



Mining company sustainability reporting in the Macquarie and Lachlan catchments, NSW, Australia: Usability for local community needs

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Water disclosure research – Aim, objectives, methods

Aim

•To examine **disclosures from mining companies regarding their water usage** in the **Macquarie and Lachlan catchment areas**, both parts of the Murray-Darling Basin in **New South Wales, Australia**.

Objectives:

- To assess whether disclosures are **sufficient to allow communities to determine whether mining companies are complying** with mining conditions of consent and abiding by the requirements of their water licencing agreements.
- To **compare with water reporting requirements** of the **Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)** and **Australian Water Accounting Framework for the Minerals Industry (WAFMI)**.

Methods:

•An **archival study** - has involved examining relevant publically available information released by mining companies and government regulators, including regulatory breeches, and indirect information via intermediaries.





Case studies, water accounting frameworks, legal and regulatory requirements reviewed

Companies and sites selected as case studies:

- Nine mine sites identified in the catchments - only four had substantial accessible environmental reporting.
- **Two companies** controlling these **four sites**, referred to as Case A (gold) & Case B (coal) selected for examination of their environmental information.

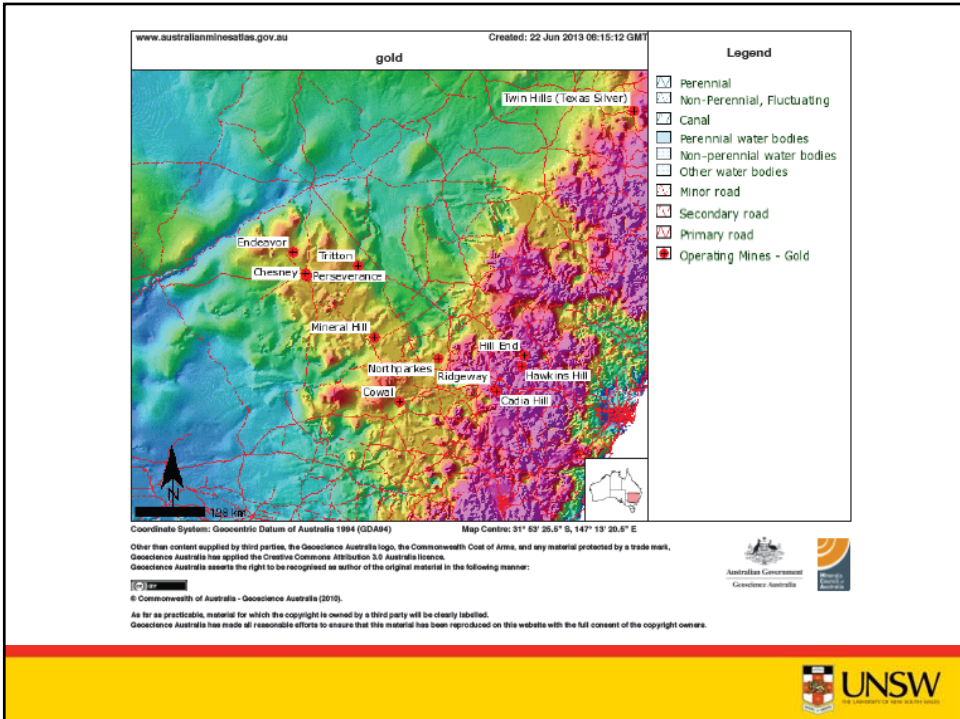
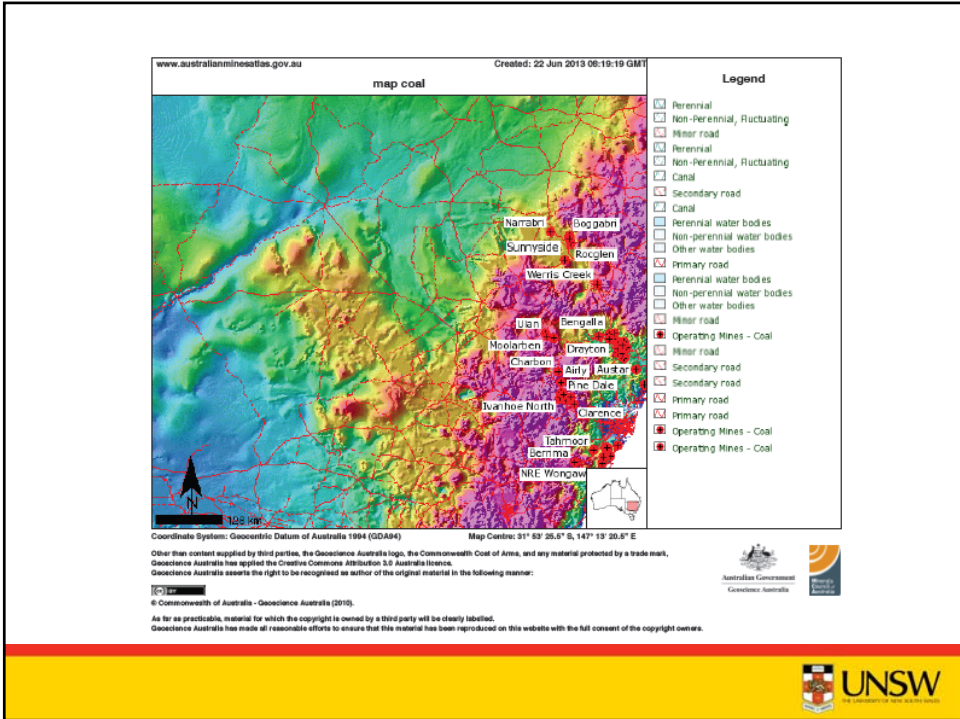
Water accounting frameworks

