication to the Internet and any other media available to us the methods used by the mining industry in collusion with Ministers of the NSW government to obtain coal at the cost of the existing water supply belonging to the people of NSW on the Woronora Plateau.
- The commitment of our IT specialists to assist the aboriginal people of the Northern Illawarra to develop a high ranking website which will enable them to inform the people of Australia and the world of the deliberate damage and destruction to their history, culture, water supply, land, artefacts and sacred sites on the Woronora Plateau..

Reason for submission

A representative of BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal stated that a balanced argument should be presented when analysing the effects of longwall mining on local water catchment areas. He said -

1. "...there's a lot of misinformation being put out in the community, which is giving people, potentially, the wrong impression".
2. "People aren't getting a balanced view. They do not understand what decisions are being made by mining companies around their environmental responsibilities."

Quotes - Mr. John Brannon - General Manager of Sustainable Development and External Affairs BHP
Billiton Illawarra Coal

Mr Brannon is inferring that the mining companies are being unfairly treated and the community group like Rivers SOS and their associated organisations were the cause. Rivers SOS being the only groups we have seen regularly voicing opinions on longwall mining.

We, the members of the Macarthur Bushwalkers decided to see for ourselves.

We have a passion for the areas we walk in; some of those areas have been subjected to longwall mining by BHP Billiton and the mining industry over a considerable period of time. One of those areas is our own Georges River. A river very much underrated by those who do not know it.

It is also a river whose water levels have dropped considerably since the early 80's. The water levels have dropped to the point which has created concern amongst the locals, who are now seeing little water flow, particularly during the wet season.

Members of the Macarthur Bushwalkers have walked and lived in the area of Georges River since the late seventies and have intimate knowledge of the river. In the past the mining industry has blamed drought conditions for this reduction in water levels.

Project Georges River

- Macarthur bushwalkers started this project in January 2009. Our goal was to establish monitoring locations throughout the Georges River catchment.
- Our intention was to use these locations to photograph the river throughout the seasons.
- In addition we have photographed the rivers water levels during times of drought and heavy rain noting how quickly the levels dropped and water flow stopped.

Initially we felt that the photographic data base would benefit the communities of the future

Monitoring locations:

Our first action was to identify and establish monitoring locations throughout the Woronora Catchment. Some areas were under strict control of the Sydney Catchment Authority and not accessible to us. The first location chosen was The Basin at Kentlyn, a northern suburb of Campbelltown. The most southerly location being the distant Maddens Plains near Darkes Forest on the upper reaches of Maddens Creek in the Georges River Upper Catchment.

Initially we felt that the Kentlyn location would be the most important because the total water flow from the Woronora catchment is seen here. The combined flow from O'Hares, Stokes, Maddens and Punchbowl Creeks plus the water from the swamps located in Maddens Plains and Iluka Creek, part of the upper catchment can be observed and photographed at this location.

- Location 1. The Basin on Georges River at GR056304 - Topographic Map 9029 - 1N
- Location 2. The Cause way at Wedderburn George River GR098823 - Topographic Map 9029 - 1N
- Location 3. The Woolwash, junction of Georges River and O'Hare's Creek GR002253 - Topographic Map 9029 - 1N

- Location 4. The water gauge upstream of location 3 on O'Hare's Creek Wedderburn GR006106 - Topographic Map 9029 – 1S
- Location 5. The water gauge upstream of O'Hares Creek / Stokes Creek junction Wedderburn GR003104 - Topographic Map 9029 – 1S
- Location 6. Iluka Swamp in the Dharawal State Recreation Area GR003104 - Topographic Map 9029 – 2N
- Location 7. River crossing downstream of Iluka Creek on O'Hares Creek GR003104 - Topographic Map 9029 – 1S
- Location 8 Maddens Creek GR078094 Topographic Map 9029 – 1S

Whilst these locations are still important and others have been added the Basin and Woolwash are now our focal point because we can observe the total water flow from the catchment. The rest of our monitoring points are seen as reference points for comparison.

Georges River tributaries:

Georges River has two main tributaries which are O'Hare's Creek from the upper catchment north of Appin Road and Georges River south of Appin Road near the Cataract Scout Camp and Cataract Dam. The third, relatively minor yet undamaged and pristine water source is the Punchbowl Creek

