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O/N H-1042683

**INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MEETING WITH SINGLETON COUNCIL**

**RE: RIX'S CREEK SOUTH CONTINUATION OF MINING PROJECT**

**PANEL:**                   **PROF MARY O'KANE**  
**ANDREW HUTTON**  
**TONY PEARSON**

**ASSISTING PANEL:**           **DENNIS LEE**  
**CALLUM FIRTH**

**COUNCIL:**                   **TONY McNAMARA**  
**JOHN MARTIN OAM**  
**DAN THOMPSON**  
**GODFREY ADAMTHWAITE**  
**TONY JARRETT**  
**SARAH LUKEMAN**  
**MARK IHLEIN**  
**BRIONY O'HARA**

**LOCATION:**                   **SINGLETON CIVIC CENTRE**  
**12 QUEEN STREET**  
**SINGLETON, NEW SOUTH WALES**

**DATE:**                      **5.30 PM, MONDAY, 29 JULY 2019**

PROF M. O'KANE: So, um, welcome and thank you for coming in, particularly at this hour. Um, in starting the meeting, I would like to acknowledge the Wonnarua people, the traditional owners of the land, and to pay my respects to their elders past, present and future. As you know, the Bloomfield Group is seeking approval for SSD  
5 6300 to continue open cut mining at Rix's Creek South for an additional 21 years. My name is Mary O'Kane. I chair the Independent Planning Commission and I chair this panel, determining the matter – the Rix's Creek matter. Joining me are my fellow Commissioners, Andrew Hutton and Tony Pearson. Um, we're supported by Dennis Lee and Callum Firth from the Commission Secretariat.

10 In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a full transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website. This meeting is part of the Commission's decision-making process. If you're asked a question and are unable to  
15 answer, please feel free to take it on notice, and it's a good idea if you could say who's speaking so it goes on to the transcript. We're just saying welcome with the formal welcome, but we will now – now sort of start, now you've arrived. Um, anyway, thank you. Um, we're particularly grateful to Singleton Council for a couple of things. Um, one is for, you know, giving us these facilities. It was  
20 wonderful to – great place to hold the meeting today, so thank you very much for that. Um, we've – I think you know, ah, that we've spoken – the LGA has asked us to try and use council facilities where we can, and we think it's a fantastic idea.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Absolutely.  
25

PROF O'KANE: So you will see us more and more. Um, and also thank you for this meeting at late in the day, um, and also thank you for both councillors coming, the deputy mayor, of course, and um – and the management – council management. And that's another thing the LGA has asked us to do, to try and meet with both  
30 groups. So we're – it's a perfect arrangement. So you – we're really here to hear you, any comments you would like to make about the Rix's Creek development. Um, we were lucky to have a meeting with Mark and his team last year but – um, when we were doing the review, but now we're at the final determination phase. So, over to you, I think, unless my fellow Commissioners have anything else to add or  
35 - - -

MR A. HUTTON: No, thanks.

MR T. PEARSON: No.  
40

PROF O'KANE: No.

MR M. IHLEIN: Well, if council don't mind - - -

45 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: No, no. Do.

MR IHLEIN: - - - I might just – might just start off and – and ask councillors, um, to just chime in as we go. Um, councillors, what I'm going to do is just talk to the – talk to the Commission about those – those points that were in the roundtable the other day, just – and expand on them as we go through. And councillors are  
5 welcome to chime in as we go, um, to give the Commission a greater sense of those issues if and when you feel – feel appropriate. I – and we've spoken about this before. I guess the first point we would make is that, um, Rix's Creek, as a business and a mine, um, is a good neighbour to Singleton. Um, they've been in the Singleton community for a very long time. Um, they conduct themselves in a – with integrity,  
10 um, in the way in which they – they operate their operations, um, and, most importantly, the way they deal with our community. Um, I know a number of the councillors here are variously involved on previous community consultative committees, so you might like to make a comment.

15 PROF O'KANE: Yeah. We'd – we'd welcome that.

MS S. LUKEMAN: Um, yeah. So Sarah Lukeman, councillor. Um, I have been initially chair and now just a member of the Rix's Creek CCC since my election to council in September 2016. Um, I took over from that position from Councillor  
20 Scott, who I know was on the CCC for many years. And, unfortunately, is unwell, so unable to be here. I know she would probably like to be. Um, yeah, Rix's Creek is a small, locally owned, Australian owned company. Its employees live and work locally, um, so they've, um – and I think that's a large part of how – of why they are so engaged - - -

25 PROF O'KANE: Are they more - - -

MS LUKEMAN: - - - with the local community.

30 PROF O'KANE: Yeah. Are they more engaged than other mines?

MR McNAMARA: They tend to be more local. A lot of the employees here are more locally based employees.

35 PROF O'KANE: Right.

MR McNAMARA: You would agree with that, Sarah?

MS LUKEMAN: Yeah. Look, I haven't got statistics on it.

40 PROF O'KANE: No. It was more of - - -

MS LUKEMAN: But, um - - -

45 MR McNAMARA: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: They – they tend to be, yeah, less commuting - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: - - - from outside the area. But - - -

5 PROF O'KANE: Uh - - -

MS LUKEMAN: That's, I guess, more anecdotal. They also seem to have a lot of long-term – but a lot of - - -

10 MR McNAMARA: Mmm.

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

15 MS LUKEMAN: A lot of the mining companies do - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: Um, but – but, I guess, the management are local.

20 PROF O'KANE: Yes. Yes.

MS LUKEMAN: Um, which is less regular.

25 PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

MS LUKEMAN: You know, a lot of the employees or operators are - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

30 MS LUKEMAN: - - - long-term from all of the mines, but – but not necessary all the management.

MR McNAMARA: Mmm.

35 MS LUKEMAN: So there's, um, a consistency - - -

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

40 MS LUKEMAN: - - - in operation that you don't necessarily get with the large multinationals.

MR JARRETT: Anecdotally, um, from people that go to that mine, it's a good mine to get a job at. They are, you know, really enthusiastic and that's – you know, quite happy to actually get employment there.

45 PROF O'KANE: That's interesting so compared to the others, particularly.

MR T. JARRETT: Yeah. Uh, yeah. So - - -

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Doesn't seem to be as transient.

5 MR JARRETT: Mmm.

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

MR JARRETT: And that's what Sarah was saying - - -  
10

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MR JARRETT: - - - that you're there. You tend to stay there. You don't tend to  
15 .....

MS LUKEMAN: They seem to be very happy and committed employees - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

20 MS LUKEMAN: Definitely. And - - -

MR McNAMARA: It - - -

MS LUKEMAN: There does, um – I mean, each CCC is different. The issues are  
25 different. It's got, they've got different members - - -

PROF O'KANE: I was going to come to that - - -

MS LUKEMAN: - - - who raise different - - -  
30

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: Different concerns so it's very hard to compare and I don't sit on  
35 any other CCC, but, um, when issues are raised, they're very responsive. Um, they –  
it's quite surprising, but every night they have somebody sitting out in a vehicle with  
noise monitoring, um, and they're very reactive. They model – and if they're where  
the noise is going to go, they control their operation, you know? Sorry – they plan  
the operation to minimise the noise, um, but if there is a complaint, um, you know,  
they get out there. They're monitoring it, um, and that feeds back into their model as  
40 well. So they're validating that model constantly, um - - -

PROF O'KANE: I mean, how do people think about Rix's Creek with regard to  
noise and air quality given it's relatively close to the town? I mean, is, are people  
45 cross with it? Happy with it?

