

Commissioners of the PAC, ladies and gentleman good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak here this evening.

My name is Darrin Francis and I am the current [REDACTED] at Springvale Coal, I am here today on behalf of the 300 + Springvale employees and to throw our full support behind our fellow colleagues at the Airly mine, and our hope for a timely and positive outcome for this application.

I am sure most of you here today know of the plight currently at Springvale with our approvals, in fact this is the third time in a few short weeks I have stood in front of a PAC committee to plea for peoples jobs. Our approval process has been going for years and we have had to sit through two PAC meetings. We at Springvale are currently stood down with only 100 of our 300 + employees able to work on a rotating roster which is now into its 5<sup>th</sup> week and come next Wednesday we will be going into full stand down with only a hand full of people working until the approval comes through. We do not want the workers at Airly to have to go through what we at Springvale have had to endure. The worry, the anxiety of not knowing what the future holds is very taxing and puts a huge amount of pressure on everyone both at work and worse with families at home.

What my fellow lodge officers and I have seen through this process is very stressful for all involved. To sit in front of a group of work mates and tell them that we are being stood down indefinitely and the holidays they have booked for their families at Christmas will have to be cancelled because they have to take their leave now and sit at home and hope for a call back to work, or have people come up to you and want to know how they will pay their mortgage or feed their family because they have no annual leave or long service leave is heart breaking and totally unnecessary. This approval process while necessary needs to be simplified especially for applications for existing mines that have already been operating over a number of years and within current regulations. As I said earlier we do not want our colleagues at Airly to go through this unnecessary stress.

On top of this you have to sit through the environmental group attacks here today and on social media, you will be made to feel inferior and sometimes even embarrassed to admit that you are a coal miner, but don't let this process or them get to you, hold your heads high stay united and be proud to be a coal miner and don't forget your brothers at Springvale are right behind you.

Its quiet amusing to sit here a third time and listen to the same people representing the same groups speak against the Airly Mine. They stood here and said that the Springvale application should not be approved because there is a viable option in supplying Mount Pipers coal through the Airly mine and now they stand up here only three weeks later and speak against that very mine. They stood here and said they were against Springvale application because of the longwall method of mining and the amount of water we pump, but here we have a very dry board and pillar mine, but they are still against it.

You will hear in their objections the word OPINION used a lot. In my opinion this is mine subsidence and in my opinion this tree fell over because of mining. Well opinions are not always correct because in my personal opinion I don't drink to much and I look like Brad Pitt, so as you can see by my opinion of myself opinions do not always represent facts. This is the case with most of their opinions. They are not backed up by any science or fact, but I am sure the commissioners will see through all this rubbish. These people have an agenda and that is to close down mines and no amount of facts will change their opinion. No matter how many people or buisnesses it affects.

On closing I would like to beg the commissioners to make a timely decision, I know you have a big job ahead, but please remember these decisions affect a lot of lives.

I am very honoured to have had the opportunity to speak on behalf of my lodge members at Springvale and put our full support behind the Airly Mine Application.

Thank you.