Good Afternoon Madam Chair & Commissioners,

My name is Sue Cudmore. Our family own a mixed enterprise farming business in the area. My husband Ken (who is LPSC councillor) and I both vehemently oppose the Shenhua Watermark mining application. I have been a bookkeeper in this area for 26 years. Originally hailing a southern farming family I have been continually amazed at the production capacity of the Liverpool Plains.

The process of the granting of the Watermark Coal Project has been flawed from its inception when approved by the ex Labor minister Ian Macdonald. When $300,000,000 changes hand for an “exploration license” one would correctly assume that the die had been cast and the word “exploration” could be removed from the application. The process had proven to be biased towards the proponent from beginning to end.

The PAC Review process has been onerous to the opponents who have had to bear substantial costs in the employment of expert opinions and a large amount of time to prepare for the PAC sittings. Combine this with the insecurity caused when battling one of the world’s largest governments and the fact that this application has already been rubber stamped by the planning department gives one little confidence in gaining a fair outcome – I constantly need to remind myself of David and Goliath – I do believe the past & present governments of both NSW and the federal government have underestimated the resilience of the Liverpool Plains land owners.

I was confused but not surprised by Shenhua Watermark Pty Ltd.’s response to the PAC Review - example Recommendation1:– The Commission recommends that the NSW Government should amend the boundary of EL7223 to remove those areas that intrude into the black soil plains – to which Shenhua Watermark noted it is beyond the scope of the PAC’s statutory function and its TOR to purport to advise the NSW Government on the proper boundaries of any EL

So – were the PAC acting outside their delegated powers –this is a major concern - the outcome of this mine lies with a commission who do not understand their own TOR’s.

The language used throughout the response showed an arrogance and disregard for the PAC process. Not only is it insulting to the opponents but insulting to the commissioners responsible for the review.

Coal mines all over Australia are laying off employees or closing. This makes this Watermark Project, in Barnaby Joyce’s words an absurdity. Why would any government with an ounce of foresight risk prime agricultural land for a mine which will last only 3 decades – or one generation – when there are alternative areas where a mine would have no major impact on food/fibre security??? There IS NO RESONABLE REASON for this mine to proceed on the Watermark location when there are alternatives.

The nature of the coal economy is cyclical like most other economies. If the town of Gunnedah is to become reliant on this recourse what will be the impact when coal ceases to be in demand? As we heard yesterday from someone supporting the mine – the last coal downturn caused a lot of hard ship. One thing with a drought is we know it will come to an end. Yesterday we heard comment made from a local business person about the hardship droughts caused to Gunnedah. Gunnedah is not solely serviced by Liverpool Plains farms. Yes we have had droughts – however there is not one year on record that a crop has not been produced from this magnificent farming country.

 Agricultural exports are increasing and the prediction is positive for the future. Increasing prices and consumption will only boost the local and broader economies.

Many of us have been present at four days of PAC hearings. My observation is the support from the rural community far exceeds the support for the proponent. One must be a little in awe of the young who have stood in support of agriculture and presented intelligent and informed speeches. Alternatively Shenhua who supposedly have been so generous in their donation of grants (which we know is condition of the license) have had very few if any young coming out in support of the project.

 I urge the commissioners of this PAC to show the integrity that these young have shown – renew our faith in the political system and make the intelligent decision to stop this mega mine proceeding.

This will be a decision that the future generations of Australia will be grateful for. Please don’t turn the Liverpool Plains into a mine field – once this license is granted we know that others will follow.

Stop the rot now.

Thank you.