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TINKLER DONATIONS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT FAST-TRACK FOR MAULES CREEK MINE

The Northern Inland Council for the Environment has questioned the fast-track that has been given for the Maules Creek Coal Mine through the planning process following news that political donations made by the chairman of the company, Nathan Tinkler, were not reported to the NSW Planning¹ department.

Donations of \$50,000 were made to the National Party by Nathan Tinkler. The proposed Maules Creek Coal Mine is located in a National Party seat. The Planning Department is now conducting an inquiry into the failure to disclose the donations, according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

The Maules Creek Coal Mine is one of three major open-cut mines proposed for the Leard State Forest area, a significant natural area near Mt Kaputar (north of Boggabri) in north-west NSW.

"The Maules Creek Coal Project has had a dream run through the planning assessment processes in NSW - it has moved through at twice the speed of adjoining mines" said Carmel Flint, spokesperson for the Northern Inland Council for the Environment.

"The news this morning that there have been unreported donations involved now raises genuine questions about the integrity of the process.

"We are calling for more serious measures to investigate the matter - the processing of the development proposal should be stopped immediately and a more far-reaching inquiry conducted by an independent authority.

"The Maules Creek Coal Mine, if approved, will clear some 2,079 hectares of vegetation, including 544 hectares of the critically endangered Box-Gum woodland.

"It will have an enormous and irreversible environmental impact on an outstanding natural area that provides habitat for up to 36 threatened species, including the Masked Owl, Koala and Painted Honeyeater.

"This mine will also forever change the quiet rural community of Maules Creek into a giant industrial zone with impacts on health, air quality, noise and amenity. We believe the mine proposal should be rejected.

¹ <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/billionaire-faces-inquiry-over-donations-to-nationals-20120117-1q4sn.html>