

My name is Monica O'Brien, I am a resident of the Mid-Western Regional Council area. I am a relation of Sharyn Munro, the author of 'Rich Land, Waste Land'. Over many years I have followed Sharyn's journey in her writing about the heart-breaking effects - both environmental and people's personal heartbreak - of indiscriminate coal mining.

In Sharyn's 2012 book, 'Rich Land, Wasteland', the chapter on the impacts of coalmines on the Wollar area is called 'Clearing out the country' – true then - and even more shamefully true now in 2017. That is not a reason to allow them to worsen, but rather a reason to stop them, since the adverse social and health impacts are so clear. The air and noise pollution suffered by residents in and around Wollar has been, and is, shocking.

The book describes how from day one of construction the neighbouring Cumbo Valley residents, who'd been told they'd have no noise impacts from Wilpinjong, suffered badly from them ... and kept on suffering until Peabody was ready to buy them out, denying and dismissing impacts, using every loophole in noise conditions, and finally offering a pittance that the desperate residents had to take.

As Cathy Pattullo said, 'Everything was always in their control. All we ended up with was a choice to get out. But you just couldn't live there, you couldn't live with the noise.' Yet on Wilpinjong's website Peabody could state that 'they have not had a noise problem'.

Then came Wollar's turn, and again, the reality was nothing like the promises. Long term resident, Bruce Marshall, had believed their promises, but the actuality is that Peabody has treated them with contempt. By 2010 most of Wollar had been bought out, the people had left, houses demolished.

Even longer local battler, Bev Smiles, rightly predicted that as Wilpinjong moved closer, nobody would be able to live with the noise. As Sharyn wrote 'I am baffled to find myself in a society where this is not a good reason to say, "No, you can't mine there, and don't even try that nonsense about no impacts"!'.

Bev saw the community entirely divided by the early acquisition processes, with their mandatory confidentiality agreements; As Bev is quoted in the book, 'the white-anting has succeeded ... and Wollar will collapse. It is heartbreaking'.