

Presentation to Shenhua Watermark PAC 26/27 June 2014 Gunnedah

Madam Chair and fellow Commissioners

My name is John Lyle and I am a farmer on the Liverpool Plains, but more specifically for this project a farmer on the Breeza Plain. Our properties are directly east of the Watermark Catchment and the waters from this catchment provide stock and domestic supply and recharge our cropping land. The few who have stated their support for the mine live many kilometres away and not affected. The mental anguish and financial cost has been relentless. Our farm is on the edge of the exploration area.

For this presentation I am wearing several hats. I am an effected landholder, Chair of the Namoi Catchment Water Study Stakeholder Committee, a community member of the Shenhua Community Consultative Committee and a previous Mayor of Gunnedah 1987-95. I am passionate about farming, the farming community and the future of the Liverpool Plains.

My personal concerns are many. As chair of the Namoi Catchment Water Study Stakeholder Committee the risks that will be encountered are enormous. (Hanson Bailey Background Paper October 2011) Despite Shenhua's continual upgrades of 'fix', magic wands do not exist.

The project is in the centre of the Liverpool Plains. The effects on the groundwater, surface water, increased salt and pollution to cropping, stock and people's health are immense. The risks will be demonstrated in the scientific evidence. Politicians (from both sides of politics) have continually stated that science will be the decision maker for this project. Will they stand by their commitment? I hope this is not just a throwaway line.

Additional to this our livelihoods are at stake.

1. Properties will be devalued and with that comes reduction in borrowing power.
2. This is Shenhua's first mine in Australia. To me Shenhua do not understand Australian rules and regulations stating very early in the peace that they believed they would be mining with the exploration licence. (Planning and Environment) Will they abide by Australian rules, I doubt it?
3. The state government have very few inspectors on the ground to police mining activities (statement- Department of Mineral Resources) and are usually very reluctant to make difficult decisions.
4. The Shenhua Watermark open cut mine, if approved, will be allowed to change the total environment. They will be redirecting water, clearing large tracts of land, removing Aboriginal sacred sites and artefacts, relocating the koala, change the climate system and generally contaminating the area.
5. There is also a misconception in the community that mining companies are contributing monies voluntarily. Few realise this is a condition of their exploration licence.
6. Minister Andrew Robb's comment (ABC Radio AM June 21)re 'employment mobility' puts a new meaning to fly in/fly out.(FIFO)

Farmers are very resilient people. They endure fire, flood and tempest. As heartbreaking as these are the ability to stand up, shake ourselves down and push on is continually admired. We are not only resilient we are progressive and the farmers of the Liverpool Plains are at the forefront, especially when it comes to innovation and operational practises. They have also been to the forefront in addressing environmental issues.

During my time as Mayor issues arose re application and disposal of agricultural chemicals. The Helix contamination, when the Department gave advice to be able to feed cotton seed and trash during the 90's drought was perhaps the crux of contamination awareness. This cost the State Government \$6ml in compensation. The community of the area realised, too, that practises needed to be addressed and the Gunnedah Chemical Liaison Committee was formed. This voluntary committee developed guidelines for both the application of aerial and groundrig operators. These guidelines are now Australia wide and legislated. This committee also pursued tirelessly the need for chemical drum disposal and recycling. They were rewarded in the national launch of Drummuster in Gunnedah.

The Liverpool Plains farmers are second to none in Australia and have shown this in the acceptance of regulations within their farming practices. Are they now expected to accept aquifer damage, land clearing, salt, pollution and water diversion?

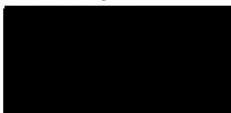
To put this farming area and its people at risk is sheer madness.

If the mine goes ahead others will follow. Thus ends the Liverpool Plains as a food bowl.

Madam Chair.

Can I say, I cannot believe that you have been directed by the Planning Department to approve this mine with conditions. (Press release: Department of Planning May 15, 2014). This is right out of line, professionally reckless, biased and pre-empting this hearing.

John Lyle



Media release



Planning &
Environment

Thursday, 15 May 2014

Public hearings planned for PAC reviews of mining projects

Community members will have an opportunity to address the independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) about two coal mining projects being assessed by the NSW Government.

The Department of Planning & Environment has forwarded its preliminary assessments of the Bulga Optimisation Project and Watermark Coal Project to the PAC for review.

- The department's preliminary assessments found both projects should be approved, with strict conditions put in place to minimise potential impacts on biodiversity, water resources and local communities.

Under the Minister's terms of reference for the PAC reviews, the Commission will hold public hearings – ensuring that the community has another opportunity to raise any concerns they may have, following public exhibitions of the projects in early 2013.

Members of the public can register with the PAC to make a presentation during the public hearings and any issues raised will be considered by the Commission as part of its review of the merits of each project.

Following the two reviews the Commission will report back to the Department on its findings and recommendations, with this information helping the Department finalise its assessments. After receiving the Department's final assessments, the Planning Assessment Commission will determine each proposal.

The department's preliminary assessments and further information on the projects is available at: www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au.

Further information about the PAC review will be made available at: www.pac.nsw.gov.au.

Bulga Optimisation Project background:

Bulga Coal Management Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Glencore Coal Limited, proposes to expand and continue the Bulga open cut mining operations to access 205 million tonnes of coal from seams within and beneath the existing open cut mine until 2035.

The mine is the southernmost mining operation in the Upper Hunter coal fields and has been operating since 1982.

Economic benefits expected from the project include \$565 million in royalties for the NSW Government, continued employment for the 700 people that currently work at the open cut mine and an additional 300 jobs during the construction phase.

Watermark Coal Project background:

Shenhua Watermark Coal Pty Limited is proposing to develop the Watermark Coal Project, a new open cut coal mine located 3km west of the village of Breeza and 25 kilometres south-east of Gunnedah on the Liverpool Plains.

Under the proposal, coal would be extracted at up to 10 million tonnes of coal a year over 30 years, recovering a coal reserve of about 268 million tonnes.

The project has a capital investment value of \$850 million, and would generate about 600 jobs during the 18 month construction period and 600 jobs during operations.

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