MS B. O'HARA: Um, they seem to be more proactive than reactive.

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

MS O'HARA: They seem to be on it before there's an issue.

5 PROF O'KANE: Right.

MS O'HARA: But that's just a general consensus from the community that I've, that I've had.

10 MR J. MARTIN: Could I - - -

MR D. THOMPSON: I - I can speak on the air quality - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

15

MR MARTIN: I want - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yeah, please.

20 MR MARTIN: Yeah. John Martin. I'm councillor, former ..... twice and, er, I've been trying to work out in my mind when Rix's Creek made application for the, the mine just over the, the ridge, the first - - -

PROF O'KANE: The north - - -

25

MR MARTIN: Development, yeah.

PROF O'KANE: Rix's Creek North.

30 MR MARTIN: I can't remember when it was. It must have been in the eighties some time - '83/84, somewhere around there - and they held an inquiry here.

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

35 MR MARTIN: And I was a councillor and I attended the five days' hearings and so on, so I'd like to pick up and expand on what, um, councillor Lukeman has said about the company. I - I knew of the company Bloomfield before they made application for the Rix's Creek Mine. They were in Saw Milligan, the company I managed.

40

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

45 MR MARTIN: Um, purchased a sawmill from them, so I've known them for a fairly long time. And picking up on what has already been said, but I'll repeat: a private company, a family-owned company, and of long standing. And the thing that I've found over the many years that the management has been stable. Of course, there's been changes over that period of time, but the management's always been

very stable, and Mr Richards and the family have, you know, they – they're known to me and to us. The inquiry back in the eighties was – I think it was five days, and it was sort of one of the first developments very close to the town because it's just across the ridge.

5

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MR MARTIN: And I can remember the inquiry and the conditions that were put on the mining company and, and the questions and things that were asked back at that time and from memory they've complied with as best they can with the suppression watering, good management, always been good citizens to the town. And, in that respect – and, you know, I would firmly support and strongly support any development that they wished to go into because I have confidence in the company and the people who run it.

15

PROF O'KANE: Thank you.

MR THOMPSON: I can comment on the air quality issue.

20 PROF O'KANE: Yeah. Yeah. That will be good.

MR THOMPSON: Dan Thompson, Singleton councillor. I'm also on the Upper Hunter Air Quality Alliance. As a mine closest to the town, um, we have very few complaints about their, ah, discharges in comparison to others within the – within our local government area. The fact that they're on the north-western side of the community, um, would indicate, with prevailing westerly winds, that we would, ah, normally have issues.

25

30 PROF O'KANE: Exactly, yes.

MR THOMPSON: But with, ah, the last quarterly – ah, the thing is I forgot to bring them with me, but Singleton had less, um, days of exceeding some of the PM10s last – in, ah, in the last quarter, which was the, ah, autumn quarter for 2019. Then, um, other sites, ah, Merriwa is the indicator site for - - -

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PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MR THOMPSON: - - - the Hunter Valley, coming in from the western ..... and Merriwa had, ah, one more day of, ah, PM10 exceedances than Singleton did, which is fairly major testament to, um, their care and things, and I know that they work with, ah, the OEH and things on, ah, the – the high probability days and modifications and – ah, of their practices, so, um, OEH had been trying to do a modelling - - -

45 PROF O'KANE: Yes.

MR THOMPSON: - - - um, that would indicate that tomorrow is going to be a high dust day, so can you bring your equipment off the high walk and you stop blasting ..... and for – from my experience on the Upper Hunter Air Quality Alliance, there's been no issues with that – that particular mine with those issues.

5

PROF O'KANE: That's good. With the ones where you've got more issues, is it that management's a bit less responsive, a bit less willing to work in with – what sort of distinguishes the – is it - - -

10 MR THOMPSON: Once again, anecdotally - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MR THOMPSON: - - - um, yeah, that – that does appear to be the case.

15

PROF O'KANE: Yes.

MR THOMPSON: Um, different – different people are very, ah, as third parties have said, Bloomfield tend to be proactive in getting out there, um, so, ah, whereas other mines are reactive. They want the neighbours to tell them where the noise is coming from and then they'll make the adjustments afterwards, and it – you know, um, from my experience, that's things, and, like I said, from an air quality point of view, um, North Singleton, which is just monitoring around there, is – is a higher dust level than the community itself - - -

25

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MR THOMPSON: - - - but nowhere near as bad as Camberwell - - -

30 PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MR THOMPSON: - - - so it's not feeding in from either the southerly direction or – or the westerly direction. They appear to be - - -

35 PROF O'KANE: Tell us – yeah, tell us a bit more about Camberwell, because it gets raised quite a bit over this – it's the multiple mine effect, is it?

MR THOMPSON: Yep. There's – there's, ah, an issue with, um, basically a community which is surrounded, so no matter which way the wind blows, they're going to get it, um, and there – there is an accumulation, ah, of, um, sort of dust issues, um, that - - -

PROF O'KANE: At Camberwell?

45 MR THOMPSON: Well, yeah, if you want to go onto the, um, EPA's website, um, all those reports are available.



PROF O’KANE: Yeah, I know.

MR THOMPSON: Okay.

5 PROF O’KANE: I have seen them. I just – because it’s handy to have it summarised by somebody who knows. Yes.

MS O’HARA: Madam Chair, if I could just add to what I was saying before, um, I also had been a, um, for some years a resident - - -

10

PROF O’KANE: Yes.

MS O’HARA: - - - of Hambleton Hill and Mason Dieu area.

15 PROF O’KANE: Right, yes.

MS O’HARA: Yep.

PROF O’KANE: Of course. Mason Dieu is the other big one, isn’t it?

20

MS O’HARA: Yes, so just on the community side of things, I would have had probably three times as much communication from Rix’s Creek as a – either a mail-out or a call or something to let me know that there was something happening than I would, from the mines that are out a little bit further. So - - -

25

PROF O’KANE: That’s interesting.

MS O’HARA: So there – and that’s one of the things that I’m saying about the proactivity, is that they want to make sure everybody’s communicated to and knows exactly what’s happening.

30

PROF O’KANE: Thank you. That’s – yes.

MR G. ADAMTHWAITE: I’m Godfrey Adamthwaite. I’m a councillor at Singleton. I’ve been on council since 2008, six of those years as the deputy mayor, and I also live probably five or six kilometres away from this mine as the crow flies. And I can honestly say that I have never had one – not one communication from any member of the public in regards to complaining about Rix’s Creek. When they were on – when they were on the other side of the highway, and now on the side that

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40

they’re on. I’ve been in Singleton a long time and I’ve known management from, uh, that particular time and they’ve always been easy to get along with. Easy to talk to. And sometimes I’ve – or some cases I have been more than just an acquaintance or a colleague. I’ve been a friend, ah, one of the general manager, Reggie Crick.

45

I had the opportunity to go to work for Reg down in Bloomfield, down near East Maitland, but I was happy where I was. And, also, it was mentioned that, um, the workforce are happy to be there. I wouldn’t say 100 per cent are happy, but the

majority, it was a – a lifelong job. If you got in there it was either you were known by someone that worked there, you were the son of someone that worked there, or some other relation. And at one time, 80s, 90s, there was a waiting list for people to work there under those circumstances.