1. O'Hares Creek - Water flows from the swamps on Maddens Plains into Maddens Creek near Bulli Tops. Downstream Iluka Swamp drains into Iluka Creek which merges into O'Hares Creek. The volume increases as the river flows toward Campbelltown. The gorges become deeper and difficult to negotiate but the views are extremely pretty, here we start to see white water. There is an abundance of animal life as can be seen from the tracks left in the sandy areas. O'Hares Creek flows on until it reaches Wedderburn and merges with Stokes Creek before finally meeting Georges River at the Woolwash between Minto and Wedderburn. This tributary is the main water supply for Georges River and is estimated to carry 70% of all water flow into the Woolwash.
2. **Georges River Upper Catchment** - starts near the Cataract Scout camp south of Appin road near Cataract Dam. The river passes under Appin road and flows over Kings Falls which figures prominently in our monitoring of the river system. The river which has been severely damaged by longwall mining generally carries little water to the Woolwash. The river meanders around the back of Appin passing through Myhrnes Hole and carries on its way through Wedderburn Gorge. After passing through Wedderburn Gorge, the river meanders around the back of Minto and finally merges with O'Hares Creek at the. **The Woolwash** is THE MOST IMPORTANT monitoring point in our project. Here we can observe the water flowing from both tributaries of the Georges River Catchment and merging to create Georges River.

The river at this point widens and takes on the appearance of a full size river. We see all manner of flora, fauna and spectacular scenery with stalactite like rock formations caused by water seepage. Bright Green Pythons, Water Dragons, Red Bellied Black snakes, Wallabies, Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Sulphur Crested Cockatoos, Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos, Gang Gang Cockatoos, and Honey Eaters, to name just a few.

Punchbowl Creek - The Basin - Kentlyn: the river flows from the Woolwash to the Basin where it flows over a rock shelf creating a waterfall before changing direction and flowing through Ingleburn and Glenfield before arriving at Liverpool where it flows over Liverpool weir to become part of the tidal river system. Punchbowl Creek flows into the Basin from its 50 square kilometre catchment adjacent to the headwaters of the Woronora River. At the Basin ALL the Georges River water sources meet; in the early 80's this was a vibrant flowing river.

Our area of operation

Topographical & Orthophoto Third Edition Published by NSW Department of Information Technology and Management:

- **Map APPIN 9029-IS**
- **Map CAMPBELLTOW 9029-IN**
- **Map BULLI 9029-2N**

Appin Road bisects the Woronora Plateau. North of Appin Road we have an area 100 square km or more which contains the swamps and catchment for O'Hares Creek, Dahlia Creek, Woronora River, Waratah Rivulet, Iluka Creek, Brennans Creek, Four Mile Creek, Stokes Creek, Cobbong Creek, Back Gully, Myrtle Gully, Flat Rock Creek and Forest Gully.

On the southern side of Appin Road we have the catchment for the Cataract Dam, Cataract River, Lizard Creek, Wallandoola Creek, Green Swamp and Upper Georges River.

Macarthur Bushwalkers activities

Members of the Macarthur Bushwalkers have spent much of 2009 and 2010 photographing and observing Georges River at The Basin, Wedderburn Gorge, O'Hares Creek and its junction with Georges River and Stokes Creek plus other locations throughout the catchment.

Our forays into the catchment are regular and occur at least four times each month which has generated a huge 20 Gigabyte photographic data base.

We now focus mainly on the Woolwash and the Basin at Kentlyn because we can see and gauge the water flowing from the entire catchment at these two locations.

Our monitoring points now cover the entire Georges River catchment enabling us to observe how much water is coming from each creek or swamp.

We were dismayed to discover that during, and immediately after heavy rains Georges River water levels were much lower than in the past and quickly disappeared despite the ground retaining water and being sodden.

Google Mining research - longwall mining damage - environmental damage BHP Billiton & the mining industry

We felt the need to learn about the mining industries attitudes, methods and techniques when dealing with communities worldwide. It was also important to discover, where possible, what benefits they may have provided to those same communities.

Simply by utilising the generic terms “longwall mining damage” and “environmental damage BHP Billiton” in Google we were able to unearth a shocking history of unsavoury activities both here in Australia and overseas.

The Australian Government has lobbied the Indonesian Government of the time for authorisation for BHP Billiton to mine underneath Heritage Listed Forests.

There was a tremendous amount of information available from the US which we have used to create a background for our website found at: <http://www.georges-river-macarthur.com>

The American population have been exposed to bad mining practices on a grand scale for 150 years, particularly in Pennsylvania.

UK and Europe has also had its share of issues with mining. It seems the countries of operation change but the Mining Companies have the same attitudes and use the same strategies.

