

PAC Meeting 7th April 2017 Lithgow District Chamber of Commerce Submission

Madam Chair, Members of the Panel, Invited Guests and members of the public, my name is Mark Hoy, I am Vice-President of the Lithgow District Chamber of Commerce and I'm here today representing all businesses in Lithgow & the surrounding area.

The Chamber of Commerce is not only retail businesses, we represent a broad spectrum of many different businesses including goods & services, Tourism, hospitality, government departments and small business, today we offer our support to help secure the future of Lithgow and the employment of the personnel at Springvale Colliery.

There are over 700 businesses registered in the Lithgow area, both large and small, our objective today is to support the proposal by Centennial Coal to modify it's existing production of coal, to increase the workforce to it's maximum capacity of 450 and secure the future of the men & women who are employed at Springvale Colliery. All the processes are in place, nothing different is taking place, Centennial already has a well-established Environmental Management System that places the mine within the strict guidelines imposed on them.

Centennial are part of our community and generously support many charities and organisations.

The men & women who work at Springvale and their families are an integral part of what makes Lithgow a great place to live.

Lithgow has suffered financially over the last 4 years, as we are all aware. In fact the economic down turn has been happening a lot longer than that. Businesses are still struggling with the uncertainty of further job losses, families are saving rather than spending. This in turn is passed on to the business sector because people are not going out and spending their money?

The impact on our economy by having a further 140 employees and their families will perhaps be the catalyst to encourage other businesses to locate in Lithgow. The flow on effect will be felt immediately as there are a lot of suppliers who have felt the impact of Angus Place Colliery and Wallerawang Power Station closing.

People are cautious which leads to uncertainty. This is then reflected in how prospective industries see Lithgow, should we invest and relocate here? Will Lithgow survive?

Opportunity, optimism and positive attitudes build success and will provide businesses the opportunity to grow. Lithgow needs to change its current economic development plan so we can create new industries just as we are seeing Bathurst & Orange grow.

Coalmining has been around this area since the turn of the century and it will continue to provide employment opportunities until such time as we develop alternative renewable electricity sources, but that time is not now.

We hear the calls to stop mining coal, but what I don't hear is anyone providing any solutions, what are the alternatives? What happens to the 450 personnel and their families if the Springvale Extension is not approved?

The Chamber is aware of Lithgow's potential to attract new industries, to bring new career paths for our children, to provide new opportunities over time for those who are currently working in the mining industry. Long-wall mining requires a team of people with specialised skills that can only be learnt on the job. To retrain the personnel to have the required skills so that they are employable in other industries is not a short-term project, it takes time, that has to be developed locally and on a State & Federal level, if that is the alternative.

The Chamber is working with Council to attract new industries and to encourage families to come to the area. We already have the infrastructure in place to successfully transition from coal mining over the next 15-20 years, but even then we will more than likely rely on coal fired power stations and the need to continue coal mining.

The decision to grant Centennial Coal the proposed extension at its Springvale Colliery is one that will see Lithgow's economy survive, prosper and encourage other industries to locate here in the Lithgow region, thank you.