

Planning Assessment Commission  
Speaking Notes

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Watermark project today.

Can I start by saying that I am not here to try to convince anyone to change their minds on this issue. I understand the passion that drives people to feel strongly about a situation but I come with some facts and figures that are important in understanding the bigger picture - the bigger picture being not only our region, but Australia.

Farming and agriculture are part of the life of this country and indeed the Gunnedah basin. This is the food bowl of Australia.

Farming is part of our proud history and will continue to play a major role. It is an important contributor to our economy, providing 3% to GDP and over 48 billion dollars per annum. With value adding this figure exceeds 155 billion dollars.

Australia exports 60% of what it grows.

Growth in the agricultural sector is around 2.8%.

There are over 38,000 farms in NSW which make up 32% of Australia's total, and these farms account for 76% of NSW land. 80% of the Gunnedah shire is devoted to agriculture.

Agriculture uses just under 50% of NSW water.

Over 63,000 people are employed in agriculture in this state.

The majority of farmers are in their 60s.

Farming has helped shape our nation and is embedded in our daily life. It is a major contributor to our economy and will sustain our population for years to come.

The mining sector is another, equally important, contributor to our national *and local economy*. It is also part of our proud past.

Australia is the *world's leading coal exporter* with exports increasing by 50% over the past 10 years. Newcastle is the *world's largest coal export port!*

Mining contributes 10% to GDP with exports of over \$164 billion.

More than 145,000 people are employed in mining.

Mining takes up less than 1% of NSW land.

It accounts for less than 2% of total water consumption in NSW.

The average age of a person in the mining sector is 39 years.

Growth attributed to the mining sector can be measured in the rapid expansion of job opportunities and strong income growth in the household sector. This in turn is leading to increased household expenditure.

Over time, this will translate into, for people in this community, not only more jobs but *secure employment for many years*. Mines in this area will be employing people for the next 30 years and more.

Not only will mining bring secure, long term employment but it will also mean more doctors, dentists, medical facilities, schools, libraries and shops. Faith in our growing local economy is evidenced by Aldi which will open its doors here in September.

And in more time, with continued strong growth, it is entirely feasible that direct flights to Sydney may be reintroduced. Think what this will mean to our community.

This growth will mean higher standards of living, with similar opportunities for education, health and employment enjoyed by those on the other side of divide. Where we are fortunate, we have the beauty and the industry of the natural environment plus the benefits of increased wealth through mining. Those in the cities just have the wealth....and the traffic and the noise and the congestion!

Can I finish by saying I love this sunburnt country. I love living near vast cotton and cattle farms. I love seeing and hearing those coal trains *rumbling through the day and night*. It's not surprising that Gunnedah is listed as one of Australia's boom towns and I personally am delighted to be here in Gunnedah, living modern Australian history as it unfolds around us.

Thank you for your time.

[Information provided by the National Farmers Federation Farm Facts 2012  
Mining facts from land use facts, com and the Mineral Council of Australia Fact and  
Figures]

