

**Hannah Murray**

**PAC HEARING, GUNNEDAH, 11/12/14**

**SHENUA WATERMARK PROJECT**

Good afternoon Madam Chair and commissioners. My name is Hannah Murray and I am a fifth generation farmer from the Liverpool Plains.

I spent my first three years out of school working on cattle stations in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, and I am currently enrolled at UNE studying Agribusiness. Throughout my travels across Australia, it has not gone unnoticed that the Liverpool Plains is a unique and highly productive area unlike any other. My future as a farmer is held firmly in your hands today!

As part of Shenhua’s response to the PAC Review Report (3/10/14).

I am amazed at the arrogance of some of their replies.

Under recommendation 2, paragraph 2-1-2 - Shenhua states – “By its nature, mining for coal is not a portable industry that can be moved to locations where it will have no impact on agriculture. The NSW government already has a rigorous system in place for balancing the needs of coal mining and agriculture in places such as near the black soil plains” Shenhua go on to state that the NSW government have the gateway process in place even though the proponent did not go through the gateway process.

There is nowhere in the world where mining near these type of black vitrosol soils has been attempted, let alone successfully rehabilitated. With Shenhua’s unfortunate record in other countries such as Mongolia, is it best practice for the NSW Government to allow a foreign company to experiment with our irreplaceable soil and water?

Shenhua consistently argue throughout their response that they should not have conditions imposed on them that are different to other mining projects in NSW. They also state that their Land Management Plan is sufficiently strong enough to not have to comply with many of the recommendations, but who are they to tell the Planning Assessment Commission what they are going to do?

This is a unique area with interconnected underground aquifer systems from Coolah tops National Park reaching across the plains to Keepit Dam – this project should have special conditions and they need to be adhered to!

Paragraph 3-2-1 – “Economic Benefits are overstated and the recommendations in the PAC review report in relation to requiring staged approvals prior to progressing into separate mining areas, would have a dramatic impact upon the financial justification of the Project”

If Shenhua are using their best practice – what are they afraid of? A Government owned company who do not have to rely on the raising of capital finance from outside sources should not fear the scrutiny of staged approvals.

Paragraph 3-2-2 – Aquifer Interference. Shenhua state that interference will not exceed the respective water table, water pressure and water quality requirements of Table 1 of the Aquifer Interference Policy. Shenhua’s water modelling was found to be grossly inadequate by the PAC Review – when the Caroon Coal project released in their Gateway application drawdowns on aquifers of up to 184 metres, how does Shenhua propose drawdowns of less than 2 metres?

It is Shenhua Watermark’s contention that this project should go ahead without the consideration of PAC conditions that they find to be ‘unprecedented’ and ‘unworkable’.

If these conditions are unworkable, then it is clear that Shenhua have no intention of adhering to these conditions, therefore, in the interests of the community and the State of NSW this project should be rejected!

As one of many concerned young farmers in the area, and the fortunate receiver of a great secondary and tertiary education – what lies ahead for us?

An uncertain future in local agriculture – always concerned about our water supplies, equity concerns in land valuations resulting in diminished investment, transport competition, a breakdown in community health and social issues and above all the cumulative effect of mining which the NSW State Government is simply unable to say “NO” to! This will all lead to an increase in the mass exodus of young people from this region and the creation of another Hunter Valley.

The future of sustainable agriculture and the future of all these young farmers are firmly in your hands and you can make a decision for the anticipated quick buck and the possible destruction of a landscape or another 1000 years of sustainable food production?