

04 August 2023

QCoal outlines facts on Glenden

You may be aware of recent media reports focussing on issues in the township of Glenden.

Please be assured that QCoal rejects these claims. The company is left in little doubt that it is being unfairly targeted in a politically motivated campaign of misinformation to disrupt the approval process for our proposed mining accommodation.

The facts are that QCoal is honouring the commitments it made during its 2010 EIS process. QCoal always said it would provide its non-resident workers with choice about where they live and where they are accommodated during their working week. This is a fundamental human right.

As far back as 2010 QCoal noted that the preference of most non-resident workers was to live in a mine-based worker's camp. QCoal's position has not changed since 2010.

QCoal's Byerwen non-resident workforce all live in the regions – mainly Townsville, Mackay, and Bowen. QCoal's Byerwen non-resident workforce is not fly in fly out – they are bused to and from regional coastal communities.

This is not about QCoal's non-resident workforce living in the regions – they already do – they just chose not to live in Glenden.

QCoal workers right to choose where they live and their safety is paramount. QCoal cannot legally dictate to its workers where they live or demand that they move their families to Glenden.

Glenden requires 2000 rateable homes to be sustainable. Even if all 600 of Byerwen's workers moved to Glenden this would not be enough to make the town sustainable.

QCoal is of the firm belief that being forced to accommodate its non-resident workers in Glenden during their working week will only put them at increased risk of travelling nearly 100 kilometres a day to and from work. It will also unnecessarily and unfairly take up a further two hours per day with travel and the time necessary to muster workers onto bus transport. QCoal does not believe this is reasonable and neither does its workforce.

To facilitate its non-resident workers choice about accommodation during their working week QCoal has acquired 14 houses in Glenden which have come onto the open market. It also accommodates some of its workforce at the Glenden Motel and is renting three additional premises. There are presently no other houses available for sale or rent in Glenden.

Our competitor, the Swiss based multinational Glencore owns the 300 old vacant homes in Glenden. Notably, Glencore itself elected to expand its Hail Creek workers camp by 1000 workers rather than accommodate its workers in the vacant houses it currently owns in Glenden, and which require extensive renovation including asbestos removal to bring them up to modern standards.

Glencore's Hail Creek camp is approximately the same distance from Glenden as the Byerwen mine. Glencore's expansion of its Hail Creek camp was facilitated by the same Ministerial approval that is wanted by QCoal. Isaac Regional Council makes no complaint about Glencore's camp or its refusal to use its vacant Glenden housing for worker accommodation.

We believe it is interesting that Glencore's approval was granted by the same Minister only 18 months ago at a time when he was also aware of QCoal's application. QCoal is entitled to equal and fair treatment under the law and from the Minister.

At the time of its EIS, 13 years ago, QCoal estimated 30% of its non-resident workforce could possibly choose to be accommodated in Glenden. QCoal however cannot morally or legally force its workers to live where they don't want to (Section 19 of the Human Rights Act). Recent surveys indicate that approximately 10% of the non-resident workforce would like to have the choice of being accommodated in local housing. This percentage is consistent with the industry average across the Bowen Basin. The remaining 90% want to continue to live in Byerwen's purpose-built camp at the mine during their working week.

Importantly, it is not QCoal's choice to bulldoze 300 homes. Any arrangement regarding removal of the homes or rehabilitation of the land is between Glencore and the State and has nothing to do with QCoal.

It must also be said that since 2010 and following the Global Financial Crisis Glenden has changed significantly following the reduction in operation of Glencore's Newlands, Wollombi, and Suttor Creek mines.

Glenden was constructed in 1982 by Glencore's predecessor as a mine specific purpose-built town with a twenty-year life. Glenden is over twenty years past its proposed life. A lack of upgraded infrastructure including water and sewerage works, a change to the industry roster to 12 hour, 7 days on, 7 days off, a sharp decline in services available in Glenden and an increased awareness of the dangers of fatigue and increased focus on fatigue management have all contributed to Glenden's decline and made the community unsustainable.

It is significant that general amenities in Glenden such as the local pharmacy, the supermarket, bakery, children's playground, and newsagency have closed. Other essential services have reduced trading hours. There is also now no doctor in Glenden as Glencore declined to renew the contract when it expired this year. It is feared the school will soon follow as the number of school age children living in Glenden declines.

These factors are not peculiar to Glenden and have resulted in a decline in the population of traditional mining towns and an increase in workers being accommodated in worker's camps during their working week and their families living in coastal towns.

Resources Minister Scott Stewart is well aware of Glenden's infrastructure issues and the other issues affecting Glenden.

It is unreasonable in QCoal's opinion for the Council and the State to ignore workers' choice and what has become a widespread industry practice.

While busing our workers to and from Glenden to the mine may mitigate some of the safety and fatigue issues it also heightens the dangers of travel on a road in poor condition. But paramount to our argument, is our worker's choice and the unnecessary adverse impact on their lifestyle.

QCoal stands by its commitment to allow its non-resident worker's choice about where they live and where they are accommodated during their working week.

We welcome this opportunity to clear up some of the misinformation surrounding this issue. If you have any further concerns or queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Please contact James Black via email jblack@qcoal.com.au with any queries.

Yours faithfully,



Christopher Wallin
Managing Director