Of particular interest are the following accusations of BHP Billiton by its own shareholders of the company’s activities and policies:

1. BHP Billiton Annual General Meeting -

<http://www.minesandcommunities.org/article.php?a=8866>

- Environmental record in the Philippines, Indonesia, Guatemala and Colombia.
- Its failure to listen to complaints.
- Its failure to answer many detailed questions with anything more than vague generalities.
- Failure to admit that consultation processes in many countries are affected by corruption and intimidation.
- Blank denial, without evidence, of informed and well-documented criticism.
- Its failure to endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Its role in worsening climate change activities in producing a radioactive legacy for future generations

2. BHP plans to exploit mining rights across swathes of Borneo’s tropical forests

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article2076562.ece>

THE world’s biggest mining company, a supporter of the BBC’s Saving Planet Earth campaign to protect orang-utans, is planning to raze some of the great apes’ rainforest habitat. Documents obtained by The Sunday Times reveal that the **Anglo-Australian group BHP Billiton plans to exploit mining rights across swathes of Borneo’s tropical forests in south east Asia. It has lobbied for the protected status of some of these areas to be lifted so it can clear the trees and dig for coal.**

Sunday Times - Clare Rewcastle and Jon Ungeod-Thomas

3. Aboriginal tribe defy BHP

[Aboriginal tribe defy BHP Billiton](#)

“What do these people expect after Maralinga and now three uranium mines operating near them”, Ms Dingaman said, Radon testing must be done.

“You ignore this poison being leached into the waterways because it’s invisible. You need to demand tests independently or you and your children will become sick as we did.”

“Your governments thirst for nuclear and power has stolen this country’s water. They are out of control and you must speak up and demand that this madness stops.”

[KOKATHA REFUSE BHP EXPANSION AND DENOUNCE NATIVE TITLE “MINING CO. AGENTS” «](#)

Isabelle Dingaman (Executive Member) on behalf of Kokatha

4. You can't engineer your way out of something that is unpredictable and untested

<http://www.malibutimes.com/articles/2005/10/06/news/news7.html>

Every resident of Malibu should be horrified about the BHP Billiton oil and gas rig in the Gulf of Mexico that was lost during Hurricane Rita," Malibu Mayor Andy Stern told The Malibu Times. "Not only did the supposed foolproof precautions taken by BHP Billiton fail, but according to their own spokesperson, they do not even know why they failed.

5. Coal mining threatens the "Heart of Borneo" mongabay.com July 25, 2007

<http://news.mongabay.com/2007/0725-borneo.html>

Barry Gardiner, the recently appointed special representative on forestry for British prime minister Gordon Brown, said in Parliamentary testimony that despite pro-conservation overtones, BHP Billiton has pressed hard for mining in the biologically rich areas.

"The new, democratic Indonesian Government took commendably swift action to protect their remaining forests following the overthrow of the Suharto regime. On 30 September 1999, the Government enacted laws giving protected forest status to many of the remaining highland and key watershed areas. Included in that protected forest status were five out of seven concessions that the giant Anglo-Australian company BHP Billiton had, shall we say, secured under the Suharto regime," Gardiner said.

Forestry law No. 41 of the statute book of the Republic of Indonesia in the year 1999 No. 167, addition to the national statute book No. 3888, clause 38, sub-clause 4 strictly states that open-cast coal mining is prohibited in protected forest areas. Having already invested approximately \$40 million in exploring the potential of those concessions, BHP Billiton was not going to see them rendered effectively worthless without a fight. Along with a number of other companies, BHP Billiton lobbied to have the concessions reinstated. It did more than lobby: it threatened to bankrupt the fledgling democratic Government by launching legal proceedings to demand compensation. The new Parliament first refused to buckle, but that group of foreign companies applied significant international political pressure."

Gardiner continued, saying that BHP Billiton met directly with then president Megawati Sukarnoputri and "persuaded" her -- by threatening to sue the fledgling democracy for \$22 billion -- to illegally

overrule Indonesia's Parliament. The company eventually secured 20,000 hectares of previously protected forests, according to Gardiner.

6. BHP Billiton caught in US climate change scandal

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/bhp-billiton-caught-in-us-climate-change-scandal-20090812-eicr.html>

[BHP Billiton Scandal](#) - SMH Marian Wilkinson Environment Editor August 13, 2009

BHP BILLITON and two other leading US energy companies operating in Australia have been caught up in a lobbying scandal that was aimed at defeating the landmark US climate change bill but is now under investigation by a congressional committee.

The scandal involves 12 forged letters sent to members of Congress urging them to vote against the US climate change bill. The bill, which was passed by the US House of Representatives in June, is designed to cut America's greenhouse gas pollution and promote clean energy.

The forged letters were purportedly sent by grassroots groups in coalmining districts to three Democratic members. But a Washington lobby firm working on behalf of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity admitted that an employee forged the letters and faxed them.

BHP Billiton is a prominent member of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity along with Peabody Energy, America's biggest coal company which owns mines in NSW and Queensland, and Chevron Mining which has two major gas projects in north west Australia.

Extracted from www.georges-river-macarthur.com - When longwall mining comes to your town, your home is in the hands of the mining company

The personal side of longwall mining told through newspapers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A state with a 200 year history of coal mining which now uses longwall mining extensively with seemingly little consideration for the population. A familiar story in Macarthur and NSW.
R ICH LORD Pittsburgh City Paper.com

a. [Effort to halt mining damage crawls:](#)

Subsidence caused by longwall coal mining in south western Pennsylvania can happen in a matter of days, if not hours, as nine homeowners in Washington County found out last week.

