CONVERSATION & LINKS
Opening conversation: 18 July 2007 with
PATRICE NEWELL & JULIE SHEPPARD of Rivers SOS.
Also screening of short film, ‘RIVERS OF SHAME’

HELP CHANGE POLICY
Stop Our Water Being Ripped Off!
1. Visit the websites – Rivers SOS: www.riverssos.com
   The Total Environment Centre: www.tec.org.au

Rivers SOS campaigns for a safety zone of at least
1km round all rivers to protect them from ongoing
damage. Rivers SOS is a coalition of environment
and community groups formed as a result of the
wrecking of rivers in NSW by mining operations.

2. Make a Submission –
   To the Inquiry into Underground Coal Mining in
   the Southern Coalfield (stretching from Sydney
to the Southern Highlands) until 30 July 2007.

Submissions must address the terms of reference.
See terms at Department of Planning:

Post: Southern Coalfield Panel Secretariat,
c/- Department of Planning, GPO Box 39, Sydney 2001.
E: Peter.Downes@planning.nsw.gov.au.

The Inquiry's terms of reference don't even mention the
water supply catchments. The Inquiry is directed to trade
off revenue with stopping coal mining related damage to
essential water supplies.

OTHER LINKS
State Government Coal Mining Approvals Process
DOP – Department of Planning: www.planning.nsw.gov.au
   The Minister is Frank Sarton.
DPI – Department of Primary Industries:
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au
   The Department of Mineral Resources is the primary
consent authority for coal mining as it grants mining
leases. It comes under the umbrella of the Department of
Primary Industries (DPI). The Minister is Ian Macdonald.

Exhibitions
The Trouble with the Weather: UTS Gallery, July 2007;
www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au
Alison Clouston & Boyd: www.burragerang.org

SPECIAL THANKS
Patrice Newell, Climate Change Coalition and
Julie Sheppard, secretary Rivers SOS. Thanks also to
Dave Burgess, Total Environment Centre, Bob Percival,
Woolloomooloo Film Society, Lisa Havilah, Campbelltown
Art Centre and Vivian Vidulich, Wollongong City Gallery.
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UNDERMINING RIVERS is an exhibition placing works by leading contemporary artists Deborah Vaughan and Toni Warburton side-by-side with activist commentary to ask who owns Sydney’s pristine water resources. Rivers in our sacrosanct water catchment areas have been cracked, drained and polluted: undermined by underground coal mining.

Sydney Catchment Authority has no power to stop mining directly under and beside the rivers and dams of the Upper Nepean catchment area. Until recently, it was fundamental that protection zones applied to essential drinking water catchments. In the midst of a global water crisis what new madness is this?

Although these special catchments are normally hidden from view, dramatic photographs by environmentalist Julie Sheppard show vanished rivers and creeks, poisoned water and barren ground. Longwall coal mining causes this subsidence damage. Once the gargantuan longwall machine has made its cut (of up to 2km long) and passed, the roof is allowed to fall. The short film ‘Rivers of Shame’ shows the wider impacts of this greed for coal.

In their installations, artists Deborah Vaughan and Toni Warburton also raise moral questions. As Deborah Vaughan’s work ‘Train Schizzes’ (2007) underscores, coal supplies are no abstract issue but one close to our heart. Her looped footage of empty and full coal trains eternally running up and down the Illawarra Line suggest the conflict: our computers, stoves and heating run on cheap coal-fired electricity. But we pay with environmental consequences.

In Toni Warburton’s ‘Wall Chronology: Transactions to Catchment’ (1990-2007) a sculptural figure of a boy in eighteenth century dress drinks a beaker of water. He seems to read a poetic wall-text describing the pleasure of his drink. Alongside, an elegant wall installation of ceramic, glass and artist’s books connects the ancient beaker form and purification rituals to the natural science of water filtration.

If the coal mining damage continues, we will need more than a desalination plant to secure adequate water resources. Global warming has begun and there is more abrupt climate change ahead. Yet our policy makers and state Treasury are reluctant to change their ways.

In recent years, the state government has approved new longwall leases for the world’s largest resources company BHP Billiton (Illawarra Coal) and the world’s largest coal company, Peabody Energy (Metropolitan Mine), under our water catchments. More are in the pipeline.

Jo Holder, July 2007