

Alec Macintosh Regional Manager , Northern NSW, Cotton Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at today's hearing.

As the regional manager for Cotton Australia's grower members in the North West of NSW, I am here today to acknowledge the concerns of members in the lower Namoi Valley. Also, as a resident of the area for 15 years my concerns also reflect a person with an employment history in the district, all agriculture based and including acting as an agent for the trading and selling of water licences.

Cotton Australia considers that the protection and sustainability of land and water resources and enhancement and maintenance of landholder land access rights is of utmost importance.

While we recognise that the mining industry offers potential economic benefits to Australia, without proper regulation and enforcement the mining industry also poses significant risks to the Australian cotton industry. Specific to mining our long-held policy principles include:

- Protecting the productive capacity of agricultural land from mining extraction activities.
- Opposing any mining development unless and until it can be definitively proven, that the development will have no impact on the productive capacity of the land.

Apart from water take and risks to water quality over time, concerns held by members include the lack of detail about the rail spur and its construction. Statements simply indicate that it will be built to engineering standards and in a manner to enable flood water passage underneath such as: "appropriately sized culverts".

If approved this would be the third structure on the floodplain which from my understanding of the indicative maps, have the rail spur located in the Flood Storage and Secondary Flood Discharge – Upper Liverpool Plains zone of the Upper Namoi Valley Floodplain. The other two are the transport corridors of the Maules Creek road and rail bridges further downstream.

It is the accumulated (knock on) impacts that this new structure itself, let alone in combination with the other two, will have on flood waters across the landscape and hence the downstream communities I represent, that I wanted to flag today.

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Any changes to the flow of the river are particularly highlighted in flood times and farmers and communities have adapted to past floods, e.g. construction of flood banks to protect assets or movement of assets to less flood prone areas. If the flow of the river changes in a flood the flood damage could be catastrophic to structures and crops, from which many farmers and business would be unable to recover from or at least be unable to continue to be as productive as they were prior to the flooding.

To top off these natural disasters, the mining industries has reduced the amount of water available to Agriculture in recent years as the mines have to purchase existing licences (both groundwater and river) and are prepared to pay well above the current market price to obtain this water. This has reduced the irrigated crops grown with flow on effects to local business that support agriculture.

Thank you....