But changes to the state laws and regulations that allow high-extraction mining operations to cause subsidence that damages homes, historic structures, water supplies and wetlands are occurring at a more glacial pace.

By Don Hopey, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

b [Mining documentary debuts to packed house with promise of activism:](#)

A documentary film showing the damage inflicted on surface property owners, communities, streams and watersheds by subsidence from longwall mining debuted Tuesday in the heart of the south western Pennsylvania coal fields.

A standing-room-only crowd of nearly 400 people packed the Waynesburg Theatre for the premier

of "Subsided Ground ... Fallen Futures." Another 50 people were turned away.
By Don Hopey, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

c. [My Home is My Castle:](#)

Pittsburgh City Paper - When longwall mining comes to your town, your home is in the hands of the mining company -- and the law is on their side.

"It was almost as if you put popcorn in the microwave. You could hear [the house] go **POP! CRACK! POP!** "

writer: RICH LORD Pittsburgh City Paper.com

d. [Sinking History:](#)

Longwall mines put holes in the past. Brick by brick, stone by stone, log by log, pieces of south western Pennsylvania's rich history are being erased by subsidence from longwall coal mining that has damaged or destroyed many architecturally unique and historically significant properties By Don Hopey, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

By Don Hopey, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

e. [Longwall Mining In Pennsylvania Ray Proffitt Foundation](#)

The surface damage from subsidence that occurs to houses, barns, highways, streets, railways, springs, wells, pipelines, streams, wetlands, farm fields, forests, and other surface features often is not evident to the casual observer.

The undulating surface imposed by subsidence cuts across the more imposing topography of hills, valleys, and streams on the surface landscape. Typically, the most obvious sign that an area has experienced subsidence is the appearance of "water buffaloes" (drinking water replacement tanks) in homeowners' yards. Scaffolding and bracing around homes and businesses may help to reduce structural damage during the most active period of subsidence.

In general, the thicker the coal seam that is removed and the closer it lays to the surface, the greater the resulting surface subsidence.

f. [That Sinking Feeling - Sierra Club](#)

Subsidence creates damage in a variety of ways. It can damage homes and buildings ranging from cosmetic cracks to collapse.

A building can tilt; be pulled off its foundation; have wall, floor and ceiling joints separate; and basement walls and foundations can be cracked. The building frame can be stressed and pulled to the point it tears apart. Doors and windows can fail to close, floors can tilt, windows shatter, and chimneys fall. Water and gas pipes can rupture and electric and phone lines can be broken.

Ground shifting has cracked wells, cisterns, and septic tanks. It has burst water and oil pipelines, torn down utility lines, and dropped and cracked roads, streets, and rail lines. Trees have died when their root systems were pulled apart. Orchards and woodlots have been damaged.

Subsidence damage to farmland ranges from small sinkholes to more than two-acre water traps. Large widespread troughs over mined out panels have severely disrupted surface drainage patterns

making fields too wet to farm. Farm ponds and major impoundments have had banks and shorelines disrupted and have even been drained. Cracks and deep fissures pose hazards to livestock, farm equipment, and vehicles on damaged roadways.

Subsidence is also creating the loss of ground and surface water. Fracturing and cracking of the rock strata is draining aquifers, springs, and wells. Streams are being drained or are pooled. In areas such as Greene and Washington Counties in Pennsylvania where longwall mines affect thousands of acres, entire watersheds are being disrupted.

Macarthur Bushwalkers – <http://www.bushwalking-cycling.com>
is a 46 page high ranking website now being converted to project Georges River Macarthur

Project Georges River Macarthur - <http://www.georges-river-macarthur.com>
This website contains 32 pages with links to many similar incidents created by the mining industry around the world. These links demonstrate the mining industries cavalier attitude and their focus on profit. The citizens of countries the mining industry operates in are merely tolerated at best. We are already experiencing the consequences of similar bad mining practices here in Australia.

Communities affected by the mining industries activities world wide are strongly reacting. They are publishing the effects of mining damage to their communities on the World Wide Web for all to see.

Misinformation

The following FACTS were published in the Macarthur Chronicle Tuesday 18 May 2010 by BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal:

FACT: If Illawarra Coal adopted a one kilo metre buffer zone from major rivers and streams, the ongoing operation of the Appin and West Cliff mines would be jeopardized.

