

Shenhua Watermark- Gomeroi Traditional Custodians

Uncle Neville Sampson – Respected Senior Elder- the baby boomer generation- the older baby boomer generation

Welcome

Statement

Thank you for the opportunity to share the concerns of many Gomeroi people the traditional owners of the lands and waters you are meeting on today and our traditional lands and waters you are determining its future today. The decisions you make will affect our families, our children, our culture, and the rural and cultural life we hold dear.

The Gomeroi Traditional Custodians represent more than 191 concerned traditional people and their families, which represents more than 1,000 Gomeroi and Aboriginal people in our community and I have the heavy and honoured responsibility of sharing their concerns with you today.

The Gomeroi Traditional Custodians are presenting to you, as five generations today because the decisions you make today, about this mine, affects us generationally-

The members of the PAC and the government need to hear from all of us to understand the impact of your decisions - when you go back to your homes after making a decision about our homelands.

The PAC identified that the impacts of the Shenhua Watermark project will need to purchase more farms and more agricultural lands because of adverse impacts of noise and dust and what this will mean for farmers and families

The discussion and determination statements made by the government and Shenhua response are just too simplistic – Shenhua Watermark have already bought approx 78 properties in our area which destroys the social fabric of our community -even more will be bought because this mine cannot work as a neighbour to us because of its impacts which the PAC identified as concerning and instead of saying no to the mine approval the PAC makes recommendations which will either force displacement to even more families and farmers or will make life unbearable because of the mine –your recommendations and the

governments recommendations will be even more devastating for our communities.

The PAC talks about environmental hazards as the reasons for this recommendation yet agree to the mine, but there is a complete absence of the devastating effects this will have to the “glue” that has made Breeza the place it is today- the people, our communities - the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who give the area its identity.

We have survived hardships and we have survived threats and the memories and the community values which make Breeza the special place it is- is now under serious threat by this mine.....to the PAC Breeza might not look much to you- to us we love this place If this we are connected to this place, our ancestors are in this place.

If the mine goes ahead it's the community cost, it's the landscape cost, its threat to our lifestyle and the community values we hold in terms of our culture and the knowledge of this area and its spiritual meanings, our rural life, our spiritual and rural values and the rural pulling together as a

community in times of crisis that will be decimated.

This mine is one of the singular biggest threats to our environmental wellbeing, our food and water security for the Liverpool plains.

We do not believe the assessment of this mines devastating impacts by the PAC and the government to be adequate and the benefits are grossly overstated- we also believe that political relationships should not cloud environmental social, cultural and economic generational decisions about the future of our traditional homelands

The human costs of rural boom and bust cycles of mining and mining towns are hard lessons to be learnt, yet these are not even considered adequately – the impacts are not adequately assessed nor are there any plans to really address this scenario.

The government think that this vast tracts of open cut mining – the scarring and gauging of the landscape -should be the future of our homelands. We assert it should not! - nor should

it be the future of our farming communities and the future of Gomeroi country

We don't believe this is right nor should we have to be subjected to this impact.

Look at the Hunter Valley and the landscape there and the environmental and health problems identified because of the intense mining activity look at the problems with the river system and the air shed quality.

The PAC itself identified that the Shenhua proposed project cannot work side by side with farming communities.

The earthworks and excavations being planned is with destroy the land forever.

Through this approval the mine will remove the heart of the community, they will obliterate our cultural values of what it means to be the Liverpool plains and the iconic landscape which make this place unique.

Something's are simply not able to be mitigated.

This year the Gomeroi people invited the EPA to a meeting with us and we asked them.

Under what circumstances does the EPA ever so no to a mine or development -they responded that since 2000 the answer is they do not say no to anything – they just put conditions on a company or development....

We asked “How can you tell us that everything is mitigatable?” – We got no answer.

To say this that the EPA do not say no to any project is madness and we fear decisions to approve a mine like Shenhua in the area it is proposed, in the lands it is proposed and with the water needs our communities rely on, is gravely misleading and grossly irresponsible of government

The elections for the State will be occurring in 2015, the irresponsibility of the decision makers will not be forgotten and will not go without challenges.

Decisions are being made by people behind desks or by ministers who have not come out on country with Elders like myself to see what it is that will be destroyed- in but one place there is an amazing legacy of our ancestors - there is a very

large amazing grinding groove site it has over 100 spear making grooves- deep and perfectly formed- this is the legacy of our great warrior community, a culturally important industrial community, a wonderful men's site, a site which has seen repeated use over many generations of Gomerioi people. The amount of time it takes to rub these marks into the stone is over many years and many users.

Yet this can be destroyed and the mitigation proposed is to cut it all up and move it on.

Our culture and heritage is not protected by the government.

It is not valued.

Our culture and heritage is seen as a nuisance to dig up and get it out of the way or to blow it up and destroy.

The grinding groove site is one of two sites and they are no average set of grinding grooves - they are incredible – there is over one hundred grooves over an enormous sandstone and they are not typically located - they are in a hidden

area -near a natural spring- with a look out area with another set of grooves.

To make the kind of decisions that you as the PAC and the government will make, without coming with us Elders to see these grinding groove sites and to make a decision without understanding what you are agreeing to destroy - is shameful -

It simply tells us that as a people that we don't count-

What we value doesn't count and

What our ancestors have left us as a legacy of our amazing culture doesn't matter to Australians, to government and to the committee members of the PAC and certainly not to the proponent

And that regardless of all the statements about reconciliation and that Aboriginal people should not just have a say about our culture and heritage but we should really be able to save what is important to us is so discounted....