5

PROF O’KANE: So if you had to rank mines in terms of good behaviour to the community, are they right at the top or is there any other – any other of the mines that’s really good to deal with?

10 MR ADAMTHWAITE: The – well, I’m – I’m currently a member of five CCCs.

PROF O’KANE: Oh, right. Well, you’re in a great position to - - -

MR ADAMTHWAITE: Ah, in those CCCs, the majority are Glencore.

15

PROF O’KANE: Mmm.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: The – Yancoal.

20 PROF O’KANE: Yes.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: And I think that’s it. Ashton’s Yancoal ..... Peabody, ..... Peabody, but it’s part of a soon to be a - - -

25 PROF O’KANE: Yep.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: - - - combined entity.

PROF O’KANE: Yeah.

30

MR ADAMTHWAITE: And as well as – I wouldn’t answer it the way you’ve asked the question to be answered.

PROF O’KANE: All right. That’s fair.

35

MR ADAMTHWAITE: But they’re a family set up. They’ve always been a family set up, and you could feel that when you went there to visit. So, basically, all I’m saying is they’ve been – they’ve been an asset to this – this town.

40 PROF O’KANE: Mmm.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: But in respects to the Glencores and the Yancoals, and then to the Bloomfields, and it’s to do with size.

45 PROF O’KANE: Yep.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: Bloomfield doesn't put as much into the town as Glencore on the monetary side of things.

PROF O'KANE: Yep.

5

MR ADAMTHWAITE: But that's – you know, you can't really use that as a – as a weight – weighting measure.

MR MARTIN: John Martin again. I – it might look like as if I'm taking up a  
10 supportive role tonight, but I can confirm what Godfrey has said. And – and I've had a long experience with the mining industry in town. And, uh, I wouldn't – I wouldn't answer your question by, you know, picking winners, but I can tell you, with a lot of experience with dealing with all of the companies, and I'm talking about – I first went on to council in 1965 and that was nearly before too many coal mines.  
15 So I've been there and, uh, spoken with them and with the officers of council and the – and the general manager. But I would support what Godfrey has said and – and I'd put Bloomfield up there with the people who were welcome to come to a meeting.

PROF O'KANE: Thank you.

20

MR HUTTON: I've just got a question for – general question about the future growth opportunities for Singleton and whether that would be to the north and therefore bring more people closer to the site. What's the general long-term strategy for growth of Singleton?

25

MR IHLEIN: I – I might – might answer that, um - - -

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yeah.

MR IHLEIN: Remiss of me not to say my name, Mark Ihlein, Director of Planning of Singleton Council. Commissioner, the – this was an issue that we've worked closely with Rix's Creek over many years with this project and hand in hand with them with our future planning of our Singleton north area to the extent that we got to a point where with the information that Rix's Creek were providing from a noise  
35 modelling point of view, we've been able to very clearly articulate in our strategic planning where we can have residences that are not clearly not – not likely to be impacted by – by noise moving forward outside of the envelope of impact from the mine. Um, because as the town grows, we do need to continue to grow up to the north alongside the railway line which does bring some – some residential areas  
40 potentially a little bit closer to – to the mining affectation. However, where we currently stand, we – we have no issues with that and our strategic planning will accommodate that quite – quite comfortably.

MR HUTTON: Mmm – and in the direction of Maison Dieu, is there growth  
45 projected that way, either in a commercial, industrial sense or residential sense?

MR IHLEIN: Ah, more so from an industrial sense.

MR HUTTON: Yeah.

MR IHLEIN: Um, we've – we've got – there's quite a bit of, um, already zoned industrial land that, um, in time, we'd hope would be developed. Um, you know, we  
5 – we think that is a comfortable – comfortable fit with basically mined buffer land.

MR HUTTON: Mmm.

MR IHLEIN: In actual fact, half of that land is actually land – it was previously,  
10 um, buffer land that ..... Creek were involved with and, um – um – they were part of that consorting to develop that industrial land, so it's a good – it's a good, um – ah – good – good focus on what can be done in mined – mined buffer land as mines - - -

MR HUTTON: Yeah.

15 MR IHLEIN: - - - move away, um, and also provides a physical buffer for the town area with industrial developments for the mine as well. Um, so in terms of other residential development, we – we do have some, um, high density residential development earmarked, um, across, um, in Singleton below Maison Dieu, however,  
20 that area be well and truly out of any – any likely influence of – of coalmining from Rix's Creek or anybody else, so, um, we think we're well placed from a strategic - - -

MR HUTTON: Yeah.

25 MR IHLEIN: - - - planning point of view with the mine moving forward.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yeah.

MR HUTTON: Perhaps a continuation of the question, mining is a temporary land  
30 use. One day it will finish. Um, the Singleton Council's thoughts around the potential post-mining land use opportunities for that site, given its proximity to the town and any other comments - - -

MR IHLEIN: Yeah.

35

MR HUTTON: - - - around post-mining land use.

MR IHLEIN: Yeah.

40 MR HUTTON: Or closure.

MR IHLEIN: So I – I might hand over to my council to maybe make a comment in a moment. Um, that that is a subject that we've – subject matter that we've had ongoing conversation with Rix's Creek about and they've got ..... to talk to us more  
45 deeply about that.

MR HUTTON: Mmm.

MR IHLEIN: I think it's fair to say at this minute we – we really haven't, um, come to a conclusion to what that looks like. What – what we have done is through this process and making submissions to planning on, um, potential, um, conditions should that go that way that, um, we've asked, um, planning as well as the – the – the Rix's  
5 Creek to actually develop with us on energy strategies for that site early on in the process and before they get too much in the mining, so that we're not, you know, fixed with, um – not so much the mining, um, area that – of impact, but certainly further on with – with rehab and those sorts of things. We want to have the conversation about ..... land use before they're wedded to that and we understand  
10 that's a bit problematic with the way in which, um, the process is set up with Government and mine rehab plans and those sorts of things, but, um – um, it's a conversation we're having and I understand planning a – we'll – we'll recommend a consent condition that that accommodates that and requires - - -

15 PROF O'KANE: Maybe - - -

MR IHLEIN: - - - a strategic land use exercise.

PROF O'KANE: That would be very helpful for us if you could - - -  
20

MR IHLEIN: Yeah. Um, we - - -

PROF O'KANE: - - - maybe send that in, um, because we, you know, would like very much to be able to take your views into consideration with any - - -  
25

MR IHLEIN: Yeah.

PROF O'KANE: - - - any conditions.

30 MR IHLEIN: I'll forward it on to the Commissioner. We – we actually sent it to Planning in March.

PROF O'KANE: So maybe we have it, but I don't - - -

35 MR IHLEIN: I'd be surprised if you didn't, but I'll – I'll forward it on.

PROF O'KANE: We – we probably do and I've somehow missed, but I thought I would have picked it up or something.

40 MR IHLEIN: Yeah. Yeah.

PROF O'KANE: Anyway.

MR IHLEIN: Um - - -  
45

PROF O'KANE: I'll – we'll let you know if we don't have it. That's the easiest way - - -

MR IHLEIN: No problems. No problems. Um, whether councillor - - -

MR MARTIN: Well, as a – as a councillor, I – I agree with where we're going and – and, ah, what Mark has spoken about. And, um, you know, I – I can see in the  
5 future where, ah, we need to put this, ah, fairly well as a priority and – and that's  
been done. We've had submissions and motions to different organisations and  
conferences and so on. But – but I'd just like to, ah, only very briefly say that the  
rehabilitation that I've seen, and I have seen it over a long period of time, ah, it's  
never enough. We – we know all that.  
10 But the rehabilitation that I've seen has been well done.

