

From: [Maureen Cooper](#)
To: [Agriculture Resources and Environment Committee](#)
Subject: Submission to Common Provisions Bill
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5th July, 2014

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The Research Director
Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
By email to: AREC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Mineral and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Bill 2014

My name is Maureen Cooper and I have lived most of my life in North Queensland where I have watched the erosion of the social fabric of my home town, Mackay, as well as many small mining towns, with the advent of coal mining. The destruction of our coastal land occurred because mining families wanted to live beside the beach and there was no account taken into rising sea levels and erosion of the foreshore. I now live in Victoria but for many years I have been a member of Mackay Conservation Group and have had many trips out to mining areas to conduct bird surveys for the local branch of Birdlife Aust. I have seen the degradation left behind by the mining companies who are allowed to leave enormous voids to cut costs. These voids fill with water in the wet season and this water is extremely salty and contains heavy metals leaching out of the old coal seams. Every new mine is allowed to leave these voids (74 proposed in the Galilee alone) so Queensland will be dotted with toxic voids which will cost the taxpayers eventually to rehabilitate these areas. Nature Refuges are under threat from mining with Bimblebox Nature Refuge (protected in perpetuity according to the documents signed with the Government) now having permits to mine over it from both Governments to benefit Clive Palmer. I now live in Victoria to escape mining but find that the Victorian State Government is hell bent on mining brown coal for export. To take away our rights to protest against or to be informed about new mines will be very detrimental to the health of our ecosystems and is an invasion of the public's rights. Global warming must be taken into account.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee.

Even small mines may last for decades and have serious impacts on our finances, ecology, environment and society. Public objection rights are powerful rights to go to court, unlike mere consultation. Public objection rights to proposed mines are essential to enable the costs and benefits to be debated openly in Court and to deter the type of corruption exposed in New South Wales. I say do not change those existing rights under Queensland law.

So I **oppose the changes** proposed in the following clauses.

- Clauses 418 and 420
These clauses **remove existing community notification rights and rights to object to mining lease applications**. Changing land tenure to allow for mining rather than another land use could impact on a

broad section of the public. Therefore the narrow definition of an ‘affected person’ proposed, which would exclude neighbours or community groups or people in the water catchment, is absurd. Land use decision making processes for other industries provide for community submission and appeal rights, so there is no good reason why mining tenure should be exempt from this basic standard.

- Clause 245
Limiting community notification and formal objection rights to the Land Court to “site specific” environmental authorities will, in conjunction with the above clauses, **remove all existing public rights to lodge formal objections to the Land Court in up to 90% of mining projects** ^[1] in Queensland. This is unacceptable and fails to recognise the positive impact of community objection rights. The same mining companies who want to limit public objections are often foreign owned. Suggestions by State government Ministers that objectors lodge frivolous or vexatious cases is entirely untrue, rather the opposite is true: there are no examples of such cases and objectors are very responsible. In the Alpha coal case (2014) the land holders and conservation group exposed that the mining company had a lack of hard data on groundwater impacts. Public spirited objectors went to Court and saved Ellison Reef (1967) from limestone mining and helped show the importance of protecting Fraser Island, now World Heritage Listed (1971).
- Clause 423 and 424
It is inappropriate to restrict matters that the Land Court can consider and give these powers, such as to consider the ‘public interest’, to the Minister. Decreasing judicial oversight, increasing ministerial powers and shutting out community participation has **worrying implications for corruption**.
- Clause 429
Removal of restricted land status when the miner is granted exclusive surface rights to access land removes one of the few rights of vulnerable landholders. No-one should have the land surrounding their house destroyed by an open-cut mine yet this would be possible under this clause.

I call on the Committee to approach the proposed legislation with a view to empower, rather than disempower, our communities to take responsibility for our State. In Queensland for decades any person or group has been entitled to object to any mining proposal in open court, to have the evidence scrutinised about the benefits and detriments of a proposed mine. I request that you do not accept these changes but instead keep existing provisions that require public notification of all proposed mining projects and that allow any person or incorporated group to object to all mining leases and environmental authorities on all the existing grounds.

Consultation Process prior to the Bill reaching Parliament

Please ask Minister Cripps to provide exact figures on how many of the 176 submitters to the discussion paper opposed changes to existing objection rights and detailed examples of alleged cases of vexatious objections. According to EDO Qld, at least 106 submissions of a total of 176 submissions on the discussion paper, from both rural and urban submitters, opposed the changes. Yet Minister Cripps does not report this key fact in p47-48 of the explanatory notes.

Yours sincerely,

Maureen Cooper

^[1] Discussion paper, p 7.