

Annette Rhodes 7/11/18

The Bylong project will provide a much needed economic boost to the Kandos/Rylstone region with so many young people having to leave the area currently to find sustainable employment.

Both towns, along with the Bylong Valley have suffered since the closing of Charbon mine and The Cement works. The recent drought has also kicked the life out of us all, placing further pressure on our region.

Having worked for many years in a Job services organisation I have seen the demoralising effects of unemployment within families in the area

I now have the privilege of working with the local school kids, appreciate the amount of talent they have and can see a future for them, if given an opportunity. In my opinion this will open that chance up to the locals and revitalise the towns.

Currently working with a Not for profit Group Training Organisation, having seen the benefits of working with global companies to boost employment and grow employability skills within communities locally. The region is in need of such a boost and this project will provide that.

I also work in the security industry and in the past have had the task of patrolling regenerated sites, so can fully appreciate that companies within the resource sector do a great job at regenerating and improving the land if disturbed.

It is my understanding that this project will have minimised open cut disturbance and will not affect the appearance of the valley long term.

I grew up in the Mudgee region and am part of a family that were amongst the first settlers in Hargraves, so I have seen industries come and go and our locals be hit with the loss of major employers.

My own husband losing his job when the local abattoir closed and wondering if we could afford to stay on and find another path. It was a very stressful time as we had one small child and another on the way and I can remember feeling utter hopelessness, as we visited Centrelink for the first time in our lives to ask for assistance, feeling we were taking from others was a degrading and demoralising experience.

We were fortunate that we found a way out and it would be fantastic to see families in Rylstone/Kandos have that same outcome, now my children are teen agers and I can appreciate that they have a choice to stay in Mudgee or travel. My husband and I still work 2 jobs each and are frugal with coin...as we also are farmers, but these options are available to us and for that I am thankful.

That same choice is not available to people in the region where the project is proposed. I ask that the panel consider the massive benefits to the community when making a decision and am definitely in favour of the venture.