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

MR MARTIN: And – and I'll cite two examples. The, um – the, um, mining  
15 companies, um – um, mined the, ah, Hunter River Flats at Lemington.

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MR MARTIN: And they built a – a, um, a wall to keep the river out in flood time.  
20 All that sort of stuff. That's when rehabilitated back into good, ah, cattle country.  
The other part is at – um – at Bayswater – the homestead at Bayswater and that  
property was a sheep property and – and you were lucky to run rabbits on it. That's  
what it was like. But the rehabilitated areas there are now, ah, grasslands with trees.

25 PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

MR MARTIN: So I've seen it happen and that's – that's what I would support.

PROF O'KANE: And what would be ideal with regard to rehab for Rix's Creek? I  
30 mean, ideal in terms of what you want it to look like at the end, ideal in terms of how  
fast the rehab should happen.

MR McNAMARA: Mmm. I'll put my two bobs worth on that.

35 PROF O'KANE: Mmm, please.

MR McNAMARA: Tony McNamara. Um, I've been on the Singleton council  
since 1999 and, ah, I've been the chairman of numerous CCCs over 10 years, but, ah,  
I've stepped aside to let these new people have a go, including Bulga, Mount  
40 Thorley, Warkworth. Um, I have a strong opinion about rehabilitation and I've kept  
my eye on Lindfield's work at the – I – I think that there's two things that we've  
really missed – the Americans have shown us how to go. That is, there's no question  
about what your final land form should be. It should be a replica of what it was  
before you started. That to me is what America does very, very well. There doesn't  
45 seem to be any great difficulty for them to do it.

There's no problem with the price of coal as you can see because of that so – the other thing that we seem to miss in rehabilitation of coal country is that we don't irrigate the trees. We plant seed or we plant seedlings and it's done reasonably well. Topsoil is too thin because there's not much of it and the coal luckily in most of the areas and the Warkworth coalfields and others around here, the – the coal footprint is not in, um, very fertile soil and consequently, you've got thin topsoil, if any, at some .....

10 So what I saw from 2000 to 2012 was rehabilitation was done at a very partial rate to re-opening of new land. So, for example, Mount Thorley once had 14 hectares of rehabilitation in that particular year, but 130 hectares of new work opening. The trees were planted, um, and there's saplings or suckers or little fellows like this. There was a bad drought and they all died, but it appeared to me – and I might be very wrong, but I still have this opinion – it appeared to me that the mounding was done, the top soil was spread, the plantings were done. The EPA came along, "So that's done. That's done. That's done." Tick. And that was it. It's done and that's the end of it. It's never touched again. Those mounds that that I'm talking about are still bare hills and no follow up, no rehabilitation of the failed rehabilitation. And that seems to be right across the board in Australia.

20 As far as Bloomfield, I think they are by far the most trusted coal mine in our Local Government area. Some of them are trusted more than others. One or two are not trusted at all, but I'm talking about the general community, not me personally. We get a lot of, ah – lot of complaints about dust from the big mines and the community has it in their head, and I know where it came from, that when the dust rises above the wheels of the machines, they're supposed to shut down.

30 The community has had that thought for 30 years, but doesn't happen. But at Bloomfield, it does. When the dust that is going to affect Singleton Heights Public School or other things in the community that are living up there, they do things about it, so I understand from what I just heard there before and before that, they adjust their machines to different sites on the mine. They do not want to upset the people at Singleton Heights - - -

35 PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

MR McNAMARA: - - - and they do whatever it takes, it appears, to keep them happy, to keep the dust out of their homes and to keep the noise low. And generally speaking, I'm not an expert, but from what I can see, the rehabilitation is sound.

40 PROF O'KANE: Thank you, Tony.

MS LUKEMAN: Sarah Lukeman here.

45 PROF O'KANE: Yeah. Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: I don't mind – if you don't mind me just jumping in.

PROF O'KANE: No. Of course not.

MS LUKEMAN: Um, the – in terms of final land use, um, there's a few issues. Obviously, from the community's perspective, it's not just one mine. It's the  
5 cumulative impacts of all the mines and so with the plan that has gone forward, it is – there is a concern about final voids.

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

10 MS LUKEMAN: So, um, whilst I'm – I'm supportive on the whole, ah, the fact that our Government – or State Government allows - - -

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

15 MS LUKEMAN: - - - final voids is – is, in my opinion, a failure of the system.

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

MS LUKEMAN: Um, but what Rix's Creek has put forward is – meets the  
20 requirements, so, um, so that's a – a disappointment there. Um, it's some time since I've looked at it, but my recollection is that with the new extension that the final void is actually smaller than the - - -

PROF O'KANE: Mmm.

25 MS LUKEMAN: - - - what is currently approved, so it's – it's – it's an improvement over what would happen if - - -

PROF O'KANE: And there's only one instead of two.

30 MS LUKEMAN: Yeah. Yes.

PROF O'KANE: Yeah. That came out of the review. Yeah.

35 MS LUKEMAN: Yeah. It's – there's a bit of a trade-off there. So one less final void, ah, rather than two. That's – that is an improvement for - - -

PROF O'KANE: But still - - -

40 MS LUKEMAN: - - - for the community. But it is still a void which is, I think, what - - -

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Which is not confined to Rix's Creek either.

45 MS LUKEMAN: - - - Councillor McNamara - - -

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: But it's everywhere.



MS LUKEMAN: Ah, that's what I'm saying.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Right – it's right around our L – LGA.

5 PROF O'KANE: Yeah. No. No. We absolutely - - -

MS LUKEMAN: But it's a bigger issue than just Rix's Creek.

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

10

MS LUKEMAN: Um, and in the scheme of things, Rix's Creek is nowhere near the biggest and the most - - -

MS LUKEMAN: - - - you know - - -

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PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: - - - the longest to reach equilibrium, etcetera.

20 PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MR HUTTON: Yeah.

25 MS LUKEMAN: So – so the void is – is one issue that that the community as a whole, I guess, is – is not happy with, but that's not unique to Rix's Creek. Um, in terms of the other area for final land use, I, um – I believe you had on your site tour last year, you went out and saw the old Coke Ovens - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yes.

30

MR HUTTON: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: - - - which were built around the 1860s. I've been out there as well. Um, and they're quite amazing - - -

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PROF O'KANE: They are, aren't they?

MS LUKEMAN: - - - in their size.

40 PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: The fact that there was a community of over 1000 people living there.

45 PROF O'KANE: Was it? I didn't realise that.

MR HUTTON: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: Yeah.

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

5 MS LUKEMAN: It was a – it was a massive – massive area. And, um, I do know – I don't think it's included in the plan, um, which I think is a – actually a – something they could've put a bit more on – in on, but, um, they are planning to maintain – improve the maintenance on them because they're – they're looking pretty rough at the moment and there's - - -

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PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: - - - very few that aren't damaged. Um, but at closure, that could be turned into actually an industrial heritage site.

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PROF O'KANE: Yes. Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: Um, there's talks of – of bushwalks in and, um, I – I think that's a fantastic opportunity - - -

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PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: - - - as a final land use for part of the area.

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PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: And, um, and the CCC is talking.

PROF O'KANE: Well, that's good.

