



Residents for Responsible Mining
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BAUXITE UPDATE : 10 October 2011

The latest developments in Bauxite Alumina Joint Venture's proposal to mine bauxite in north Bindoon, Chittering, Western Australia

✦ *Public Environmental Review: no Scoping Document after 13 months*

In early September 2011 Bauxite Alumina Joint Ventures (BAJV - the Chinese majority owned JV that Bauxite Resources Limited represents) distributed a brochure to Chittering residents as its long-awaited response to feedback given and issues raised by residents at the Scoping Workshops held in February 2011.

The brochure is another glossy BAJV production that ignores the key issues raised and as anticipated, distorts the feedback given by residents who are overwhelmingly against bauxite mining in the area.

It took more than 6 months for BAJV to produce this brochure that provides little new information. The JV has not produced a Scoping Document for its planned studies in 13 months since the Office of EPA announced the PER (September 2010). The continuing lack of information on bauxite reserves, mine plans, processing, development and transport plans is remarkable. The scope of work, location and duration of environmental studies and tests is undisclosed which we believe is a breach of EPA Guidelines. The testing appears random with some agreed testing being cancelled without explanation.

R4RM's advice from mining experts is that the BAJV does not have a viable bauxite project. Unlike most mining companies who conduct their environmental assessments as efficiently as possible, BAJV's snail-like progress suggests the opposite – it suggests the JV is buying time and resisting the disclosure of basic information which would show the project to be a non-starter.

✦ *Chittering residents comment on BAJV's September 2011 brochure*

We asked residents on the R4RM email list for their comments on the brochure. A selection of the feedback we received is reproduced at the end of this update.

The comment from a practising mining consultant with more than 30 years' experience is particularly relevant - The citizens of Kyrgyzstan receive more information about mining proposals than BAJV's proposal – not a flattering comparison!

✦ *Does bauxite mining "improve farmland"? - the status of Stage 1 rehabilitation*

BAJV recently conducted bus tours to the Stage 1 site at Hare's Farm, north Bindoon to show-off the rehabilitation of the 8 Hectare mined area.

To re-cap: BAJV claims that bauxite mining will improve farmland.

Stage 1 bauxite mining ceased in January 2010 and "rehabilitation" was completed and show-cased from April 2010. The Stage 1 area had previously been pasture

hosting about 16 mature Marri/Red gums. After mining, it was rehabilitated as pasture with only 2 mature trees “preserved”.

Aerial photos taken during the winter of 2010 showed that pasture re-growth was poor compared to surrounding un-mined pastured areas, despite the site being seeded and fertilized twice in 2010.

2010 was one the driest years on record and by January 2011 the Stage 1 site was bare, with no residual pasture surviving unlike the surrounding unmined pastures.

In June 2011 the Stage 1 area was cross-seeded and fertilized for the third time in 18 months in a further attempt at rehabilitation.

We have received two independent eye-witness descriptions by visitors who went on the bus tour to the site in the presence of BRL’s Environmental and Public Relations Managers. One of the visitors is an experienced long term farmer in the Bindoon area, the other is a qualified geologist. Both described:

- the soil profile of the Stage 1 area as permanently changed resulting in the mined bowl-like area compacting to a hard clayey base which is noticeably drier than the surrounding pasture;
- one of the two “preserved” mature trees within the area is dead and the other is dying;
- several mature trees on the western ridge where mining took place outside the approved area are also dying;
- there are no trees replanted in the mined area leaving it permanently exposed to full sun and wind erosion compared to its immediate surrounds;
- there is modest pasture growth but the real test will come in the spring/summer seasons

As a result of altering the natural ground contours, there is reduced surface water to surrounding paddocks and water catchments. It is inevitable that the groundwater recharge is fundamentally altered and it can be anticipated that this will mobilise salinity in neighbouring farmland downslope (consistent with Dept of Agriculture & Food technical advice).

Due to the altered soil profile and loss of topsoil, it is unlikely the Stage 1 area can sustain permanent pasture through the summer months, unlike the unmined pastures nearby (as occurred in 2010). We believe Stage 1 is clear evidence that bauxite mining will permanently degrade agricultural land directly and neighbouring agricultural land indirectly. R4RM will continue to monitor the progress of Stage 1 through aerial photographs and inspection from the neighbouring property.

BRL Managers allege “axe attack” on Stage 1 tree!!

BRL’s Environmental Manager and PR Manager informed those on the recent Stage 1 bus tour that the reason one of the mature trees in the Stage 1 area has died is because it has been “attacked with an axe” - implying that an enemy of BRL has killed the tree.

This is a bold allegation coming from a company that conducted mining without environmental assessment or monitoring, without public consultation and without proper approval. Neither of the two managers was employed by BRL at the time the Stage 1 mine was operating therefore it is not clear if the “axe-attack” theory is offered as a scientifically-based explanation or a corporate conspiracy theory.

No explanation was offered by the Managers for the sickness of the other “preserved” tree and the death of several mature trees on the western ridge of the site where unauthorized mining encroached.

BAJV continues to insult everyone’s intelligence and offend local residents. The “axe attack” allegation shows that the corporate culture of BAJV is unchanged with its management prepared to make ridiculous, trite allegations to distract from the JV’s woeful environmental performance and its past illegal activity. R4RM has asked the EPA to investigate the allegation.

Extracts from feedback by Chattering residents to BAJV's brochure issued September 2011

Resident 1: (This comment is from a practising mining consultant with over 30 years' experience)

"As a very short reply, I have read the BRL brochure and find this an irrelevant document. In no other country in the world where I have been involved in mining project development can a company..... carry out community consultation without explaining to the community what the life of mine plan will look like and being able to explain the specific impacts and the mitigation measures.

I can see none of the above in the information provided by BRL to date. If of interest I can provide these types of documents for Queensland, NT and Kyrgyzstan!

Without any details of the operation itself and the other major impacts such as water and transport, the document they have sent out is meaningless and shows a lack of regard for the community consultation process."

Resident 2: "Thanks for the update and the attached Feedback Brochure, which in essence means absolutely nothing, because it does not detail any meaningful answers regarding the concerns raised.

This company cannot have gone this far without knowing their exact needs and costs involved to enable these mining operations, (no company could operate blindly in that way), so it is about time the cold hard facts of what they need and how they will actually operate are put on the table for all concerned to see, if these mining proposals get the go ahead. We don't need to know about what pie in the sky studies they propose to do, this does nothing, only fogs the issues. They must know exactly what they need and plan to do now, so let us see it, why all the subterfuge. Bindoon areas had a particularly dry season last year and everyone struggled with existing water supplies for there orchards, farms and household. Can they guarantee our water will not be affected in any way and the extra heavy traffic they will need, with all the other problems that it will include will have no detrimental affect. We all know the answer will be no,. I cannot see why anyone, particularly people in the area, would want to allow these proposals to go ahead under this veil of darkness, for profiteering that will only benefit this company and it's foreign investors."

Resident 3: "I received the update today and thought what complete and utter rubbish, it doesn't even cover half the questions we asked at the meeting and as for responses or comments on what they are proposing to study, well it kept referring to and I quote " The results will be part of compliance reporting for the proposal " and the jumble of words well I for one did not make head or tail out of it and I suppose they are hoping to do that to a lot of people."

Resident 4: "It infuriates me to read it because it sounds like the same old words that mean nothing. More propaganda to look like they are doing something.

No mine plan, no acknowledgement that we don't want them here, no details.