

SUBMISSION RE: CORTONA COMPANY'S MINING PROPOSAL AT DARGUES REEF. LOIS KATZ 10.08.2011

Some of the speakers today may make use of graphs, charts and statistics during their talks to help to make their point. My talk will focus on a more personal level. I will try to convey what I think is important for our future.

One major ingredient to sustaining life as we would like to live it, is enough clean, safe water. Without clean water, a decent life is difficult, if not impossible. Right now, in the Araleun Valley, there is a sufficient and safe water supply for the general populace's needs, for farmers to produce food and for native animals to live in their natural setting. This is not a small achievement. In many parts of the world, clean water is scarce and people and animals suffer terribly from the lack of it. However, as we all learned from the horror drought that we struggled through during this past decade, lack of water is a serious threat to our continued way of life. Water is the source of all life and must be treated with the greatest respect. Water must not be squandered recklessly or used extravagantly or selfishly. It is the most precious resource on earth and its first and foremost purpose is to maintain life on earth. Right now, the drought threat is over. Thank God. But, this is Australia, and history has taught us to expect droughts. We should prepare for these dry occurrences.

The Cortona Gold Mine Company has conceded that its operation will use enormous amounts of water. The water table would drop from 2 to 6 metres as a result of Cortona's water usage. Perhaps, in times of good rainfall, the human residents of the Valley could still carry on as before. However, this extreme drop in the water table would cause our native animals to suffer severely. Where would their water supply come from? If you don't think that this is a valid question, then I think that you should examine your values. The Federal and State governments have made it illegal to harm a native animal. They are protected by law. Surely, siphoning off our native animal's water supply is not affording these animals the protection that the law promises and the development could be challenged on that basis. This is especially pertinent in this case, as many of the native animals living on Dargues Reef are endangered or threatened.

I am a member of WIRES. WIRES stands for 'Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service' and is a native animal rescue volunteer organisation in New South Wales. The biggest threat to our native animals is the destruction of their habitat. What could be more important to their habitat than their water supply?

Another aspect of this gold mine proposal that is very frightening is the use of the chemical Xanthates to extract the gold mineral from the earth. It is well documented that this chemical is extremely toxic and has been suspected of causing birth defects. The National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme has described this chemical as 'associated with a number of long term effects which include cardiovascular, neurological and reproductive effects.'

The water table is a reservoir that accepts contributions from many sources. Once poisons are introduced into the mix, there is a good chance that they will foul the water supply. Coal seam gas mining has admitted that it cannot promise that its invasive practice of injecting poisons into the ground will not pollute the water supply. (Sydney Morning Herald, 3 August, 2011, Coal seam damage to water inevitable) Can Cortona give a 100% guarantee that its gold mine won't add any poison to the water supply of the 100,000 people who live less than 2 kilometres down stream from this proposed development?

Cortona should be forced to sign an air tight written guarantee that the safety of its methods of extracting gold are fail proof and that the owners and directors of this company are legally, morally and personally liable for any occurring health problems

and/or water contamination as a result of this proposed mining if it goes ahead. If Cortona balks at this suggestion, then it clearly hasn't confidence in its own procedures and should not be allowed to proceed with this plan.

We should not be squeezing the earth for things that it does not want to yield. We need to respect the reasons for this withholding. Why would anybody want to put our environment at risk by using these extremely toxic chemicals to extract gold from the Earth? There is one reason only: Big profits, big money for a few.

Humanity is the only species that will cut off the limb that it's sitting on. The other species that share the planet with us have learned to adapt to the laws of nature. Humans, arrogantly try force Mother Nature into a tool of their own desires.

Humanity's cleverness has outstripped its understanding and respect of the basic laws of nature. We humans are outsmarting ourselves. As we push the boundaries of common sense and decency, we must recognise that our actions will have adverse effects on the Earth. Our technology has developed at an extraordinary rate, but our sense of propriety has not kept pace with it.

The Cortona Company obviously has an immense amount of wealth. Cortona should use its huge resources to diversify its holdings. There are other markets besides gold. Cortona could go into the solar energy market and abandon the gold market. Solar energy is an area where development is needed and many more jobs would be created. I know that the gold mine development would create some jobs, but not on the scale or for the duration of solar energy. The gold will eventually all be taken, but the sun will shine on and on.

Many places that were once busily being mined, are now destitute. After the mineral has been unearthed and sold and the landscape defaced, much of the natural resilience of the land is gone. It will be many life times before an area can repair itself from the disruption of mining.

Gold is not an essential ingredient for life. Water is. The dignity of sharing our Earth must be encouraged. We cannot allow our unreplaceable treasures that we want to pass down to our descendants, safe water, natural beauty and thriving wildlife, to be stolen from them. The Earth belongs to us all and we must halt the unconscionable grabs for monetary wealth that steal Earth's true riches from us.

Please reject the Cortona Company's mining proposal at Dargues Reef.

Thank you for your time.

Mary Lois Katz