

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views. I speak here today as a recent arrival to Gunnedah who has invested a considerable amount of money in a local business.

Coal has been mined in Gunnedah since Gunnedah Colliery No 1 opened in 1895. Since then, coal mining and farming activities have coexisted harmoniously.

The Shenhua project is estimated to have a net social benefit of 1.5 billion dollars to Australia in the form of federal tax payments, state royalties and local contributions to services and infrastructure. It will create hundreds of local jobs directly and many more indirectly. I emphasize this is a net benefit arrived at after discounting for costs and is expressed in today's dollars.

In particular, the mine will create 1,200 direct and indirect jobs, including over 750 flow-on jobs created to support the mine and supply goods and services. If any doubt the veracity of these claims, I would point out this cost benefit analysis has been peer reviewed by a highly respected professor at the Australian National University. (Dr Jeff Bennett, Professor of Environmental Management, Crawford School of Public Policy).

Construction workforce will peak at 600 jobs, and the operating workforce will build from 200 in the first year to 600 permanent peak workforce in year 21.

With regards to local employment, people recruited from outside the region will be required to live within an hour's drive to the mine.

All towns within an hour's drive of Breeza will benefit.

An additional 10 to 40 people are expected to move each year into Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains, Tamworth, Narrabri and Upper Hunter shires. This growth will generate from 4 to 16 new houses each year in each shire. Most of the increase will be in Gunnedah.

Many will remember the downturn in Gunnedah with the closure of the mines in 1998 and the dark years until the resurgence a few years ago.

I have spoken to many who saw Gunnedah at its lowest for the first eight years of this century. Business confidence was at rock bottom, jobs were scarce, shops were closing everywhere, and people, especially young people, left the town in droves looking for employment and a better life.

The main reason for this? The closure of the last of the coal mines. Since 2008, there has been a gradual steady improvement.

The main reason for this? The renewed interest in coal mining in the Gunnedah basin.

Any issues about environmental and ground water effects should be addressed by science, not emotion, and for this project, the science is in. There will be no long term adverse

effects for anyone. I suggest those in opposition look at the facts, and not be driven by fear or greed.

Farming is a valuable and productive enterprise, but any reasonable person should be able to see there is room for farming and there is room for mining. I talk as a macadamia grower for the last 25 years.

But even in such a rich and productive area as the Liverpool Plains farming cannot take up the slack when the mines are not operating. The Gunnedah basin has one of the world's richest deposits of high quality, low ash, low sulphur and low phosphorus semi-soft coking coal, and low ash, low sulphur, high energy thermal coal.

While the world is moving towards alternative energies, we would be crazy not to take advantage of this fact and make the most of it.

You have to question the logic of those in opposition to this project on environmental reasons.

If we deprive the power stations and steel mills in countries like China, India, Japan and Korea of this high quality resource, what do you think they are going to do? They will source a lower quality product elsewhere and this will have the effect of increasing global carbon emissions, not decreasing them, which is exactly opposite the result all of us want.

In summary,

- if you don't want 1,200 new jobs for our regional youth,
- if you don't want an injection of hundreds of millions of dollars into the local community,
- if you're against new houses and shops in the region,

shut down this project. But if you believe in the future of Gunnedah and the region, give it your utmost support.

James Farquhar

