

PAC Meeting Lithgow May 17th 2017

I have been a business owner in our Local Gov Area for 44 years, having had three hairdressing salons, a Takeaway Food Shop and a Fruit Shop.

Prior to my husband's death Bob was a coal miner for twenty years, yes, there were many times in that twenty years he would say "they were going down the road", a term that would be used if you were going on strike for better conditions.

The one thing we really never had to be concerned about was the security of the future of work in the coal mining business in the LGA.

I listen to the people and the uncertainty in our community at present with the serious situation we are facing if this approval is not granted is seriously affecting the health and mental state of all involved, the miners and their families, the Energy Australia staff and their families and extended families of all involved indirectly or directly are affected.

The local business owners are worried, rightly so, they have had the faith to invest in their businesses, the uncertainty hanging over them is causing an enormous amount of stress.

The local schools, particularly the smaller schools are struggling for numbers due to people moving from the area to seek employment, what a shame if this continues to occur, without wonderful choices in education more people will choose to send their children out of our area to be educated.

I have clients who are fly in and fly out miners, due to the local down turn in the mining industry. People have to survive, hence seeking work out of our LGA, this is not by choice it is called survival! It has a devastating mental and physical effect on the miners and their families, also extended families.

I plea with you today with the exposure of mental health in the spotlight you take this into consideration when you hand down your report.

Families are under huge constraints financially, this uncertainty increases the risk of depression, self harm thoughts and of course creates massive untold stress on all involved.

I do believe we have to be mindful of the environment, it also is part of a huge part of our future, however, I think there is to be a balance moving forward for an outcome that will look after and respect the environment as well as produce coal to keep our Local Government Area a viable prosperous place to raise a family and produce electricity to turn on the lights!

Maree Statham