So what are they saying? Does this single statement fully describe BHP Billiton Illawarra Coals sentiments, attitude and intentions to our rivers and creeks? Even a one kilometre buffer zone is no guarantee against cracking a river or creek bed

FACT: Illawarra Coal has never mined under O'Hares Creek

*Macarthur Bushwalkers have reported that the O'Hares Creek water flow **has stopped** as it did on Saturday 15 May. The water level dropped over 300 mm in a two week period. O'Hares Creek has had an almost non-existent water flow throughout 2010. Further mining in its vicinity would compound the problem which is more important than the coal extracted close to its swamps and tributaries by Illawarra Coal*

One must remember that the mining industry cannot guarantee not to damage a swamp, creek or river bed even if the longwall has a safety zone of 1, 1.5 or even two kilometers between it and the geographical feature.

FACT: There has never been any longwall mining beneath O'Hares Creek

*Macarthur Bushwalkers **have never said** that BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal have mined under O'Hares Creek. We have said that the longwall mining **in the catchment** is the cause of water loss along O'Hares Creek. We also point out that they are going to insert longwall mines ADJACENT to O'Hares Creek for 16 kilometers over 30 years. We obtained this from their submission for the Bulli Coal Seam project. Longwall's will be as close as 100 metres to O'Hares Creek? - see BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal Bulli Coal Seam submission map [Appin Area 2 extended - Fig 5](#)*

BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal longwall maps created for their Bulli Coal Seam Project submission show very little detail and are not clear because of their lack of size and detail, they are in PDF format A4 size. We have drawn the area to be mined onto Topographical maps used by bushwalkers with a scale of 1:25.000. This allows one to grasp the enormity of the area they wish to use.

FACT: In 2008 the independent Inquiry into mining in the Southern Coalfields found that longwall mining in the region did NOT impact the quantity or quality of Sydney's drinking water

*It is now 2010 and Macarthur Bushwalkers are **regularly** finding dry creeks and now dry rivers. We do not sit behind desks. We do not use out of date information. We go out with our cameras and photograph the catchment. We find the BHP Billiton statements above to be inappropriate, inaccurate and out of date re: 2008 independent inquiry*

Findings / Results

1. **Georges River** – monitored from Cataract Scout Camp via Appin and Wedderburn Gorge to the Woolwash. There was almost no water flow throughout the full 14 months of Project Georges River. The river remains a grass filled ditch contaminated by garbage from run off. This tributary is now a ditch with water flowing only after rain with the exception of the run-off from BHP Billiton's Illawarra Coal mine dam located at Appin
2. **The Georges River Catchment** has ceased to exist as a tributary of Georges River and is now part of a dying river system.
3. **O'Hares Creek** which extends from Maddens plains and bisects the Woronora catchment is now regarded as the main water source of Georges River. This creek has regularly been recorded without water flow throughout the 18 months of our project. This creek flows only after rain. Within two weeks of the cessation of rain O'Hares Creek can be found with water levels dropping as much as 300 millimetres within a two week period
4. In January 2010 we visited our monitoring location on **Maddens Creek** during the wet and discovered a reasonably healthy water flow. We then visited a location at **Wedderburn** located on O'Hares Creek 12 kilometres downstream and found almost no water flow. Wedderburn itself is now being subjected to longwall mining with associated cracking.
5. The trickle of water at this location which may have had its source in the Stokes Creek Catchment. One of our members walked through the water to indicate its depth. The water didn't cover the rand (sole and side below the upper of his boot) of his bushwalking boot.

6. Up until the heavy rains of May 2010 both tributaries of Georges River were dry.
7. We are seeing the destruction and demise of the longest river with the largest catchment on the Woronora Plateau which is the reason we chose to monitor it.
8. Adjacent to Georges River we have the destruction of the Waratah Rivulet.
9. We have recently discovered with the help of Allan Carriage the smashed creek bed of Simpsons Creek which is located west south west of the Appin Township. In addition to the smashed creek bed the walls of the gorge are collapsing. This gorge contains aboriginal sacred sites belonging to the Wadi Wadi people. We are informed that the destruction of Simpsons Creek has not previously been publicised. Simpsons Creek would have supplied water to the Nepean River at one time. The public at a meeting in Penrith Council buildings in the early part of 2010 were at a loss to understand why saltwater had replaced the freshwater they used to pump out of the Nepean River to water their crops and animals.
10. Punchbowl Creek is the last surviving tributary of Georges River but BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal have earmarked its headwaters for longwall mining along with the adjacent headwaters of the Woronora River.

Monitoring – We were informed by the mining companies in the past that the swamps were being monitored.

We have found no visible signs of monitoring or human activity in the area with the exception of some very old horse tracks and local fauna. There is a remarkable absence of vehicle tracks, footprints or any other form of activity in, on route to, or at our monitoring locations.

The Sydney Catchment Authority does not monitor the water levels in this area of the catchment by their own admission; it is not part of their role. And funding has not been made available.

The SCA however were helpful and supplied maps which enabled us to determine which areas we could enter without fear of prosecution.

