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## FRUSTRATION LEADS TO ACTION AT COAL MINE AFTER FAILURES IN ASSESSMENT PROCESS

More than 30 people including local farmers and conservationists have today blocked coal trucks leaving an open-cut coal mine in a peaceful protest to highlight concerns about the health risks from coal dust if the proposed mega mine-complex goes ahead in the area, east of Narrabri.

Two large expansions and one new mine are currently proposed in Leard State Forest and surrounding farmland.

Maules Creek Community Council and Lock The Gate Alliance believe due process has not been followed with the mine proposals and that the planning assessment should now go back to the drawing board.

"The Planning Assessment Commission that recently considered these mines did not properly follow the Terms of Reference set by the Planning Minister to '*assess the cumulative dust, noise, blasting and water impacts of the project*' but instead just recommended future monitoring of dust levels" said Peter Watson, spokesperson for Maules Ck Community Council.

"We estimate that cumulative dust impacts from the mines could be up to 18,000 tonnes per annum and may affect up to 67,000 hectares of surrounding land. However, there is no legal protection for our community at present because this zone of impact has not been identified.

"The Maules Creek community has spent 2 years and \$45,000 working within the planning system and feel very frustrated that the Planning Assessment Commission has not done their job properly.

"We've met the Planning Minister twice and had been assured that the issue would be addressed, but nothing has changed and the planning department has recently given the green light to the Boggabri Coal Project.

"It is our view that the development assessment process is fundamentally broken and we are asking the Planning Minister to send these mines back to the drawing board until the Terms of Reference have been properly met" he said.

"As President of Lock The Gate Alliance I have seen this pattern repeated again and again across eastern Australia - communities play by the rules but the authorities do not" said Drew Hutton.

"The risks to human health from dangerous coal dust are well-documented and it beggars belief that they have not been fully and comprehensively quantified.

"It has taken an extreme failure of due process to stir this quiet community into action and I urge the NSW Government to show them some respect and immediately act on their concerns" he said.

Information or comment: Peter Watson 0427 434643 or Drew Hutton 0428 487110