

Planning Assessment Commission Hearing
Watermark Coal Project, Gunnedah LGA

Submission: Brian Pepper

[REDACTED]

I am a landholder in Breeza, have lived and worked here for 10 years, and I'm speaking to register my strong objection to the proposed Shenhua Watermark Coal Mine at Breeza. Not only have I been here for a decade my family has been in this area for 35 years and when I first saw the Liverpool plains at 10 yrs of age I knew that this was the place I wanted to farm.

The high risk of contamination and loss of ground water is a significant concern. The long-term impacts on our water supply are unacceptable. Water is the source of life, the key to production and the foundation of the environment. If the coal industry continues to destroy our local water, it will leave the community and local industries with no choice but to leave the area. Do you really want a coal mine ghost town where our most productive agricultural region currently exists?

The loss of ground water will effectively eliminate our bore water supply which in turn will present a significant financial burden of having to purchase water and will negatively impact upon the resale value of my property. I work on local farms which produce irrigated and dry land crops and livestock. Contamination and loss of water will have a direct negative impact upon my employment and income as productivity will decline. I have no desire to work in the mining industry. I currently work in primary production and wish to remain employed in this industry.

The contamination and loss of ground water will mean increased reliance on tank water. This will not be a solution as the potential of dust contamination will render our tank water unfit for use. The health impacts of increased dust are well-known, as seen in the Singleton and Muswellbrook townships. For example, increased incidents of severe asthma and other respiratory disorders. Dust contamination is unavoidable as a proposed total of over 4000 hectares of vegetation will be removed over the life of the project in addition to the increase in train movement on a line that is already frequently used. This increase in train movement will also have a negative impact on our living standard due to increased dust and noise.

Breeza is a quiet rural area. Infrasound/low frequency noise (ILFN) produced by machinery is known to be a problem in these types of areas due to the lack of background noise. ILFN is known to cause cardiovascular disorders, psychological problems and stress. I am greatly concerned that Shenhua is not completing any assessment on low frequency noise as stated in the EIS "Acoustics Impact Assessment 4.6 Low Frequency Noise - no separate assessment of low frequency noise levels is required".

The Liverpool Plains is a highly productive area of high quality produce. Every year I enter grain and cotton into the Sydney Royal Easter Show under the district exhibits and for the last several years I have taken 3 out of the 4 possible prizes for sorghum heads and grain. This is a state wide competition. We produce the best grain in the state and this is being put at risk.

My income, lifestyle and living standard are going to be directly impacted by this mine which has only just met the bare minimum requirements. There appears to have been no attempt to ensure that this mine will not only just meet requirements but exceed them. I have been here since before this mine was proposed and I plan to be here for a long time to come. The direct impacts on myself and my community cannot and should not be ignored. Try searching for Shenhua Coal Mining in Mongolia to see how this mining company operates. They have devastated the local environments and have ignored government policy that requires the strictest management of water sources. Fines and any other sanctions after they have destroyed our homes and livelihoods are not effective nor will they undo the damage done. The fact remains this company has a proven history of ignoring environmental impacts, ignoring government policies and destroying environments and water supplies in the name of chasing profits.

Thank you for listening and taking my objections under consideration.