We chose the Georges River because of its large catchment, its close proximity to the Waratah Rivulet and Woronora River whose sources are adjacent to the swamps and creeks located on Maddens Plains. They are also have been subjected to the stresses and strains imposed by mining. Finally because of its close proximity to our homes in Campbelltown, a city with a population of over 220,000 people.

Local reference / history

Georges River has been undermined by the longwall mining process since the early eighties. During that time frame we have seen the rivers upper catchment change to its current status between the Woolwash and Appin of a grass filled ditch.

During the late 70's and early 80's Georges River was a healthy river prone to floods. Many of us remember Wedderburn being cut off by floods and the Wedderburn Gorge Bridge swept away

There is a long history of cracked river beds which public pressure finally convinced the mining companies' to grout. Grouting has not been successful in Pennsylvania and is regarded and a failure by the Sierra Club and the Ray Proffitt Foundation.

At the Woolwash we have walked **across** Georges River from bank to bank within a week of heavy rains at two locations –

- At the merger of Georges River and O’Hares Creek
- At the Basin in Kentlyn which was our primary monitoring point.
- **We have photographed this section of river totally without water despite the fact that it is downstream from a 100 square kilometre catchment and we were receiving g rain.**

Long term effects

If BHP Billiton is allowed to carry on mining under the Woronora Catchment our expectations are that there will be no Georges River within the next 10 years based on the deterioration we have seen since 1980.

We would also expect serious consequences to both the Woronora River and the damaged Waratah Rivulet.

On the southern side of Appin Road we have **Cataract Dam, Cataract River, Nepean River** and the **Loddon Creek** which flows into Cataract Dam. The Creek has its source on the Georges River side of Appin Road near **Maddens Plains and in Iluka Swamp**, the same area as Georges River.

Rebound

Recent research has revealed the term “**rebound**”, an after effect of longwall mining now being experienced in the UK.

After the mining production has ceased and the drainage pumps have been turned off, water collects in the old workings. This in turn creates pressure under the surface previously damaged by longwall mining subsidence. The surface is pushed upward creating even greater damage than was initially experienced at the time of the longwall mining.

The time frame for this phenomenon is 15 – 20 years after cessation of mining and turning off the drainage pumps.

We have found no mention of “rebound” in any mining documents so far researched in Australia.

- Is this because it won’t happen?
- Is unlikely to happen?
- The mining companies do not wish the population to know about it?
- They simply don’t care?
- They don’t know?

Water levels in Georges River after longwall mining.

Mining companies have reported that the ground water escaping through cracked river beds will appear down stream from the damaged area.

We have found **no evidence** of this throughout the 100 square kilometres of the Georges River Catchment and 18 months monitoring the system.

We have travelled 30 kilometres or more downstream, looked at adjacent creeks and rivers, there is **NO ADDITIONAL WATER** appearing.

The German government requires and enforces “Backstow” behind longwall machines. This is the replacement of the material removed by the miner after accessing coal. This is an operation which reduces surface subsidence and eliminates the huge mounds of material left on the surface.

Were the NSW and Australian Governments to require and enforce Backstow we may not have the problem we are about to face in the not too distant future – The total loss of Georges River, O’Hares Creek and the possibility of similar damage to the whole Sydney catchment.

Conclusion

- We have seen a marked effect on O’Hares Creek with loss of water between Maddens Plains and The Woolwash which includes Stokes Creek and its catchment.
- In addition we have seen water from O’Hares Creek flow back into the Georges River Upper Catchment at the merger of Georges River and O’Hares Creek. This was because of the absence of water flow out of the Georges River Upper Catchment into the main channel at the Woolwash
- Throughout our research we have not found a source of information or photographic evidence of Georges River and its catchment prior to the commencement of mining. This makes it difficult to prove that the mining industry is destroying our land.
- We therefore feel that the Macarthur Bushwalkers project Georges River may be the only ongoing work to create a photographic history of the catchment.
- BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal have spoken of its intention to carry out a survey of the area is a little late. They may have nothing to compare it to from the past.
- BHP Billiton’s continual denial of causing water loss is not proven. The onus must be placed on the mining industry to prove that they can mine without damaging OUR environment and our water supplies.

Georges River has documented reduced flow on many occasions since April 2009.

- 14 April 2009 – flow ceased
- 30 January 2010 – flow ceased
- 27 February 2010 – water flow at the Basin almost nil. Water flow from Maddens Plains was observed on the same day and found to be minimal.
- There was a complete failure of water flow from all parts of the catchment on the weekend of 15 May 2010 with the exception of runoff from the mining company dam at Appin

Recommendation

The Macarthur Bushwalkers recommend that the minister stop any further longwall mining activities in the Woronora Catchment and the Sydney water supply.

