PAC Hearing – Shenhua Watermark proposal

My name is Paul Briscoe and I represent HVTC North West – We are a Group Training organisation with 10 offices across the state and I am based in our Tamworth office and service the NE / NW region of the state

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak at this hearing – As an employer of over 50 apprentices and trainees across the Gunnedah /Tamworth Narrabri area and covering a wide range of industry sectors including the mining industry, I would like to speak in favour of the proposal for the following reasons.

HVTC Northwest staff have for the past 2 years been able to provide Training & Employment opportunities to nine local school students through a School Based Traineeship programme sponsored by Shenhua Watermark Coal within the local Gunnedah community.

This project has allowed those nine young people to pursue training and employment with local employers in industry sectors such as Engineering, Automotive, Electrical and Business Studies in preparation to their careers in these industries and potentially employment within the Shenhua Watermark mine once approved.

All of these nine students have successfully completed a Certificate II level qualification and eight of them have already been offered and accepted offers of Apprenticeships/traineeships or full time employment as they complete their HSC studies.

The benefits of this project have been to allow local young people and employers to connect and show their potential in work & training. Within the local region over the past 15 years there has been a steady decline in employment opportunities for our young people due to many factors such as drought, the closure of larger industry providers (meat processing).

All of our young people deserve the opportunity to employment opportunities their local area rather than having to go those High school with the uncertainly of not knowing whether there will be local job opportunities available and leaving the region to pursue employment elsewhere.

While I am not a farmer or primary producer living and working on the Liverpool Plains, I can understand the passion with which this group may oppose the proposal at hand. I am also not a geologist, environmental engineer, surveyor or one of the many expert professionals that Shenhua Watermark Coal has engaged over the last few years in developing this project.

One thing I see in all of us of those I have just mention is a passion for their cause -I also have a passion and that is to see every young person growing up in a region l area given the best opportunity to the best employment and training options available to them.

I believe that if this proposal is given the go ahead it can only have positive outlook for the young men & women of Gunnedah and the local region in general. In the initial stages of construction there will be countless opportunities for apprenticeships / traineeships to start with many local trades and industry groups.

Once a facility is operational there will still be an ongoing need to train and equip young people in many facets of these industries both directly in the facility and throughout the associate trades connected to it.

The current project that HVTC Northwest has had with Shenhua Watermark Coal has the ability to be replicated every year to provide an ongoing sustainable option to provide sound employment opportunities for the next & subsequent generations of school students in this region.

While not every student may wish to work directly in the proposed facility, there will be many other options for to gain employment in the many related industries associated with it and also the wider business community. I know that Shenhua Watermark Coal is committed to providing these opportunities to the Gunnedah community by their commitment to the current project and their valuable social and community input so far in the region.

As I said previously, I am passionate above seeing the creating of employment opportunities for the young people of this region by way of apprenticeship options within local communities.

The ongoing and cumulative effect of this project going ahead will be long term economic growth for the trades and services and other businesses across the Gunnedah region and confidence in the school students that local job opportunities and training are available for them to pursue careers in their own local area.

Thank you -