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Namoi Water Study falls short of the mark

"The Maules Creek Community Council has a range of concerns regarding the Namoi Water Study (NWS). In general, the Terms of Reference, the process, the consultants, the budget and the management are all in some way questionable." said Phil Laird spokesman for the Council.

"Half the agreed community requirements are missing. Among other things, exclusion of water quality and certain geographic areas of the catchment in the current Schlumberger model do not in our view conform to the Terms of Reference. The MCCC believe that respecting the original Terms of Reference for the Namoi Water Study is fundamental to meet the communities expectations to develop a credible water study."

"The NWS Phase III model has not been peer reviewed, there has been no statistical audit of the underlying data and "generic data" has been used to plug data gaps in large areas of the catchment. Scenarios that capture the impacts of climate change along with the likely full development of coal mines and gas fields that will be in simultaneous production are not included. This is not the benchmark for individual projects that we expected and does not cover the full cumulative impacts." he said.

"It is also concerning that the Namoi CMA Chairman was removed at such a critical time in the NWS. The Namoi CMA is widely known as the leading CMA in the state, meeting its KPI's and developing strategic planning data to better manage the resources of the catchment."

"The MCCC is calling on the State Government to address the outstanding issues by commissioning further work to fulfil the gaps left by the Schlumberger model in accordance with the Terms of Reference that were accepted by the community. Above all we need to understand the risks to the *quantity and quality* of the water resources of this valley." he concluded.

Key Concerns;

1. The NWS Terms of Reference are different to the contract which the "Independent Expert" Schlumberger has signed. This contract is commercial in confidence and there is no visibility as to terms, payments, penalties etc. There is limited or no accountability to the community.
2. The company who were employed as the "Technical Expert" for the Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC), were also appointed as the project manager. This meant that the company who was supposed to provide frank and fearless advice became the body responsible for pushing the project through.
3. The study itself is missing large pieces of data in areas such as the Pilliga, Maules Ck and near Watermark. It omits key concerns (e.g. water quality) and has not been peer reviewed or had the data subject to a audit based on statistical risk factors. Confidence and credibility is at issue given the Independent Expert is part of a company that provides mining and CSG services (including the supply of Hydraulic Fracturing

Chemicals) in Queensland and throughout the world. Namoi Water carried out its own peer review of Phase II of the NWS and it was found that the work had not met the Murray Darling Basin guidelines.

4. The scenarios regarding the output from the computer models (Phase III) were questioned in great detail by the community members on the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). For example, the impact of climate change on catchment runoff and its impact on the modelling.
5. Limited budget. \$5 mil for the entire catchment. Compare this to a salinity study in the 80's that cost \$25 Mil for the Liverpool plains above Gunnedah.
6. The mining companies are not giving any credibility to the study. Take for example this quote from the Aston response to submissions to the Dept of Planning.

"The Namoi Catchment Water Study Model will not represent the coal seams from the Maules Creek Formation, or the Boggabri Volcanics. These key geological units were included in the EA model. This will mean the Namoi Catchment Water Study will be coarse, and significantly less complex than the EA model. There will be no benefit in waiting for the results of the Study as they will be significantly less detailed than the EA modelling work, already completed."

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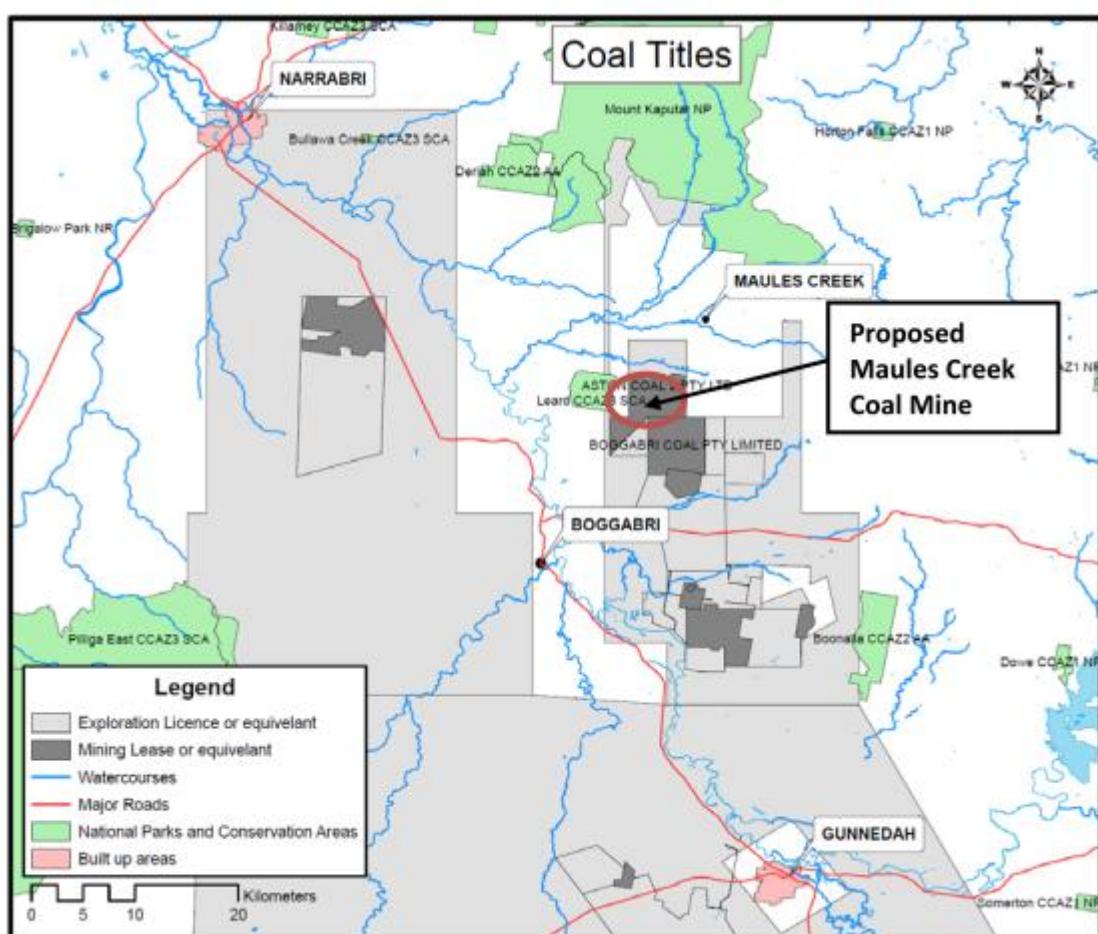


Figure 4-2 Existing Coal Titles shown in grey