

Blackwater Community Progress Group Inc.  
PO Box 56  
Blackwater, QLD. 4717.  
25<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.

Research Director  
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the Blackwater Community Progress Group Inc. I would like to make a submission into the inquiry into Fly In and Fly Out and Other Long Distance Commuting Arrangements in Queensland.

Our group was formed back in 2008 when the community felt they had no voice and were losing our identity as we were witnessing a great increase in mining camp developments and applications within our community. Having huge amounts of dongas with a high unknown transient workforce has left a perception of being unsafe and a feeling we have been disregarded and just become a miners stopover. Since then we have noticed a great increase in transient workers as major mining companies have really promoted this practice with some workers not even offered the choice to reside in our community with their families.

This alone has had a devastating impact on our community as it is families that make communities and with less families in town it has placed a real strain on those that still reside here with businesses closing, essential services losing volunteers, pressure being put on schools as they no longer have the numbers in class sizes for certain subjects and local sporting groups struggling to field teams as there are less kids in town. As a parent you then start to question living here yourself as your kids are not getting the opportunities that they deserve.

Our group strongly believes that you cannot tell a worker where they have to live but this issue has been getting a fair bit of media coverage lately with a lot of mining companies now getting or seeking to have a 100% FIFO/DIDO workforce which is denying workers choice of residency and having a huge detrimental impact on the communities from which these mines operate.

The big question you have to ask is why do these mining companies that once built these mining towns now want to walk away from them. The answer here I believe was identified in the Windsor Senate Inquiry into FIFO/DIDO, in particular recommendation 12 of this inquiry which identifies the fringe benefits tax loophole that these mining companies receive for operating with this style of workforce.

I have witnessed this here myself in Blackwater where the company that I work for has pushed people out of residential housing that are paying rent of around \$400 a week into a camp that costs around \$900 a week. To the normal Joe Blow this doesn't make economic sense until you know about this fringe benefits tax loophole.

Besides the above mentioned effects that our community has witnessed this type of practice also puts a huge strain on commute workers themselves with some traveling huge distances to and from the mine in which they work at with a lot hitting the road straight after night shift putting themselves and other road users at risk. Being away for extended periods from their families is also a huge burden to them and those that they left behind where they live.

To help solve this problem our group fully endorses the recommendations of the Windsor Senate Inquiry into FIFO/DIDO which calls on all levels of government to act and stop this spread of this cancer in our regional mining communities. It is great to see the Local Government of Queensland has come out in support of this as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any part of this letter further. Our group would be more than willing to help with this inquiry in any way possible should you want to discuss or witness the effects that this work practice has had on the Blackwater community.

Regards,  
Steve Grant