We are here today to say to you

We urge you to come with us to the grinding groove sites and see for yourself how amazing

they are and what you are agreeing with the stroke of a pen to destroy before you make your final decision.

The mine knew about these grinding grooves they knew about our sacred sites and know about an area of massacre

Yet they still planned their mine design to destroy them

and to make it even worse -our government will allow a foreign owned company with links to a foreign government, to do this to our people, to our culture and to our heritage and to our children.

This mine should not be approved -it's as simple as that – and the PAC and the government are so wrong in what you are doing or are about to do....

We can only say please – Please do not agree to destroy our community and our culture and heritage places so important to us.

And come out with us and see for yourself before making such a terrible decision to approve this mine

Aboriginal people are the oldest living culture on the Planet – our culture and heritage needs protection and our places saved- the government is responsible for the decisions they make to destroy this and the environmental and spiritual impacts they have on our families.

Close the gap is lovely words hollow actions, tangible action is to say no to the mine and save whats important to the Aboriginal and Australian communities government is here to serve.

Deslee-Matthews x generation

I am a proud Gomerai/Wonnarua woman and I represent the next generation X generation and support and totally agree with my Elders and Uncle Neville that the PAC should say no the approval of this mine

You are making this decision for the rest of our lives and the rest of the lives of our children

Xxxxxxxxxx

We simply do not understand how the government and the pac can agree to the approval of this mine in our essential foodbowl. I live in Breeza this is my home and you want to destroy it and change it forever

We simply do not understand in a global environment where all the experts are saying keep fossil fuels in the ground

Where they say

coal needs to be replaced by renewable energies

For government and coal mining companies to dictate that the economic answer for our state and our community must be open cut coal mining is wrong- we are not given any choices in these decisions the PAC removes our right to even challenge the decision under merits appeal where the statements of the EIS can be challenged in court and have the right to legal determination

we are not able to sit with government and create alternatives to such devastation and the rate of approvals is ruthless and decisions made regardless of the cost to our community, our food security and our water and our culture.

For us we fear the NSW Government which is supposed to protect our culture and heritage is supposed to be leaders in the environmental and economic future of rural communities and are supposed to care about the people of NSW including Aboriginal people will sell us out for money and a foreign company for approval which pays the government royalties but leaves such devastations

Kamilari incredible

Annie Squires Y Generation

I represent the Y generation and this mine if approved will destroy our country and our waters for 30 years- If this decision is made to go ahead with the mine I have to say on behalf of the youth of our community what the hell are you thinking? I don't mean to be rude but seriouslyis this it is this what you think should be our future in this region?

The economic benefits you are all talking about is not what we as the next generation need

we need to take hold of and create jobs out of innovation and greener energy initiatives and enterprise

we need to look at keeping our communities together not buying our farmlands out to either destroy it or leave it empty because the new neighbour will make you sick and the air you breath and the noise will be so unbearable your family home has to be sold.....this is just crazy thinking

we need to look at how we keep our land and water in a sustainable state for us ... We need you who sit in the seat today make these decisions because when you are older we will be making decisions for you and the next generation

this generation seems to just take and take and haven't thought about what you will leave us as the next generation

when you leave a big hole when you leave a questionable rehabilitation when you have wrecked the rivers and aquifers and water basin that so many communities rely on.

Why do you thin that we should be left with trying to fix up the mess and making something out of lands that have been so raped and pillaged.

and all this damage- is not for our families

not for our communities and
not Australia but for another country.

You keep approving these mines and approving them so quickly before finding out what is the threshold that our community and our environment can take – you don't understand the lands and the waters our ecosystems and how each part relies on the other

the science is overstated and the solutions just don't cut it and shortsighted and sometimes and often so very very wrong....

we are consulted if we say save our areas very important to us and needs to be protected -the company just plans to destroy it anyway and pen pushers and decision makers who tick the boxes of an approval and make up conditions for an approval can complete the paper work and get on with their own lives and just leaves us with the decision and the destruction...

Yes we want jobs

but we want the right choices for jobs and the right choices for our future

and this mine and coal mining simply isnt the right kind of jobs and it isnt the right kind of future

If we leave our community and go to study

we want to be able to come home to the places and the communities that are important to us

we want to take our kids to the areas we grew up in

we want to be able to stay in our communities

and work but work in industries and enterprises which are good for our communities and we need to have these investments in greener energies and farming practices work which is in harmony with our lands and waters

Yes as the Y generation we ask why and we also say
give us a fair go and make sure our generation are not being sold out
with poor decisions

Jarod Talbott Generation Z

I am representing the Z generation and I don't understand way the
government is not looking to the future for us kids—your approval
will leave us with a mess and a great big hole-

we cant eat coal

we cant swim and fish in coal

we cant use coal for water

what is the plans for the land in the future

tell me where there is an area where there is economic benefits and
use of land after mining which is providing something for future
generations to farm and to work.

What I see is the death of my culture and heritage why wont you
listen to the people and protect what is important to us

I want to be able to go out to the grinding grooves on shenhua and
protect them and pay respect to my ancestors and when I have kids I
ant to be able to do this then =what you will approve will destroy
what I want to be able to save

I have no voice because you say I'm too young yet you make
decisions which effect me and my generation so much...I ask the Pac
please don't approve this mine - I might not count in your decision

making but you owe it to the next generation to protect our future
and leave us with a good place to live work and play

Deslee Introduce the alpha generation = Kids 1 boy and 1 girl and a couple of littlies (who say nothing but stand up

My name isI want you to save my culture and heritage

don't destroy it