30

MS LUKEMAN: We've – we've talked about that.

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

35 MS LUKEMAN: About the Coke Ovens, um, for that, but as I say, I think that's – that's missing. So that's – that's something that I know the management of Rix's Creek, um, are personally very attached to that heritage - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

40

MS LUKEMAN: - - - and maintaining it and seeing that they don't damage it through their operation, um, and passing it back to the community at – at closure. It's not something that the community can access whilst their operating because of the proximity to the operation. Um, so it's not something that's a short-term thing, but – but long-term, um, I think there's great potential for that because it's a fairly  
45 unique, um, site, two different styles. Um, they're not all beehives.

PROF O'KANE: Yeah.

MS LUKEMAN: Um, so – so really interesting. Well, I find interesting. I'm an engineer, so - - -

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PROF O'KANE: No. We – we found them interesting.

MS LUKEMAN: Yeah. Um, and, ah, I had no idea there was – it was such an old operation there, so, um – so that's – that's a park that can be used. Another thing is the revegetation at Rix's Creek, we've been using biosolids for a very long period of time, which a lot of other mine sites ..... only recently been picking up. The other thing that Rix's Creek has been doing for a very long period of time is running cattle on their reveged areas, and there are studies that are being conducted now on some of the larger mine sites, are putting cattle into their reveg areas, and that's really good, but Rix's Creek has been doing that – I'm not sure if it's decades but they're doing it for a very long period of time. They haven't got the papers and studies out there but they've actually been doing it, so they just seem to quietly get on and do stuff.

So they're actually – they run cattle. They manage it themselves. A lot of the larger mining companies, running cattle is not a core business, so they don't do it. Rix's Creek, they – the management actually, you know, they go and sell the cattle and the sale yards. It's part of the business. So in terms of next land use, they are already themselves utilising the buffer lands reveged areas and managing them for agriculture. So whether it is all agriculture or not, as I say, I think there's a great potential for a heritage precinct, but I do believe that Rix's Creek, their revegetation is more than appropriate for an agricultural post-mining land use over the majority of the site other than the void.

And then the next step on from reveg and rehab is actually relinquishment, which doesn't get talked about so much; doesn't happen very much in New South Wales. And I think, again, with the smaller family owned company living locally there's a greater trust that the relinquishment process can actually be managed through – that they won't sell off their obligations to manage the site post-mining operation, will actually see through the post-mining management until they can relinquish the mining lease. And I think that focusing on the relinquishment of the mining lease and the management of that period, which can be as long as the mine operation, that is something that isn't focused on enough by the government, and there's far too many mines who, once operation has ceased, they've sold their rights to the mine, handed it over to somebody else to operate and walked away and they have no further presence in the area, which I don't believe they should be allowed to do that.

PROF O'KANE: On that, I mean, there is no – there's probably very few other places in the world apart from Singleton that could give an informed answer to the next thing I'm going to raise, which is, given the decarbonising of the economy, the chances of coal being out of the money at some point in the term of this mine extension is high, and as a council it must be something you think about, what

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happens if you end up with early closure or something. Maybe you could help us frame the way we should think about it.

MR THOMPSON: Yes. Right.

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MS LUKEMAN: Do you want to go first or do you - - -

MR THOMPSON: Yes, I will go first.

10 MS LUKEMAN: All right.

MR THOMPSON: Sarah and I are involved in another group which is called .....  
Renewal.

15 PROF O'KANE: Yes.

MR THOMPSON: Which is a group of citizens that has the orbit to encourage all aspects of society, from the State Government through to just the general people in the street, to start to look at and start to think about planning a post-mining economy  
20 for the Hunter Valley.

PROF O'KANE: Yes.

MR THOMPSON: To this point in time, two weeks ago, the joint organisation with  
25 Hunter Council has adopted the policy of going to a transition academy.

PROF O'KANE: Right.

MR THOMPSON: And I think we will still progress and part of the advocacy role  
30 ..... council has been that whilst, ah, the State Government is reaping the rewards of the mining industry, it's now the time to start to plan for, um, what can replace it within the ..... it's nice to say, yes, we're going to return this to a grazing property but, you know, a place like the Mount Thorley ..... which employs 1300 people, ah, would go back to – to two families.

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PROF O'KANE: Yes.

MR THOMPSON: And from a community point of view, that means a massive  
impost as far as schools, hospitals and the rest of it is concerned. So I think it's  
40 important for us as a group, um, and to start to think about that and to advocate for some form of transition. Um, to that end, um, this council put a funding model to the Local Government Association meeting two years ago as to how that could be – ah, findings be put together and the fact that, um, open cut mining areas should be  
45 looked at as a total entity rather than just a single – a conglomeration of individual leases. There is the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue.

PROF O'KANE: Yes. Yes. I was just thinking of it, yes.

MR THOMPSON: Yes. It is the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue which sort of works together. It's – it's really – it's a step in the right direction, but it's not resourced.

5 PROF O'KANE: No.

MR THOMPSON: You know, it's got - - -

PROF O'KANE: I do know.

10

MR THOMPSON: It's got a couple of people there and they're doing a really good job and they're trying to ..... but, you know – but from my point of view, and I can only sort of speak as a person here, I believe that we are – the State Government has been taking a lot of money out of the ..... and our proposal was that the levy that was  
15 previously put on open cut mining for support that mine subsidence ..... which was removed July last year.

PROF O'KANE: Yes.

20

MR THOMPSON: Should've been transferred into another fund which we'll still be looking at, um, ah, repairing and, ah, developing on the land that was, ah, affected by an open cut mine. To that extent that was probably, on average, about \$20 million a year over – over the life of the things which would have given us a fairly substantive base on which to develop other alternatives.

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PROF O'KANE: So that's wonderful and very helpful. What would you then say to us with, you know, should we approve this extension, about conditions on issues like rehab or whatever? How do we, you know, take all this into account?

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MR THOMPSON: It's an – it's an extremely difficult one because - - -

PROF O'KANE: We know.

MR THOMPSON: You're - - -

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PROF O'KANE: That's why I'm asking.

MR THOMPSON: You're looking at individual mines.

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PROF O'KANE: Yes.

MR THOMPSON: And bits and pieces ..... look - - -

MR McNAMARA: Can I - - -

45

MR THOMPSON: But one of the – yeah, just from a personal point of view, I'd love that perhaps one of the final uses and – would be as an Australian sculpture park ..... thing. Along the lines of when you go to Broken Hill and you see - - -

5 MR McNAMARA: Lots of sculptures.

MR THOMPSON: - - - their sculpture park - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yes. Yes.

10

MR THOMPSON: And you see the vistas and things, but if we were to – had somebody that was actually - - -

PROF O'KANE: Yes.

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MR THOMPSON: - - - putting final landforms together and things and ..... if we had the ability to purchase and put it here as a tourist thing at the end of Hunter Valley Gardens there and Australian Sculpture Park here, and that's a final – final use of things. But there's lots of ideas; that's just a personal one of mine. Other people have spoken about motorsport parks and bits and pieces. I'll shut up now and let everybody else.

20

MR McNAMARA: Well, we have to remember, Danny, and I've listened very carefully to what you said, but this council closed an 11-kilometre road called Wallaby Scrub Road, which no doubt you've heard of.

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PROF O'KANE: I haven't.

