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Members of the PAC committee, Ladies and Gentlemen my name is Joe Smith thankyou for the opportunity to speak.

I decided to speak today because I feel the need to convey the despair and worry that this process has put on our community in the past. I understand that this process is the protocol that has to be followed to the letter of the law and I respect that.

I am a coalminer currently employed at Angus Place Colliery as a fixed term employee. Before I started my career in the coal industry I was employed at the Wallerawang Power Station hence I am supporting both Centennial Coal and Energy Australia in this matter.

In 2014 on the 14th of October, Angus Place Colliery was placed on care and maintenance. This decision was a gut wrenching decision that impacted greatly on the Angus Place workforce and the Lithgow community. A decision like this should not be made again in the future.

While the Lithgow community were coming to grips with the decision to close Angus Place the next bombshell was dropped, the closure of Wallerawang Power station, 1 month after the decision to put Angus Place on Care and Maintenance. The community was reeling in uncertainty for their future and the future of the next generations of our families.

With the community in a tailspin from the previous two decisions the next bombshell was the standown of the Springvale Colliery workforce while a decision was handed down from a PAC meeting. The decision was favourable to which I thank God, but did not help an already nervous workforce that was reeling from three decisions that created a huge amount of uncertainty in the workforce. No doubt you will hear this story many times today I am delivering my side of the story.

I have been elected by the ratepayers of the Lithgow district as a Councillor, a privilege to which I am very honoured and proud of and feel the obligation to represent the entire Lithgow district. We have survived adversity in the past and no doubt will survive more in the future but the past three years in this district have taken its toll on the community. The rate of mental health issues is on the increase which is partially attributed to the unemployment rate and job stability. The district has held a mental health summit which was hugely supported in the community.

The 425 submissions against the Water Treatment Plant is hard to comprehend as it can only benefit the community. The benefits will be seen in the improved water quality for Mount Piper Power Station which will increase the efficiency there will also be a reduction on the need to draw from the Fish River Water supply which will reduce the strain on that system in drought periods.

There will also be jobs created in the construction of such infrastructure which will benefit the community. The construction of the Water Treatment Plant will lead to more jobs because of the security of the mining industry in the community.

Our district is in desperate need of the employment this project will bring to the district as we currently have the highest unemployment rates in the Central Western area of NSW. The percentage of adult unemployment is at 8.9% with Youth unemployment at a staggering 13.9%, both figures directly related to the closure of Angus Place and Wallerawang Power Station. As previously stated projects like these will create stable employment in the district such as apprenticeships which before the abovementioned closures were on offer. These jobs will lead to growth in the area which will instil faith in investors for the area.

I realise that the PAC Committee can see the positive financial benefits that this project can bring to the district and state, but the community need to see common sense prevail. Our small community cannot survive being dragged through more PAC meetings as the worry created is having a devastating effect on the community.

In closing as an elected Leader for the Lithgow District, a Grandfather, and a worried Father of two Springvale Employees I put my hopes in the Committee that they make the correct decision for the good of the Lithgow Community. I also hope the correct decision is made to calm the instability that has been created in the district with the granting of permission to proceed with this project. I will ensure that as a group the Lithgow City Council will work hand in hand with these mining companies to create a strong economic community that once was.

Thankyou for listening to My Story.