[redacted]

Ms Robyn Kruk

Chair Airly Mine Extension Project

Planning Assessment Commission,

17/9/15

Dear Ms Kruk,

Re: Supporting Airly Mine Extension Project SSD5581

I am writing to add my support to the approval of the Airly Mine Extension Project. I have been the [redacted] of the [redacted] for the Project since the initial contacts with the [redacted] in 2011. Whilst I am intimately familiar with the technical aspects of what is being proposed at Airly, I do not intend to try and extol the virtues of the project in that capacity. My purpose in writing today is to provide some insight into my personal attitudes and values that have driven how the project is designed.

I have grown up in the Blue Mountains and have had an interest in the rich mining and industrial history of this area since childhood. I have also been an avid bushwalker and have a great affinity for the majestic beauty of the Blue Mountains region. I have seen how, over more than 100 years, industry has coexisted with this wonderful environment. In times past there have been some less than ideal practices in mining that have left some unsightly scars on the landscape. Despite this, the majority of the story of mining in the Blue Mountains has been one of hard won success and strong communities in a truly beautiful part of the world. The view point that this place and the people in it have formed in me is that there is a workable balance between the natural industriousness and communal nature of humans and the need to be able to experience the peace of the natural world.

It is with that belief that I have approached my career as a [redacted] I had the opportunity to put those philosophies into practice at the Clarence Colliery when I joined Centennial Coal in 1998. I was given the unique opportunity as a young Engineer to redesign the mining systems there from the ground up. I was able to be instrumental in the design, implementation and monitoring of the highly successful partial extraction systems in use at Clarence since 1999. These methods have demonstrated that there is such a thing as high productivity coupled with minimal subsidence and negligible environmental impacts. I have had the satisfaction of seeing the same mining methods I designed still in use at Clarence today, even though I have not [redacted] for [redacted] years. Clarence is still one of the most productive and profitable underground coal mines in Australia on a per tonne basis.

These partial extraction techniques were used in very sensitive environments around Bungleboori Creek gorge. Many of the features in that area are similar to those found at Airly. There are large cliffs, pagodas, deeply incised gorges and permanent creeks. All these features had partial extraction conducted under them without one incident of surface damage occurring. I always found it humorous to take some of the most hardened environmental campaigners out on the surface and discuss the impacts of Clarence pointing toward the pit top and then see their faces drop as I informed them that the pristine land on which they stood had already been mined.

It was with this demonstration of how it could be done, that I came to Airly. Upon seeing the landscape to be mined under, I immediately believed that if the same subsidence criteria were used here as at Clarence, the same successful outcome could be had. The mining methods would be different as they had to suit a different geotechnical environment, but the outcome could be the same.

Upon getting to know the Airly and Genowlan mountain complex, my love for these mountains also made me determined to design systems that would ensure they were as intact as I could make them so that they could be enjoyed by others for generations to come. My desire is that the legacy of Airly should be the community it supports and then all that remains to see is a plan in an office somewhere.

A great deal of effort has been put into trying to explain what is being planned at Airly to the community. While some have come to accept the mine and what we are doing here, some naturally are not approving of the mine. What is disappointing is a small minority that have sought to use the genuine effort to engage and be transparent from myself and the other management team members as a means to gain information that is then deliberately misrepresented in public domains. The arguments of these individuals have been demonstrated time and again to be false or baseless.

It is my earnest hope that the Planning Assessment Commissioners are able to see through this fog of false doubt. I urge them to see the real and sustained effort made by Airly Management and Centennial more broadly to create a mine operation that could truly be an industry wide model for how underground coal mining can be done in the 21st century.

Yours Sincerely

David King

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