

Mining and the environment – 2

1. Read the information text below.

Case study – Queenstown, Tasmania

A visit to Queenstown is a stark reminder of the disastrous impact mining can have on the environment. Gold was the first mineral mined here but this ceased by 1891. Not long after, the Mt Lyell copper mine began operation.

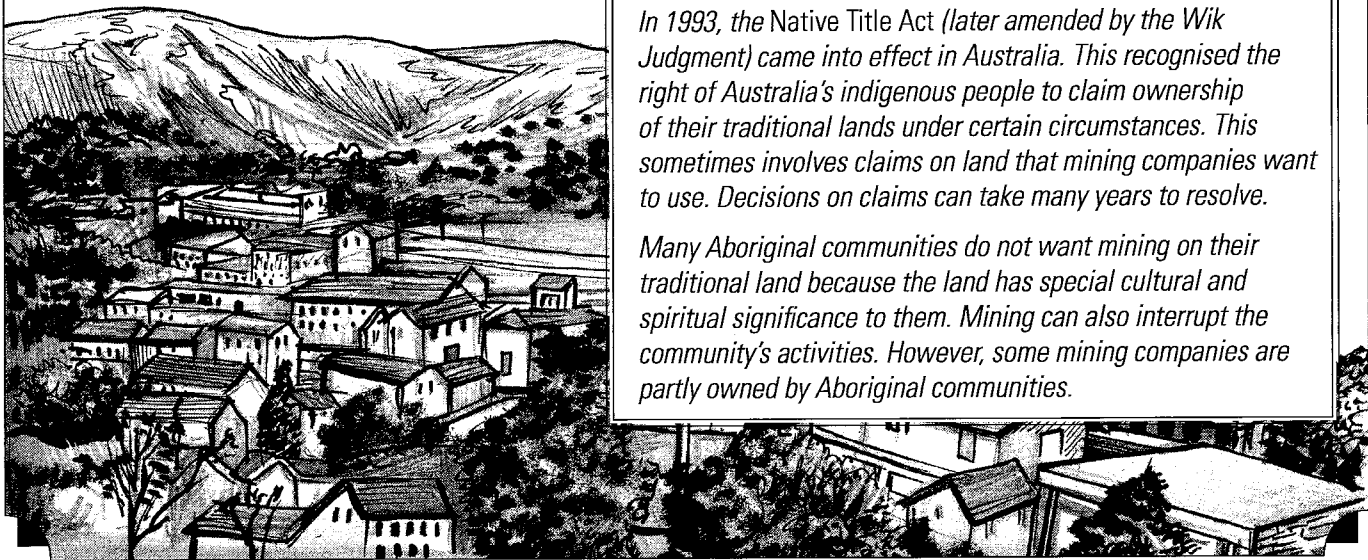
Facts

- Over three million tonnes of timber was chopped down from the hills of Queenstown between 1896 and 1923 to fuel its copper smelters. The sulfur fumes from the copper smelters also killed the town's plant life. The smelters were finally closed in 1969, but the damage had been done long ago. By 1900, the town looked like a barren moonscape—as it still does today.
- Queenstown's waterways are contaminated with toxic metals, including copper. Its King River and Lower Queen River have no aquatic life because of a high level of sulfur in the river soil and from waste dumped from the mine.
- The Mt Lyell mine closed in 1994 and was taken over by Copper Mines of Tasmania. The waste from the mine is now dumped into a purpose-built dam.
- The barren hills of Queenstown are now a tourist attraction, but some people feel that replanting of trees should occur.

Land Rights

In 1993, the Native Title Act (later amended by the Wik Judgment) came into effect in Australia. This recognised the right of Australia's indigenous people to claim ownership of their traditional lands under certain circumstances. This sometimes involves claims on land that mining companies want to use. Decisions on claims can take many years to resolve.

Many Aboriginal communities do not want mining on their traditional land because the land has special cultural and spiritual significance to them. Mining can also interrupt the community's activities. However, some mining companies are partly owned by Aboriginal communities.



2. You have been given a section of an old mine site to turn into a park. Use this space to plan the changes you will make before drawing them on a separate sheet. Hint: You could look at trees and shrubs, flowers, pathways, playgrounds, a water feature, a picnic area.

