

Good afternoon *Thank you Miam Spence*

My name is Jamie Chaffey and I'm the Managing Director of the Stripes Group of Companies based here in Gunnedah.

The Stripes Group is made up of;

- Gunnedah Industries which was established in 1971 *& Serving Agriculture Industry*
- Stripes Engineering Services providing rural, industrial and mining fabrication engineering solutions
- Stripes Asset Services, a retail store providing ~~industrial~~ *Safety* and industrial supplies to ~~industry~~ *industry* across the region
- Stripes Electrical Services *with* – electrical installation for mining and other infrastructure projects
- And transport operations with both Fourways Haulage and Gunnedah Freight Centre serving the district with local logistics and interstate freight connections to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane

Stripes are involved in projects locally and around Australia, ranging from local mine maintenance support or shut down services to on farm works to multi-million dollar, months-on-site construction projects.

The Stripes Group has almost 60 full-time locally-based employees, including **six apprentices**.

I am speaking today in support of the Watermark Coal Project.

As an employer in the region I feel business will benefit locally and should be supporting this project. I believe a positive partnership between the Gunnedah community and local businesses with Watermark Coal are possible and desirable. It will mean strong two way communication and a commitment to joint goals.

I think the Watermark Coal project will allow strong growth in the district and expect there will be employment, economic and social benefits for the Gunnedah community.

A project of this size and scale is so significant for our relatively small Shire and it is important that we use this opportunity for the long term success of our region. I have had personal and professional experience of the benefits of mining companies working together with regional communities and feel both partners, can take advantage of lessons learned in other regions to really make this project work successfully for the long term.

In the first instance, mining brings **employment** and particularly **skilled and safe** employment. There is no doubt the professionalism of mining has increased the safety focus in our local businesses. Where Stripes

have adopted the high standard of safe practices required for our mining work into our other contracts we have definitely 'raised the bar'.

The Watermark Coal project will mean increased opportunities for training and skills development for employees and contractors of all ages and backgrounds. These will include direct and indirect opportunities for cadetships, apprenticeships and scholarships for both school and university students.

This will lead to very positive outcomes for local skills, particularly allowing younger people to stay in the region. There will also be more employment in the region as local businesses grow, because where money is spent in town business will grow.

Secondly, the economic benefits of the project, stemming from employment and local contracts, will be significant for the region.

Increased local employment opportunities will keep current families in town and attract new families and spending into the local economy. Increased population and home ownership in the region will add to the ratepayer base and contribute to improved infrastructure.

During the life of the mine, local contracts of all shapes and sizes will benefit current and future businesses both directly and indirectly.

I believe the Watermark Project can work beside other industries in our region to add value and another 'string to our economic bow'. Having this growth and diversity will help buffer our regional economy and reduce the impact of many external factors such as drought.

The economic growth generated from this project will help ensure Gunnedah Shire is more viable into the future.

Finally, there will be social benefits. The Watermark Project will add benefits to local businesses and families particularly by attracting more families to live, work and play in the Gunnedah region – more children in schools, more people to attend more cultural and community events, more assets and resources in the community. Shenhua has already demonstrated their local commitment and corporate social responsibility. And if we make the best of the growth opportunities offered by Shenhua, so that there is fair access for all the community, there can only be positive outcomes.

I believe we have an important opportunity here to build a stronger future for local families and I look forward to exciting days ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.