1. An investigation should be carried out into the health of the **Sydney, Cronulla and Wollongong** water supply by a neutral body and recommendations be made only after the investigation.

2. Mining companies should be stopped from using subterfuge when contemplating further expansion to their operations. The public of NSW should be informed and models placed in centres easily accessed by them eg Sydney, Parramatta, Wollongong and The Sutherland Shire.
3. The Woronora Catchment should be included in the National Park programme under the protection of the National Park and Wildlife Service so that ongoing monitoring and scientific investigation can take place.
4. The NSW government should adopt a policy forcing mining companies to Backstow and repair any damage done by mining companies.
5. Parts of the Woronora Plateau now open to the public should be promoted as a pristine tourist area for its protection against the mining industry. We, the people of NSW and Australia own the catchment and not the mining companies or the present Labour Government!
6. Aboriginal rights and culture must be protected, not dismissed with the stroke of a pen.

Summary - BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal

- BHP Billiton appears to have adopted a deliberate policy of subterfuge even though they organise focus groups.
- Information for public display is often placed in country areas like the Picton and Tahmoor townships which rely on the mining industry for jobs.
- The information is not made available to the people of NSW and Sydney.
- The people of Sydney and NSW are not aware of BHP Billiton and the mining industries destructive activities. If the population of Sydney were made aware that their water supply was disappearing there may be a very different reaction to BHP Billiton and its plans.
- We believe that the BHP Billiton Bulli Coal Seam Project submission is flawed. Several of their documents deal with the protection of eco-systems, fish, Broad Headed Snake etc. If the water supply is reduced or non-existent which we believe it is then BHP Billiton will have **NO CONTROL** over the flora and fauna of the Woronora Plateau. BHP Billiton cannot implement their so called environmental strategies. The Woronora Plateau as we know it will cease to exist in the long term
- The NSW Labour party has been in power almost from day one and is **responsible** for damage to our rivers and catchment.
- **We do not believe that the NSW Labour Government was given the mandate by the people of NSW to commit destruction of the catchments and endangerment of the Sydney water supply.**
- We believe that NSW is about to face its biggest environmental disaster caused by bad mining techniques aided and abetted by the NSW Labour Government.
- The mining industry has paid greatly reduced taxes over many years which allow them to create vast profits as they destroy our rivers, creeks, swamps, springs and water sources plus homes, bridges and community infrastructure. They are not held accountable by government thus treating the Australian public with contempt.
- The mining industry should be compelled to clear up their mess after completion and before they move on and not leave the clean up to the people of Australia.
- The BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal has returned to the community the somewhat laughable figure of nearly \$1 million dollars in 5 years, 3 cents in every saleable tonne. *Source: Illawarra Coal advertisement in the Macarthur Newspapers*

Australian Journal of Mining

Dr Don Barnett discusses the price outlook for metallurgical and thermal coal.

Metallurgical Coal - Australian Journal of Mining March 18 2009 - [Australian Journal of Mining](#)

The world financial crisis led to a reduction in steel demand in the last quarter of 2008 which resulted in cutbacks in steel production and depressed market for metallurgical coal.

Prior to the onset of the financial crisis it was generally expected metallurgical coal prices would remain very high throughout 2009 and 2010 before slowly decreasing to long-term levels generally 20 to 40 per cent higher than the pre “China Boom” levels in 2007.

By year end 2008 the near term forecasts for premium hard coking coal had basically halved to between US\$125 to \$200 per tonne FOB export port, but the long term expectations have increased slightly over the pre financial crisis levels to between US\$120 to \$150 (Figure 1).

The 2009 price of semi soft coking coal, the lowest coking coal category and the highest quality thermal coal, is now expected to be slightly less than half the 2008 price of US\$240, and then to drift down to between US\$90 to \$100 out to at least 2015.

Thermal Coal

Despite concerns with global warming, much of Asia is turning to coal and has massive plans to invest in coal-fired power stations. Peabody states that, “globally, 200 gig watts of coal plants are currently under construction, representing 700 million tonnes of annual coal demand expected to come on line in the next several years.”

Demand for thermal coal in 2009 will be driven by industrialisation and urbanisation in China and India which will account for half of the new coal plants.

Commonwealth Securities expects, “thermal demand to hold up better than coking coal demand. The majority of Australia’s thermal coal exports are some of the highest quality available in the seaborne market, with high energy content, low sulphur, moisture and impurities. These qualities will shield demand somewhat as certain power stations require high quality inputs for effective operation.”

Thermal or steam coal is expected to fall from the 2008 level of US\$125 per tonne FOB to between US\$75 and \$105 in 2009 and by 2015 to be between US\$70 and \$80 per tonne, approximately 50 per cent above the 2007 level (Figure 2).