MR McNAMARA: You haven't. There was a lot of hunting assessment commission work done on that, and basically the final whistle came to the State Government, of course, but this council voted to close it. Now, by doing that at the time, I'm not sure that we had skate parks and sculpture parks and wonderful artistic things in mind. What we did was open up the Mount Thorley Warkworth or the Warkworth sector of the Mount Thorley Mine – Mount Thorley Warkworth Mine to give it the capacity to open cut from the Putty Road - - -

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PROF O'KANE: Yes. Yes. Now I know what you're talking about, yes.

MR McNAMARA: - - - of the Golden Highway to the Wollombi Brook. So it's already the biggest mine in the Hunter Valley and now it's going to be probably one of the biggest mines in Australia with the exception of a couple in Central Queensland. There's not much room for anything that Danny has just said there to make it beautiful in the end because it's just one hell of a hole. It's 400 metres deep. 400 metres deep and miles across and miles – miles and miles long. And with the sale of the Wallaby Scrub Road it goes too. So 400 metres below the – where the Wallaby Scrub Road was it would be the bottom of the pit. There ain't much chance of rehabilitating the – anything. You can't fill it with water.

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MR ADAMTHWAITE: There's no water to fill it with.

MR McNAMARA: There's no water to fill it with. That's correct, Godfrey, but it's just impossible to clean that water to the point where you could have aqua activities.  
5 It's saline and toxic – the water – and I'm told it can't be fixed. So what the future holds with the decarbonisation of the economy, in my opinion we will still be mining coal here in many, many, many decades time because the coal is here and it will still be creating a mess and we will still be arguing about how to make better our rehabilitation. The best way to make better our rehabilitation is to plant and irrigate  
10 something that's going to grow.

The cattle thing – I'm a cattle man. I understand the cattle industry very, very well – I hope. The cattle thing is nice to look at but really it's a bit of a false economy there with the amount of fertilisers that's pumped onto the areas of rehabilitation to make  
15 cattle grow and to grow bone out and to fatten far exceeds anything that you will see on cattle stations. It's a massive amount of cash that's put in there to make it appealing. So I don't think that we're going to see too many recreational facilities in 50 years time on open-cut cuts.

20 MR ADAMTHWAITE: Just further to that, I don't know whether when I introduced myself before – I worked all of my life in coal mines.

PROF O'KANE: Yes.

25 MR ADAMTHWAITE: Left school and went through being an electrician all the way through to mine manager – underground coal mostly and open-cuts for a short while so I know what goes on in coal mining. That's one thing I do know; open-cuts not as much as underground. Going back to seventies – seventies, eighties, early  
30 eighties I travelled from Cessnock backwards and forwards to Liddell and watched – but watched two power stations get built and watched Costains open-cut start. It was like a moonscape where they finished along that highway and it was like that until the 90s.

35 And the company that was working for me doing some work on our mine site at Liddell went from us over to Costains and raked the heap down and made it a bit more presentable. In my mind that was the first – the first bit of rehabilitation that I had seen or heard of in the Hunter proper. Now we talk about some mines do it better these days than others. They all talk to each other. Been on five different CCCs. I get involved with – well, that's – that's more or less what we're there for.  
40 It's environmental things and maybe an exceedance in a blast exceeds the noise, exceeds in dust – whatever – that's what we talk about and that's what we look at. We go and have a look around to see how their rehab is going. All of them are doing it good – some a little bit better than others.

45 Mangoola is up here – that's the mine near Denman – they're doing it the best. So everyone is aiming to be like them. Final voids – rehabilitation and final voids in the approvals in the mine – in the plan, the mine – the mock mine management plan, the

– there is conditions put on for them to follow while – while the mine is proceeding and they have got to keep up with the rehabilitation as the mine moves forward, as we all know. That’s done. That’s done and dusted. They’re doing that. And they don’t normally – I’ve got to contradict you here but I know the place you were  
5 talking about – they don’t normally leave knobs that has died off. If something dies off they go back and they will do it again. That’s - - -

MR McNAMARA: Where? Where?

10 MR ADAMTHWAITE: That’s today.

MR McNAMARA: Where?

MR ADAMTHWAITE: That’s today.  
15

MR McNAMARA: Go for a drive down Brant Road, mate.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: No, well, I’m talking about ..... and ..... that way.

20 MR McNAMARA: Yes.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: Anyway. All right. But my mind is the same as the counsellor sitting next to me; is my – mind – final voids will still be talking about using the ..... about, whatever you like, we’ll be talking about final voids in 50 years  
25 time. I won’t be here for it.

MR THOMPSON: The difficulty is ..... area will have at least 13 final voids - - -

PROF O’KANE: I – no, I’ve seen the picture.  
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MR THOMPSON: - - - some of which will take a thousand years to fill with hypersaline water. That represents a huge risk to the Hunter Valley and the State economy if that hypersaline water was somehow to get into the ground water or into the aquifers. I don’t think it’s fully understood by any means and it’s a – it’s a real  
35 worry and that’s one of the reasons why I tend to support everybody else that final voids are to be avoided if we possibly can.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: And even if the final voids – which would be the ultimate – all final voids to be filled, there would still be the problems of water building up in  
40 ..... dirt because you’re not going to compact it like it was originally. You’re always going to have this. As long as you’ve got a coal seam involved in it, you’re going to have saline water. You dig a hole, you move the dirt, it swells. You know, one cubic metre of solid whatever turns into 1.2, 1.3 bench cubic metres. So it’s like being behind the eight ball.

45 MR MARTIN: I - - -



MR ADAMTHWAITE: Are you right?

MR MARTIN: Yes, mate. Well, I've already said I'm a strong supporter of rehabilitation and grasslands and trees and – and whatever else and Sarah has  
5 mentioned the cattle industry and so on. But I think you've got to be realistic about these things and – and any projects that would come up – and we've talked about theme parks, sculpture parks and tourist destination. We spent a fair bit of time and some money on a tourist destination with a Chinese connection we had and that fell  
10 over.

MR McNAMARA: I forgot about that.

MR MARTIN: That feel over because the State Government wouldn't see it funded but that's okay. That's another story.  
15

MR McNAMARA: And it was illegal.

MR MARTIN: And I believe in all of these things but I'm making the point I think you've got to be realistic about it. On the road out to Broke where Tony lives, on the  
20 left-hand side, I saw that country there before it was mined and the family even looked at buying it at one stage. That ..... was poor country. It's that poor you could flog a flea all over it and you wouldn't lose it – there would be no risk. So you've got to be realistic that in the finish if we can rehabilitate that in some form the best we can – grass it and tree it – that's the best you'll do with that. But I agree with  
25 whatever else we could come up with. But I don't know what it is.

PROF O'KANE: No. Well, we were hoping you would tell us but .....

MR MARTIN: Well, we've tried.  
30

MS LUKEMAN: In terms of the decarbonising of the economy moving forward, I think the reality is the majority of the coal from the Hunter Valley goes overseas.

MR McNAMARA: Is exported.  
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MS LUKEMAN: So it's – irrespective of what happens in Australia's domestic market - - -

MR McNAMARA: Yes. Can - - -  
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MS LUKEMAN: - - - so we're at the mercy of other nations and what they do and I think the reality is that it is going to reduce. So what – as Counsellor Thompson said is what we're after is a just transition. You can't just have an area of land being turned, you know, holus-bolus over to agriculture – a thousand people without a job.  
45 We need to have a planned response. We've got all these different mines. We need some sort of plan for staggering this closure. In the Ruhr Valley in Germany all the mines, I believe, are actually government-owned so this would have facilitated the

process, of course, but all the mines – people moved around so that the younger people could actually keep it there – in their employment.

