

My respects are paid to the first peoples, and also to past generations of our own people who have produced in this land and kept it flourishing.

Already there has been too much destruction of good land and established farming towns. It's crazy to knowingly wipe out the tenacious village of Wollar; to dig its landscape into oblivion. Fairly soon, buyers could well reject even better coal than Wilpinjong's, for cleaner alternative energy production. At that point, workers will need to have taken their mining skills into new directions.

You couldn't get a greater contrast: On one hand, people in Australia were caring for everything that sustains life across the entire land, for around 50,000 years.

As for us, just the last 50 years have seen the land itself devoured, its water and species impacted forever. We have seen peaceful working people evicted from their land and homes, despite their right, and their ability, to continue producing for the support of our future generations.

The miners' *own children* will need air, food and water before they need energy. Continued coal mining at the expense of basic human requirements, and in a sliding climate, is becoming globally suicidal and insanely wasteful.

My great grandfather Thomas Atkinson built the stone house called Willow Glen, on Limestone Creek near Mudgee. He didn't understand the land as well as the first peoples did, but he grew food and fibre. He used its stone to build enduring structures. And Limestone Ck kept on flowing cleanly.

His son, Arthur, took a tree from the land to make this, a cogwheel, one of many parts he cast in iron poured in sand moulds, to make machinery for the Willow Glen farm. Trees grew to replace it. By my father's time, the local community was valuable and strong, caring for the land and loving our towns. The Wollar community has as strong a right to exist as any town or city in Australia.

Sure, coal mining destruction is tolerated because it provides jobs. So do major wars! Both need to be engaged in very sparingly!

Returning soldiers found work; they too were traumatised. They looked round for what needed doing, and some returned to their former trade work. Our Country Towns look forward to our best builders, technicians and plumbers returning from the mines.

In their absence, we are made to wait, and to pay inflated prices, for less competitive work. Mining has hit the non-mining household economy very hard.

To marry and raise healthy families, young people need clean air, broad education and family-friendly work hours, not sky-high early income with uncertain prospects and bad health risks.

Sure, there's a lot of work ahead if we are going to shift to renewable energy. But what does work mean, other than new jobs? Cleaner, safe jobs directed towards our longterm survival. That's what Jack Munday called "Socially Responsible Employment".

The harmful, distressing impacts of Wilpinjong mine are already too great, and neverending. Any expansion should be out of the question.

To our Government I say : Invest instead to restore our full TAFE capacity. Employ scientists, and industrial trainers to help give each one of our miners, and our country, a fresh, more hopeful

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