



## **Namoi Valley Bricks Pty Ltd**

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June 19 2014

Planning and Assessment Commission  
Level 13/301 George St  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

To the attention of the Chair, Gabrielle Kibble AO

SUBJECT:

Shenhua Watermark Coal Project, Public Submission

I am writing to you as a member of the community that is in favour of this project.

I am the Managing Director of Namoi Valley Bricks, based in Gunnedah. This is a family owned business, employing 23 staff, ranging from labourers, tradespersons, and plant operators as well as professional sales and administration staff. The business has been operating since 1959. I am also an active member of the local community being heavily involved in the local Chamber of Commerce and at the moment the Chair of a local School Board.

Being involved with the local community as well as being in business, I have experienced the highs and lows of our community, I can clearly remember the days in the late 1990's with the town having a high unemployment level and many shops empty in the main street after the closure of three local mines and the local abattoir, now the CBD is revitalised with many of the shops being tenanted with new businesses, one additional supermarket and a third one coming on line shortly and additional restaurants. Along with these businesses there has been an increase of business activity around the developing Mining Sector such as recruitment, engineering, hospitality and service related businesses.

Along with the business activity mentioned above Gunnedah has seen unprecedented levels of property development, not seen since the last mining boom in the 1980's. The Gunnedah District was struggling to see one to five homes built a year and now we are seeing a new home being finished weekly. Along with the housing development we are experiencing development in the hospitality sector with new motels and units coming on line to meet the increased demands of the mobile workforce utilised by the developing Mining Sector.

This business activity is a direct reflection on the increase of mining activities within our community and without the investment in this sector there is no doubt that Gunnedah would be still struggling with a declining economic base along with a declining population.

The opportunities being created has now given us hope to start to retain some of the youth within our community or to encourage the youth to return to our town to take up the increased opportunities that are starting to develop. These opportunities are being created not only in the Mining Sector but across the full business community as employment opportunities open up through employment shift. If you researched the skills shortages throughout the Gunnedah community you would see unprecedented levels of apprenticeships/traineeships occurring and being taken up to fill the skills gap created by the increase of business activity.



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Throughout our community many projects were not funded due to the lack of economic wealth, through the implementation of the Mining Community Grants, many of these unfunded projects are seeing the light of day which in turn provides our community with essential infrastructure to enhance the quality of life for the whole community.

Whilst the Mining Sector has many positives and I could imagine that there will be submissions put forward that highlight the negatives of a developing Mining Sector, my view is that we as the community need to have faith with the regulatory bodies that administer this important industry sector to assess each project on its merits, to look at the cumulative effects of multiple operations, to make judgement of the science and the effects of change to our environment and to put controls in place to protect our community from the impacts of Mining today and well into the future. We as individuals can only focus on what we know and we must have trust in the independent experts that have been appointed by our governing bodies to do this on our behalf.

There will be some of the smaller business and industry sectors that will be affected by the increase of the Mining Sector within our community. Employment shift can be overwhelming for some businesses that are used to a fairly stable employment pool to draw from, many of these businesses aren't used to training or future proofing their operations but we can't look at this as being a negative. The proposed development by Shenhua Watermark is of State and National significance and should be looked upon in this light within its assessment, in saying this you would hope that organisations like Shenhua Watermark and other mining operations within our region would be mindful of the issues facing small business and the communities in which they reside by offering whatever meaningful support, building long term relationships with the community to maintain business diversity well into the future. Especially when developing inexperienced workforces to, not only meet the needs of their business but also develop transferrable skills that would be of value to the community for many years to come.

The other issue that the Mining Sector needs to address, in a community that is deemed to be of average income, is the cost of living regardless of whether it's the Mining Sector or any other developing industry, cost of living pressures increase with demand, infrastructure, services and housing availability is imperative to support industry diversification. Many of the businesses will struggle to recruit new staff to the region as businesses can't afford to pay a wage competitive with the Mining Sector, this can seriously affect small business growth and these businesses need to be able to take up on the benefits of a revitalised economy. These issues can be addressed through consultation, understanding and commitments to the communities that any developing industry needs to have in place to assimilate into this wonderful community of Gunnedah.

Thank you for taking the time to consideration my submission and I wish you well in your deliberations, if you would like to speak to me on any of these matters please don't hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED].



Michael Broekman  
Managing Director  
Namoi Valley Bricks