

Nº 29  
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Good Afternoon Commissioners

I am here <sup>today</sup> ~~this morning~~ to speak on behalf of Westfund Health Insurance in my role as Chief Executive Officer.

Westfund Health Insurance has 108 of its 170 staff based in Lithgow, with many of our staff having immediate family members or friends who are employees of what us locals refer to as "Springvale" and "Mount Piper".

Westfund's origins are linked to the mining community of Lithgow. This is something we are proud of and we remain committed to Lithgow and its community. This is demonstrated by the redevelopment of the former RSL site to what is now our head office.

As a kid growing up in Lithgow it was very unusual if you didn't have at least one parent working in either one of the local mines or power stations. My dad was the main "bread winner" in our family and was an Electrician at Mount Piper. Dad was able to earn a decent income which enabled him to raise our family on a small farm at Marrangaroo along with supporting me, my brother and sister through our various sporting and academic pursuits.

As a child I looked forward to the "Powerhouse Christmas Party" for the rides, lollies, presents and "Dixie cup" ice creams.

I can also recall as a child riding motorbikes with my friend Sam Whalan during the construction of the overland conveyor which passed through his family farm back in the early 1990's.

Both Springvale and Mount Piper employees contribute greatly to the Lithgow community in a variety of ways and help make the town what it is today and I personally benefited as I was growing up from the involvement of a number of these employees in our community.

Graham "Muddy" Muir, John Mitchell, Wayne Gaynor and David Marshall have coached me at Hockey.

Wayne Vought and Brian Judge have umpired me at hockey.

Troy Luka has managed my hockey team as well coached me at cricket.

Mitch Luka led fitness sessions around Glanmire oval, and Brett Young ran "Boot Camps" here at Tony Luchetti sportsground and

Will Thomas played the guitar at the local Anglican church that I grew up attending

I can honestly say from my own personal experience that without Mount Piper and Springvale I would not be standing here today as Westfund CEO.

Not only did Mount Piper enable my family to live and grow up in Lithgow, it gave me a

place to go for work experience in high school, I have fond memories of tagging along as a “technician” with Lauren Bucholtz. I returned to Mount Piper for further work experience after receiving a “Delta Electricity” scholarship whilst I studied an Accounting degree at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst.

Following this work experience and study at university I had the pleasure of working for Centennial Coal for 5 years, including 3.5 years at Springvale as a Mine Accountant. In this role I was privy to the significant amount of money Centennial spends each year investing in its environmental programs, as well as witness how keen it is to minimise any adverse effects on the environment as a result of the mines operation. Springvale plays an integral role in the Lithgow community through its sponsorship activities. Along with its support of various local sporting events each year, Springvale assists its own staff to continue their education. They sponsored me to complete my MBA, a qualification which played a key part in furthering my career.

Springvale provided local kids Jill Auld and Zac Burley the opportunity to work as a geologist and a surveyor respectively, as well as myself and Ron Charlton as mine accountants, to name just a few. We would be here a long time if I started reading out the names of local apprentices, tradesmen and mineworkers who have been fortunate enough to work at Springvale.

Lithgow is a small regional town and Westfund, as one of a handful of its major employers, finds attracting and retaining staff to work in Lithgow can be challenging, and fortunately for Westfund we’ve been able to capture a large proportion of “home grown” employees.

Many of these are as a direct result of having the Mount Piper Power Station and Springvale

Mine in our backyard. I am one of these employees and my hope is that the PAC looks favourably upon Springvale and Mount Piper so it can continue for many years to come.

The employees of Springvale and Mount Piper are significant contributors to Westfund. If Springvale or Mount Piper employees are adversely affected, so too will be Westfund and every single business in Lithgow and surrounds. Once again, the social considerations for our town are not to be taken lightly. Taking away the livelihood from a large number of 2 of Lithgow's largest employers would have a huge domino effect and impact on the local business community, of which Westfund is a part.

Approval of the Water Transfer and Treatment project, along with the associated modifications to the Springvale and Western Coal Services consents, will give many other families the opportunity to live locally and contribute to the community, just as my family and many of the families of Westfund staff have done over a long period of time.

Thank you for your time.

Matt Banning

CEO