5 There are ways these things can be done. There are other areas throughout the world that have moved from a carbon-intensive area into less carbon. There's things like industrial parks, as AGL are talking about now, which I find inspiring. I think there's great potential there. Australia is a world leader in mining. We're not the world leader in very many industries. We can't replace the mining jobs with tourism jobs. They just do not pay the same. We've got a lot of really well educated  
10 technical people. We need to be having new technological jobs of the future coming in and utilising these lands to provide that sort of technical high-paying job that the community is relying upon.

15 And I mean, that also, I believe, does help those who aren't working in the mining industry, those small business owners, it gives them the population basis we were talking about. Um, so the terminologies are just transition so that we actually – it's not just the job that you get. It is what is that job? Is it a valuable job? Is it – are you being trained in something that's a job for the future or is it just, you know, a job anybody can do that's going to be gone down the track. So I think there's a great  
20 potential for renewable power generation. You know, we could fill a lot of these voids up with solar panels if they're in the right position. But there would be a lot of different - - -

25 PROF O'KANE: Yes.

MS LUKEMAN: - - - options. One of the problems is that pretty much all of the mines are, sort of, licensed now for agriculture post-mining, but that's, yes, not realistic really to provide the – you know, a suitable economic support to the area.

30 MR McNAMARA: What does work in rehabilitation, from my experience, is seed planting rather than seedling planting. And I can direct you to Bulga Coal, which is Glencore operation, where some 30 plus years ago it was done rather crudely with a very large bulldozer and a guy who was a friend of mine was a contractor. He's not with us any more. And they planted a sausage-type substance which was sewage  
35 with seed, the white gum.

Now, there's a forest on the eastern side of Brant Road that I'm talking – that's what I'm talking about, thousands of very straight, very fine trees, all the same, but underneath it, it has got this great broken white rock. On the western side of the  
40 same strip of road, you will see the modern way to do the rehabilitation successfully done and led by their environmental officer, Ralph Northy, and his good staff and some – some very clever work, where they've basically done the same thing.

45 They've planted seeds rather than seedlings. They've had a water truck in the young days of the plant, a big water truck in the droughts and things, and now you've got right around this new bun which is the Bulga Coal expansion project to the east and to the west of these buns which are 200 metres high. You've got young ironbark

trees to about two metres that have been – are growing very, very rapidly, and they're away now. They won't need water.

5 So it's the seed rather than the seedling. I hope you can take that on board because seedlings only occasionally work. Seeds work all the time when they get watered. And the bottom line is that you get a good – good rehabilitation. It's not suitable for agriculture and koalas maybe but – not any agriculture.

10 PROF O'KANE: Well, maybe that's the right answer given the State koala strategy.

MR McNAMARA: But like John said, most of this country that the coal was in was never suitable for agriculture.

15 PROF O'KANE: Right.

MR McNAMARA: You've just got to go past it to get to the good country where the milk and honey and the wine grows. It doesn't grow where the coal is.

20 PROF O'KANE: Right. Other questions?

MR T. PEARSON: Yes. So the applicant has talked about a couple of options in its response to the review report. The options end on a few different things but if I can simplify them to two. One option optimises final land use planning and the other option optimises impacts, biodiversity impacts. Does council have a view on the  
25 preferability or otherwise of one or both of those options?

MR IHLEIN: If I could, Tony. The, um – the land use planning one is the one we've been discussing with Rix's Creek because the uniquely positioned, compared to, um, all the other coal mines we've been talking about, they're not as close to the  
30 town. So the opportunity for the town with what Rix's Creek might be able to morph into is a real opportunity. Um, again, I mentioned earlier that the – the industrial area up at Maison Dieu is actually the bottom part of the Rix's Creek holding, um, and you can – that industrial estate, you can actually look into their operations and they're moving away, obviously, towards that new area.

35 Um, so the land use side of it is one we've been advocating with them and – and – and is the one that we've put to planning as the one which we would like to see, you know, kick off basically sooner rather than later should – should there be – should there be consent. Having said that though, it would of course include, from a land  
40 use planning point of view, it would obviously include though the biodiversity aspect of it. Um, but fundamentally, looking at what the land use planning might look like and then, I guess, work through the biodiversity stuff and see what the might look like as well. You know, a layered approach to come with some sort of a strategic approach to what might – might occur there. Um - - -

45 MR PEARSON: So does council have a position or a preference in relation to option 1 or option 2?

MR IHLEIN: Well, I can't speak for councillors.

MR PEARSON: So there has been no decision in council on that?

5 MR IHLEIN: There's been no decision made but - - -

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: No.

10 MR IHLEIN: But we have - - -

MR JARRETT: They go hand in hand.

15 MR IHLEIN: Exactly what I was explaining. I mean, I – I agree with Councillor Jarrett there. They're hand in hand processes but fundamentally we've been looking at it from a strategic land use point of view in the first instance. Once we settle on that, then we – we can look at the biodiversity stuff. I guess – I guess where  
20 fundamentally we're coming from is that this council has had many conversations with – with PACs and IPCs over many years about – and it goes for a number of the issues that councillors have raised here about the lack of whole government approach to strategic planning around mining. Okay. And that runs for a lot of the issues we raised here about, you know, we're ending up with, you know, big holes in the ground.

25 Well, a lot of that is because nobody at a higher level is actually doing proper planning and proper – properly understanding what the impacts of those decisions in isolation are together and what they will equal 20 or 30 years' time. It's an issue that has been raised many, many, many times with state government. In more recent times I've got to say, um, premiers and cabinet have – have, um, sporadically started to restart a strategic planning exercise where we would, um, look at what mining  
30 looks like in the valley and look how the different operations could, um, synergise together with some compatible, you know, wildlife corridors, land form, those sorts of things, but it never goes anywhere.

35 Never goes anywhere. And part of that conversation is about final ..... voids, all that sort of stuff, and I think we just get really, really frustrated, um, that, you know, as again the councillors have said, that this is an area which generates extraordinary royalties for the state government. The legacy that will result from that is being very positive for the town but it could be also somewhat negative some time in the future if the government doesn't help this community out by a more whole government  
40 approach.

MR PEARSON: Yeah. We've heard that view across a number of projects now.

45 MR IHLEIN: Yeah.

MR PEARSON: So thank you for continuing to express that view to us.

MR IHLEIN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR McNAMARA: And you also need to consider that 30 years ago, when this open cut – well, 35 years ago when open cut mining commenced, no one in council,  
5 in government, in state government, in science, in engineering, no one imagined that it would grow to such a size as it is now.

MR IHLEIN: That's right.

10 MR McNAMARA: It was a small mine here called Saxonvale which grew into Bulga. Lemington which grew into Hunter Valley. I could keep on naming them but I won't. It just grew beyond belief. And in fact, if you look at Channel 3, our local news, on television, when it pans out over the Hunter Valley to show you where the rainfall might be tomorrow – which it hasn't done for a long time but – it looks like it  
15 has got clouds from Broke to Muswellbrook but it's not. It's not cloud. It's open cut pits. And if you fly across them you get the shock of your life. I remember the previous general manager here of Singleton Council flew across Warkworth and was totally stunned at the enormity of this place – huge, massive and deep – and now going to double so no one ever predicted the size of the mining industry in the  
20 Hunter Valley.

