

I am speaking today in favour of the Wilpinjong Extension Program.

Until last year I was a fifth generation resident of the Wollar area and still live locally.

We had no choice regarding selling our property to the Wilpinjong coal mine. After robust negotiations we were able to keep their respect and the ability to communicate with them. We have developed a strong working relationship with senior management and General Managers have always had an open door to us.

We lease our land from Wilpinjong until it is required for mining as well as other buffer zone land. This arrangement has been very much a win for both ourselves and Wilpinjong. We have been able to increase our cattle numbers and with the mines help have been able to add to the quality of pasture and carrying capacity per hectare therefore benefiting local produce stores and stock agents. All our own and Wilpinjongs substantial pastoral needs are sourced locally.

My father was a founding member of the Wollar Bushfire Brigade and was presented with his 50 year long service medal by the NSW Governor. I have always been and still am a member of local Bushfire Brigades. I held a position on the Wollar ground trust for many years and was a member of the Wollar progress association until I no longer felt welcome there as it became a group that continually criticized and tried to disrupt Wilpinjong mine and ethics and honesty went out the door.

We lived much closer to the mine than anyone else so understood the real noise and dust levels better than anyone and as such were disgusted with the many exaggerated complaints. Every time the mine shuts down through exaggerated complaints that is wasted time which means money that would otherwise flow through the economy, a lot of it locally.

While the last thing my family wanted was a coal mine to be established at Wilpinjong but we have been able to make it work for us all as a family. Both my daughter and daughter in law have been able to be stay at home mums for my four grandchildren and my son works at Wilpinjong. We have all been able to relocate and live on small acreages in the local area while still leasing land from Wilpinjong to run our cattle.

Wilpinjong coal mine has been good for family reunification as many of the present employees had moved away to find work but now grandparents, parents and children are living in Mudgee, Gulgong or surrounding districts helping to make the area very family orientated. Many students leaving school do not have to move away as they can now access work locally because of direct and indirect jobs created by Wilpinjong.

Mudgee and Gulgongs economies have benefited greatly from Wilpinjong coal mine and would noticeably decline if anything were to happen to the mine I feel therefore that any expansion of the coal mine could only benefit local communities. It is one of the major lynchpins that keep the area prosperous and going ahead.

Wilpinjongs community donations also play a crucial role in keeping a lot of charities viable and functioning, especially after the GFC, they have an active team that puts a lot of personal effort into local charitable activities.

Wilpinjong plays a pivotal role in helping to create the population mass that allows government to increase essential services such as roads, education, health and community, giving the flow on effect that attracts others such as regional offices, retirees and professionals to the area.

It is sad to see Wollar decline but this is not something new as this has been steadily happening over my lifetime. Any restriction to Wilpinjongs mining operations will not stop this decline, only cause the greater district hardship.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

