

Good morning to the Panel, Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is Sue Willis and I live on a farm with my husband, to the south of the Shenhua Watermark Project and on the southern boundary of the BHP Exploration licence. I am wife, mother, health worker, community member, member of SOS Liverpool Plains, and very concerned citizen.

This is my first attempt at public speaking, and I would say I am a very reluctant speaker. But after 8yrs of trying to understand the process of how the exploration and mining licences are granted, after 8yrs of thinking that sanity will prevail, I felt it was time to step out of my comfort zone and not miss this opportunity to voice my objection to this project.

The one point I want to push most today, as so many others have, is water! I can't stress enough the importance of this precious commodity to all Australians. It is the vein for our human existence; it determines the quality and quantity of the food we produce; it determines whether we live or die.

Part of our farm is within the exploration area of the BHP project. BHP has started to be more up front with the data they are now providing us, and they have told us that the impact on our shallow stock water bores will be a draw down effect of anything from 3.7 to 13meters, with data still to come on our most affected bore which lies on top of a long wall panel. We are expecting that the data to come from this bore will show that we are going to lose our water totally. I would presume that the Shenhua effect on shallow stock water bores will be the same. I therefore find Jim's comment yesterday, that 'the science was in and there wouldn't be any impact', very hard to believe, especially when our data comes from the BHP modelling. How can you lose water totally from one of your bores and be told there isn't an impact.

The worst case scenario is that a mine on the Liverpool Plains will rupture an aquifer, and water will flood into that mine. This will have a huge draw down on the rest of the Liverpool Plains and lead to contamination of the flow of water downstream into the Murray Darling System. There are no winners in this situation. We could be left with a huge white elephant not producing coal and agriculture losing its water.

I believe that sometimes the risk far outweighs the benefits and one must take that on the cheek and walk away. The risk that the Plains will lose its water is a REAL possibility. We must walk away from this project knowing that for economic reasons it is better to look after the long term sustainable industry we already have, rather than RISK not having either industry.

The government has stated the primary consideration for the granting of this project must be economic grounds. There are so many considerations, each as important as the next and all of primary importance and all should be considered - economic, social, environmental, financial and health considerations. How can you give a balanced opinion when you ignore 80% of the considerations?

One thing that has stood out over these 2 days is the mistrust this community has in the political process. Is it any wonder when here we are, still in the exploration phase of the Shenhua Project, stating our objection to a mine not yet approved by the PAC, but with the proponent acting like the licence has already been granted. I am sure I saw tree lines already ripped along the Shenhua fence line when driving to Gunnedah yesterday and today. To me that is very presumptuous.

Yesterday we heard how Gunnedah suffered when a major mine closed its doors years ago. Gunnedah should be prepared to suffer again when the Shenhua effect finishes. And who will people turn to then, just as they did before? The good old long term sustainable agricultural industry.

At the end of the day or week, most of the miners and managers go home to 'elsewhere'. They separate themselves from their work and/or business and head home. At the end of OUR day and week, we ARE home. Our home is our business. Our business is our home! If we lose one, we lose the other, a double whammy effect.

For the future generations of all Australians, please take farming forward on the Liverpool Plains to produce food for our nation and for export. The risk of losing or contaminating our water is too high to let this project go ahead.