

Hello

I'm Ron Campbell. I'm a local business owner and I'm a Narrabri Shire Councillor. I've lived in Narrabri Shire all of my life. I was born there. My dad was born in Pilliga. My Grandfather was born in Pilliga. Mum was born in Coonabarabran. Up until a couple of months ago we had five generations alive and well in the Narrabri Shire until the passing of my 101 year old grandmother in Narrabri Hospital.

I've been in business in the Narrabri Shire ~~region~~ for more than 28 years. I've mowed lawns, I've dug graves, I've had an earthmoving/concreting business. I've worked in the agriculture sector, worked in the local government sector, worked in the business sector.

Eighteen years ago, I started a company called Namoi Waste Corp where we currently employ 17 people in full time positions plus provide work for local subcontractors.

10 years ago, we started working for the mines, servicing some of their waste needs.

August 2018, we won a contract across a number of different mines for the provision of waste services. We had to compete against several multinational companies and won the contract on our merits. This was a long process and we're very proud that that money stays local. It didn't leave town. It didn't leave on the coattails of a large multinational.

We shop locally, we invest locally, ~~and~~ we employ local people, *and contribute to the becoming community.*
After a day in Boggabri yesterday and a day here in Gunnedah, we're all well aware of the economic benefits mining brings to our communities.

I want to talk about a few other significant benefits mining bring to our region.

Firstly – in Narrabri - and I see it in Gunnedah as well – families like mine are able to keep their children in town. Normally they would leave for regional and capital cities to find meaningful work. And they probably would never return. But now the kids are staying – there's more opportunity for them. This is rare in country towns these days. Country towns are dying across Australia largely because of lack of employment and meaningful opportunities. But in Narrabri and Gunnedah we have reversed that trend. Not because of the great work of the local councils, not because of some local or state government initiative...it's because mining came to town.

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But it is local and state governments responsibility to build on the opportunities that mining brings to our shires. So that when it's all over we've built a community that's sustainable and that can stand on its own two feet.

The other point I'd like to make and I've seen it right across our region. Drugs are a major problem in country towns. Largely, in my opinion, due to the lack of meaningful employment. It certainly is enforced in our workplace and other businesses across our shires and that is:

No drugs and lower your alcohol consumption if you want a job in the mining industry.

This is a pre-requisite to be working in a company that works for mines, or to be working for the mines directly. This is a tangible difference within our community. I see it with my own eyes. I talk about it within our own community and others agree that this is a difference that mining has made in our shires, and our lives.

The other difference has been WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY.

It's often spoken about in the media and on a state and national level that the rural sector has high incidences of work related injuries. Since mining came to our area 10 years ago you can hear and see the difference within our communities in and around the conversation about WHS.

I see it in my workplace and other workplaces, and that has a snowball effect as people come and go from different businesses the conversation continues about WHS.

This then Reflects back to the homes and the daily lives of people in our communities.

A whole industry in WHS has been created locally.

Mining has been the catalyst for a huge improvement within our shires in regard to WHS. Has that saved lives? I'm sure it has. Can it be measured? I'm sure there's ways to do that too.

The Vickery Extension project, will be of great economic benefit to the region, but the points I've made in regards to our children staying in our towns, the fact that many of them are not taking drugs anymore and the awareness of work health and safety throughout our community are a direct benefit of mining in the region and will only be reinforced by the Vickery Extension Project.