Citigroup, however, forecast a price of US\$70 for 2012 and a long-term price for thermal coal of US\$50. With the cost increases that have occurred basically world wide in thermal coal production costs since the early part of this decade, it is not clear that at such a low price sufficient export coal could be produced to satisfy the expected consumption level.

Clearly coal companies fear a cost price squeeze in 2009 and are reviewing their cost structures to manage the compounding impact of lower volume and price.

Action by the Macarthur Bushwalkers

Macarthur Bushwalkers completely lost confidence in the NSW governments' decision making process regarding mining and its ability to deal with the mining industry.

Macarthur Bushwalkers now liken the mining industry methods of dealing with the public to similar techniques used by the tobacco, alcohol and drug industries. We believe every BHP Billiton statement must now be questioned.

We do not recognise that coal is more important to the population of NSW` than water, an attitude adopted by the NSW state government as well as the mining industry.

In May 2010 Macarthur Bushwalkers obtained information from the Bureau of Meteorology which contains access to records of rain fall over the catchment dating back beyond 1970. The only year where lack of rainfall concerned BOM was 1983 / 83. Yet the mining industry has consistently blamed drought for low water levels.

We now have documentary evidence that the rivers are running dry during the wet season and after rain. Georges River as previously stated has run dry in 2009 and for long periods of 2010. Both years were wet with 2009 being the wettest year for 10 years and record rainfalls for that time frame.

Macarthur Bushwalkers have published advertisements in the local newspapers requesting the local community send us copies of photographs taken of Georges River in the past. We have approached local historical societies for help with the procurement of photographs dating back from the beginning of longwall mining in Appin. We are now matching those photographs to the weather records previously mentioned.

We have contacted the United Nations in Geneva to raise the plight of locals both aboriginal and non-aboriginal.

Without water the planet and the inhabitants die!

Macarthur Bushwalkers has a policy of transparency and is obligated to pass this submission on to the media of this State with all other information obtained by us for Project Georges River Macarthur including 22 Gigabytes of high quality photographs.

In addition this document and all our research will be published on:

<http://www.georges-river-macarthur.com>

<http://www.bushwalking-cycling.com>

Aboriginal Heritage: Water - Everyone's Future

Macarthur Bushwalkers has joined forces with Mr Allan Carriage, tribal elder of the Wadi Wadi people.

Mr Carriage will become a member of Macarthur Bushwalkers; in addition he will have the role of adviser to Macarthur Bushwalkers.

Mr Allan Carriage has recently guided the Macarthur Bushwalkers to sites of historical value and great importance to his people. One site has been totally destroyed yet the event was not published in the media. There has been no attempt to protect these places. They have a similar meaning and value to the aboriginals as churches, cathedral and museums have to the people of Sydney.

Macarthur Bushwalkers have committed to the development of a high ranking website which will allow the aboriginal people to publicise the methods by which the mining companies can quickly overcome aboriginal land rights and the desecration of their sacred sites in the pursuit of coal. A prime example of this is Simpsons Creek which was previously mentioned in this document.

1. Macarthur Bushwalkers met with Fairfax journalists today 1 June 2010 to discuss the articles which will appear in both Wollondilly and Campbelltown newspapers to start our publicity campaign.
2. The second part of our campaign is this submission to you Mr Sartor.
3. The third part of our campaign is to publicise the Aboriginal website "**Aboriginal Heritage: Water - Everyone's Future**".
4. Alert the press both here and overseas about land rights issues and deliberate and systematic destruction of sacred sites.
5. Within the immediate future we will contact organised computer groups around the world and within Australia to help us develop a media campaign highlighting the plight and destruction of aboriginal lands and culture by this government and the mining industry.

In the Environmental Defenders Office on the morning of 31 May 2010 Mr Carriage asked the principal solicitor "**how can I obtain the keys to access my land**". In Australia of 2010 one doesn't expect to hear such a request from a tribal elder.

Like the Macarthur Bushwalkers, Mr Carriages wish is to inform the public of Sydney and NSW of the growing water issue and his fears for the generations' to come.

Kristina Keneally has already stopped the development of a coal mine in the Hunter Valley based on water and we believe pressure being applied by the racing industry. We ask "is the water supply of the Hunter Valley more important than Sydney's water supply, its flora and fauna and its population which also includes the people of the Illawarra and Sutherland Shire?"

Phi Costa - 17 February 2010 Macarthur Advertiser

Minister for Water Phil Costa said dam storages were now at 56.6 per cent and recent inflows into dams had been the best since mid 2007. "This is a very timely boost to our dam levels which have been dropping steadily over summer" he said".

Mr Costa then goes on to say "The rain we experienced over the last week was widespread across the catchment which received more than 110 millimetres.

It is obvious that mining damage to water supplies along with the destruction of aboriginal sacred sites can no longer be left in the hands of our politicians.

It must be placed in the hands of the people, the highest court in the land