

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Tim Loughnan, I am a fulltime employee at the Wilpinjong Coalmine and thank you for the opportunity to speak at today's meeting.

I have now been working at Wilpinjong Coal Mine a little over 4 years, most of that time as a salaried fulltime time employee of Peabody Energy. I operate trucks and bulldozers, represent green crew on the Health & Safety Committee, of which I am also currently the chairman. I am also an active member of the Mullamuddy RFS. I am privileged to be married for just over 24 years to my long suffering partner and we have three almost adult offspring, one aged (19), and the other two aged (16). Yes, twins... double the trouble, twice the fun!

A very simple question, Is my job important to my family and I? The answer is a resounding yes which may seem, to most, fairly obvious.

The job satisfaction, good income and ample time off ensures that both my partner & I can provide a strong family base from which to raise our clan of young adults (or maybe I should say teenagers depending on the mood of the day).

Therefore, I simply must conclude that the proposed Wilpinjong Extension Project, which we are here debating today, is extremely important to both myself and my family and also, I may suggest to my work colleagues, their families and the wider Mudgee Community.

Simply put, Mudgee would not be the vibrant town it is today without the three coal mines as major employers. Major infrastructure upgrades, downstream employment opportunities, local business opportunities, upgrades to education facilities, and list could go on, are all very evident in this community. What is also evident is that a downturn in the coal industry very quickly negatively affects the local and even wider community. I am not going to state many more of these effects, both positive and negative, as they can be proven time & time again as strong realities with a little research.

Some may argue that they don't want what the local community has become. They maybe just want things to stay as they were. They don't want Coal Mines

destroying the natural local environment through the mining process. They don't want to accept the demise of local towns, in this case Wollar, as being "collateral damage". They don't want the mines' products, coal, being burnt, releasing carbon dioxide, sulphur and other such nasties into the atmosphere.

Emotive language, I know, and some valid points for their argument.

Obviously it is far more complicated than that and it is at this point that I want to deviate a little from what may be seen as the natural course for this narrative.

I will not berate those opposed to this extension for their beliefs and, maybe surprisingly I do agree with them on some levels.

We cannot continue to burn coal and other fossil fuels indefinitely as they will adversely affect our environment and, quite simply, just run out. Sure, coal supplies may last another 200 years depending on a myriad of factors but then they will just be gone and cannot be replaced. Oil based fossil fuels are the same, but with a much shorter life span. The greenhouse effects on our environment will come to the fore before these two scenarios are reached.

That is a reality.

The release of carbon during burning, combining with atmospheric oxygen to create carbon dioxide which acts as a greenhouse gas is well documented and, as I believe it, has led to a speeding up of the greenhouse warming effect on our planet, which has occurred 'naturally' on many occasions before humans influence ever became a factor.

So here is the core of my personal perspective and what I really have to say regarding Realities and ideologies and coal. There is a lot I would like to add but time does not permit.

Coal has been burnt for thousands of years for warmth and cooking. It is nothing new and a very primitive and yet a highly effective solar battery. Again simplified, it stores solar energy derived from plant photosynthesis and the subsequent effects of temperature and pressure (coalification) to produce a solid fuel battery. It takes tens of millions of years to be made. REALITY.

The human evolutionary escalator has relied upon coal as both an energy source directly or indirectly (i.e. simply being burnt in a fire, or for steam engines in the industrial revolution or via coal fired steam generation to drive electrical generators). In effect, coal has formed an energy catalyst and funding source for human development for a long time.

And here is the thing, that escalator, as I see it, is a one way trip. We cannot, just turn off coal and walk back down the escalator or indeed, just hop off. As the escalator takes us higher up the human evolutionary incline, so too does the fall to the bottom become much greater, and sadly, more violent.

We all want a day when we no longer rely on fossil fuels to energise (and fund) our rise on that escalator. We all want the day when energy effectively becomes free, non-polluting and with the absolute minimum of 'collateral damage'. And that is an Ideology.

Coal is an escalator journey we, as a species' started on a long time ago. That cannot be changed and, with the aggregate use of other fossil fuels, oil & gas, is pretty much the sole force behind our position on that escalator today. That is REALITY.

It is prudent to remember at this point, that the realities of today were the ideologies of yesterday. Not everyone's ideologies but certainly, probably, the majority's.

We, as a species cannot simply say no to an energy source that supplies 40% of the world's current electricity needs. If we cut that amount of 'funding' or energy underpinning, I suggest that the fall off the escalator would be tumultuous and world changing to say the least and not in a good way.

The money flows generated as direct and indirect income, profits etc from the likes of Wilpinjong Coal Mine, are what help fund the education and development of our society's offspring in strong nurturing communities. These communities provide the backbone for a new generation to learn, study, develop and evolve new energy sources which will become the realities of tomorrow. And that is a reality of today.

Solar and wind technologies are developing but will never be the standalone solution we seek. We will need a suite of new hi tech energy solutions to replace fossil fuels. In the meantime, methods for burning (or in some cases, not burning) coal, capturing carbon and carbon dioxide and other pollutants have vastly improved and they will continue to do so. As long as we continue to educate and inspire a new generation in robust communities to think outside the square, the sky is the limit.

Yes, we absolutely need to ensure that Wilpinjong Coal Mine and all other coalmines adhere to their strict environmental a social condition to ensure minimal impact. We need to ensure that we are doing the very best we can, always. That is another reason why we are here today.

But in order to continue the escalator ride to a better tomorrow, a tomorrow where today's ideologies become real and advanced energy solutions, we need to continue to fund the realities of today. Just saying no doesn't cut it.

Thank you for time today, I know that much of what I have touched on here is greatly simplified but time is short. Enjoy the realities that coal and other fossil fuels have brought to us now, and let us all strive to continue to improve so that, indeed, maybe us, but certainly the generations to come, can all have a future based on advanced energy solutions. Today's ideologies – tomorrow's realities.