

Marilyn Carter

Shenhua Watermark PAC Presentation

Madam Chair, Commissioners Payne and Gilligan.

The future of the Liverpool Plains, one the most productive and reliable food producing area's in this country is in your hands. To quote our Federal Minister for Agriculture Barnaby Joyce in relation to Agricultural production in this area it is "the ultimate". It has taken millions of years to produce these wonderful productive soils and to quote Minister Joyce once again "there is no more being made, it is irreplaceable."

It is unthinkable to risk destroying the agricultural productive capacity of this land.

My name is Marilyn Carter and together with my husband & son operate a broad acre dry land mixed farming business on the Liverpool Plains. We consider our operation to be successful and very productive, in which we produce a large variety of crops in an environmentally sustainable manner. Over the years we have been awarded the Premier Shield for the best Sorghum crop, the Rosebowl for the best Sunflower crop, the Northern Region Winner for the Field Wheat Competition, runner up in the NSW State Wheat Competition, 1st in the Upper Namoi Dry land Cotton Competition, a finalist in the Australian Cotton Grower of the year and GRDC Australian Summer Grains Farmer of the Year. We are not unique, many Liverpool Plains farmers in this room have achieved these same accolades....highlighting the incredible productivity & reliability of the Liverpool Plains...our food bowl.

In 1999 we were awarded the Brownhill Cup for Conservation Farming - our farming practices were judged to be highly productive & sustainable then, and we can still produce the crops needed to feed this nation well into the future – for much longer than the 30 years life of the Shenhua Watermark mine! Indeed, my husband's family have been farming here for 115 years since 1899. Producing crops to feed our nation, on the irreplaceable & unique Liverpool Plains.

My family have been farming on these plains for 78 years since 1936. My nephew, who now farms this land, last year won the Premier Shield for the best Sorghum crop on the Liverpool Plains, on country that has been continuously cropped for these 78 years – indeed a very sustainable & productive operation!

The Liverpool Plains produces close to 50% of the states sorghum. On our farm the average yield for that last 10 years has been 5.6t/ha – 251% of the national average of 2.2t/ha.

Our average yield over the last 10 years for wheat has been 3.88t/ha – 230% of the national average of 1.67t/ha!

This last summer was one of the toughest growing seasons we have ever experienced. We had temperatures for a sustained period of time well above our usual summer average & rainfall of only 56.5mm during the crop growing period. But still we managed to produce crops. Our average sorghum yield was 3.3t/ha & average cotton yield of 3.7bales. This is simply amazing given the incredibly difficult growing conditions.... this area is the "ultimate", our soils are "irreplaceable".....the Liverpool Plains are not worth risking for a foreign owned mine that will last for only 30 years !

Madam Chair & fellow Commissioners, once again I beseech you to consider very carefully all that is at stake here. The terms of reference for this Commission include paying particular attention to the impacts of the project on strategic agricultural land, including the impacts on existing agricultural land use. This mine and those that will undoubtedly follow if it is approved will irrevocably destroy the capacity of the Liverpool Plains to produce the food we need.

The future of this food bowl is in your hands.