



Dirty Money

Matthew Bennis

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The true story of Australia's vast mineral wealth and the men and companies digging in the dirt to get it.

Mining is a dirty business. At home mining is impacting on the lives of every Australian. In Esperance in Western Australia a doctor called for the lead levels in children to be checked after 4000 birds died in a few months. Lead from WA mines was suspected. In Kalgoorlie Newmont mining admitted dumping 7000 tonnes of poisonous mercury over the city in just 12 months. It causes chronic brain and kidney damage. In Tasmania 30km of the Arthur River has been killed by the run-off from the Mt Bischoff tin mine. In Queensland illegal mining pollution is damaging the Barrier Reef while in Darwin a uranium mine sits in the middle of Kakadu National Park - both World Heritage sites. These are issues that affect Australians today. Pollution from mining is entering water courses and the drinking supply of every one of us. The toxic effects are deadly.

Overseas, Australians like to boast of their green credentials but it is our mining companies who are representing a very different side of Australia to the world. Australian Mining companies oppose legislation that would apply the same standards to their work offshore as they have at home. In Australia Rio Tinto promises: "Employees will be protected to the best of the company's ability against harassment in the workplace." In Indonesia it is being investigated by the National Human Rights Commission over sexual abuse of underage children at its Kelian mine. BHP's own Guide to Business Conduct promises: "It is BHP's policy to achieve a high standard of environmental care." But that did not stop the massive environmental disaster at its now notorious Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea.

This is not a dry business book. This is a story of a greed that has defined a nation. It will take us from the earliest mining scams and scandals to the pollution of the present day. It is a story of how communities in Australia and across the world have risen up to fight for their land. And it will tell how rich men in boardrooms in major Australian cities thousands of kilometres away have forged dirty deals to sweep them aside. It will tell us just who those men are and what drives them. Newspaper and television reports merely scratch the surface. The true story of Australia's mining industry is told dramatically and in full. It is a book every Australian needs to read because it the story of our national wealth and how those who have access to it are abusing the privilege.

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