- Examined **various sustainability reporting frameworks**, searching for **water indicators** that might be of interest to catchment residents:

- ✓ Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) 3.1,
- ✓ Water Accounting Framework for the Minerals Industry (WAFMI),
- ✓ Carbon Disclosure Project (2012) Water Information Request,
- ✓ Australian Water Accounting Standard
- ✓ Alliance for Water Stewardship (2012)
- ✓ International Water Stewardship Standard
- ✓ Water Footprint Assessment Manual (Hoekstra et al., 2011).

State of New South Wales legal and regulatory requirements







Results for case studies assessed

- NSW State **legislation places few reporting requirements** on mining companies.
- However, legislation provides the State **Minister** of Planning and Infrastructure wide **discretion in setting reporting requirements** in relation to development approvals - sample requirements (DPI 2012) are quite substantive.
- **Statutory approval and licencing requirements** to create and report on: **water balances, water management plans, annual environmental reviews.**
- A significant portion of the information relating to **GRI protocols EN8, EN10 and EN21** can be obtained or inferred from Case A's and B's annual environmental reviews.



Further results for case studies assessed

- The requirement to undertake and make publically available environmental assessments means that it is also possible to acquire details for Cases A and B concerning **GRI protocols EN9 and EN25.**
- Department of Primary Industry (DPI)'s conditions require **disclosure of a water balance similar to WAFMI** but, in general, the DPI conditions require information less detailed than WAFMI.
- The likelihood of a mining company in NSW extracting and/or discharging excessive amounts of water, or releasing excessive pollution, is diminished somewhat by the fact that it is illegal to engage in these activities without first obtaining **licences.**
- In the event of a severe water shortage, water management plans can be temporary suspended. In such an event, **domestic users, town services and the environment all have higher priority to water than mining industry users.**





Conclusions regarding water reporting and local stakeholder usability

- A significant amount of **reporting resembling GRI requirements is made publically available in NSW** for the cases researched.
- The State government apparently sees the information as important for planning/development consent and monitoring purposes.
- Accordingly, there is **potential for furthering mandatory disclosure of information on mining company water** resource usage and impacts in NSW in the future via the planning system.
- However, this is **not an Australia wide situation**.
- Also GRI reports do not disclose mine site level information.
- Information is available to **local stakeholders via NSW Stae Government requirements** but **difficulties with accessibility and understandability** for is a major barrier.



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