

Environmental group challenges Rinehart's mine

GVK Hancock Alpha mine before court

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ENVIRONMENTAL group Coast and Country have gone to Queensland's highest court to fight a decision that allows Gina Rinehart's Alpha coal mine to go ahead in the Galilee Basin.

Coast and Country have appealed a decision the supreme court made last year that dismissed the environmental group's case that the land court made the wrong decision to allow GVK Hancock Coal's Alpha coal mine to go ahead with conditions.

A hearing was held on Tuesday in the Queensland Court of Appeal in Brisbane.

Jo-Anne Bragg, CEO of Environmental Defenders Office, representing Coast and Country, said their argument was that the impact of burning fossil fuels from the Alpha mine should not be disregarded.

One of the land court's previous findings was that the mine would not increase global greenhouse gas

emissions because coal would just get sourced elsewhere, regardless of whether the mine went ahead. Coast and Country disputed this at the supreme court. Last year the supreme court found the land court judge was able to make that decision.

But on Tuesday, Ms Bragg said the idea that coal from

other mines would replace the environmental damage if the Alpha mine did not go ahead was known as the "substitution argument" and that it was irrelevant.

"The fact remains the proposed facility would still have serious impacts that need to be considered and assessed," she said.

"Just because the harm would be no worse than the alternative, does not make the harm non-existent."

Ms Bragg said the appeal case was about the interpretation of Queensland Environmental Protection Act.

A GVK Hancock spokesman said the company had invested tens of millions of dollars on a variety of environmental assessments that contributed to its environmental approvals.

"We have complied with every environmental regulation set before us, as well as meeting the legal requirements of numerous court challenges," he said.

The spokesman said coal from the company's projects would feed into a global market, create thousands of jobs and billions in royalties and taxes for Australia.

"The next steps for our project involve finalising approvals and any relevant legal challenges, before coordinating financing

arrangements, which will bring us to a point where construction can commence."

The Queensland Court of Appeal will deliver its decision at a future date.



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An environmental group has gone to Queensland's highest court to fight a decision that allows Gina Rinehart's Alpha coal mine to go ahead. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED/DARRYL PERONI