MR PEARSON: Well, I mean, if – if you do have a, you know, a view or advice for the Commission on those options as this process moves, I'm happy to - - -

25 MR JARRETT: Well, the issue basically is – is that, as Councillor McNamara has alluded to, is the fact that mining in this particular area has exponentially grown. And your comment on decarbonisation – we still export coal and they're looking at 20 to 30-year life expectancy in those areas. Now, what's going to result is we've – we've got plans and schemes but there's no – we're going to have a physical  
30 environment that's going to be scarred while the earth exists.

It's not going to – it's not going to go away. But also the socioeconomic impacts on the Hunter region alone, the government is going to have to take that into account because if you come here at 6 o'clock in the morning and see the amount of traffic  
35 that moves up that road that tells you that a lot of people in this region are dependent upon those coal mines for their incomes. When they - - -

PROF O'KANE: We were here very early this morning. We saw it.

40 MR JARRETT: And that's just – that's every day.

MR McNAMARA: It was good day this morning.

45 MR JARRETT: That's every day.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: We've got a case about that. You might back us up.

MR JARRETT: So those socioeconomic impacts, the government is going to have to step up to the mark to say right – the impact, it's going to be astronomical.

5 MS LUKEMAN: Can I – Tony, just on that biodiversity, we have talked about the fact that the mines sort of manage their own biodiversity offsets; it's done sort of separate to council's land planning process – possibly separate to anybody's planning process – and these biodiversity offsets are being locked up in perpetuity. I don't know how well connected they are. They don't – they're not necessarily well connected so ensuring that these biodiversity offsets are actually not just on the mine sites own land which a lot of them do and there may be a benefit in that but I just – there seems to be a lack of oversight in ensuring that biodiversity corridors are maintained, that these biodiversity offsets are all connected and are actually in the most appropriate place for long term planning.

15 So I think actually land use strategy is a far better position because the biodiversity falls into that rather than the other way around – having the biodiversity dictating the land use. And I think that's the – that's the key is what is the best next land use for the area and it's going to be different not just for each mine site but within each mine site there's going to be different areas. So a section may be cattle grazing, a section 20 may be an industrial precinct or other but I think the land use planning is the key. And there's definitely a need for the biodiversity offset but having some sort of strategic process to that is certainly what we have been talking about because council are the ones in 50 years time who are left with these holes of biodiversity that we can't do anything with.

25

MR PEARSON: And we haven't got the funding to do anything with it.

PROF O'KANE: I'm - - -

30 MR THOMPSON: And the other aspect of the biodiversity offsets is that they become non-rateable.

MS LUKEMAN: That's - - -

35 PROF O'KANE: Yes. Yes.

MS LUKEMAN: Yes.

40 PROF O'KANE: Somebody alluded to that.

MR THOMPSON: So there's something – this is poison chalice in perpetuity to the – this community as well.

45 MS LUKEMAN: Yes.

PROF O'KANE: Of course.

MS LUKEMAN: So it's something like 30 per cent of our LTA is currently tied up in mining.

PROF O'KANE: That's right. I remember you talked about this - - -

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MS LUKEMAN: Is that – is that the correct figure? Yes. So a large part of that 30 per cent we've got the voids but then we've also got the biodiversity offsets which, as I say, are not necessarily connected to a corridor. They don't necessarily make sense from - - -

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PROF O'KANE: Yes. I'm conscious of time too. No, keep going but we should - - -

MR PEARSON: Good. So I will – I will – look, I'll express the questions and if we run out of time perhaps they can be taken on notice, Mark. But so - - -

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PROF O'KANE: But if anyone needs to go, do too. You know, we're sort of - - -

MR PEARSON: Yes. We talked about decarbonisation and I was particularly interested in this risk that it presents of an early closure and whether the council has formed a view around the timing of the benefits of the project and, in the event of an early closure, if sufficient benefits have accrued to the council or to the LGA in that time period.

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MR JARRETT: Can I just ask what do you mean by an early closure? What's your timeframe of an early closure?

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MR PEARSON: Well, in a period less than the consent period so - - -

MR JARRETT: So less than 20 years.

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MR PEARSON: - - - 20 – less than 20 years.

MR JARRETT: We've just had a federal election and coal is a key indicator that kind of helped them get re-elected and I think they - - -

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MR PEARSON: Yes.

MR JARRETT: - - - kind of see it in a long term.

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MR PEARSON: So if you look at this particular project, what differentiates it from other projects certainly that I've seen is – is the sensitivity of this project to coal price forecasts relative to other projects. And so, therefore, the risk in a decarbonising environment of this project being at the – I guess, a greater risk of an unanticipated, you know, care or maintenance or early closure outcome is greater than, perhaps, another project, so potentially more consideration needs to be given to that issue with this project and perhaps other projects.

45

MR McNAMARA: What's the extent of the approval? How many years?

MR PEARSON: 20 years.

5 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: 20 years.

MR McNAMARA: 20? Well, you don't have a problem. You've got no problem there.

10 MS LUKEMAN: I don't think we've considered an early closure.

MR PEARSON: The markets - - -

MS LUKEMAN: .....

15

MR McNAMARA: There are people who are trying to save the planet and God bless them but coal will still be burning in 20 years time.

MR PEARSON: Yes.

20

MR McNAMARA: And it will be burning here in the Hunter Valley as well as everywhere else. The approval for 20 years - - -

MR PEARSON: Yes, yes.

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MR McNAMARA: If the coal is still there, they will still dig it.

MR JARRETT: There's still markets in Vietnam and Pakistan that haven't even been explored yet.

30

MR ADAMTHWAITE: You need coal to make ..... to make wind turbines.

MR PEARSON: That's right. Okay.

35 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Look at cars.

MR PEARSON: I was interested in council's position, so I've heard it.

MS LUKEMAN: It's not like we haven't considered it.

40

MR PEARSON: Okay. Okay. And then, look, I'll be quick and say - - -

MR ADAMTHWAITE: I'm not worried about it either.

45 MR PEARSON: Right. Okay. The project, you might have seen, relies on the use of achievable noise criteria. I'm wondering whether council has considered that, particularly in the context of the suite of pollution reduction programs that have been



implemented and with that, whether there's anything additional that council may like to see or has given any more thought to that issue or the PRP program.

5 MR McNAMARA: Well, what we've seen in the big mines, especially Warkworth which had a great impact on the town of Bulga was attenuation of the jewellery on the buckets on the drag lines, the reversing sounds on the bulldozers, the beepers on all of the machines – they've all been changed. You don't have the beepers anymore and that was the main complaint from the people up and down the river valley that right through the night they would hear reversing beepers while they were trying to  
10 sleep. They're gone. They have some flashing green lights and blue lights so there's no more of that. Coal and Allied spent – I'm sorry. I'm sorry; not Coal and Allied – Mount Thorley, Warkworth – Mount Thorley especially.

15 Mount Thorley spent – or was this Coal and Allied – thank you – millions and millions and millions of dollars on their bulldozers on stopping the plates on the tracks from clattering in the middle of the night when they were reversing up and down the hills. And also the mufflers. If I took you back to 1982 at Saxonvale which was the – the opening of Saxonvale open-cut was the closest that mining ever got to the village of Broke. It was the very beginning. And most of the guys who  
20 were working there in the starting crews either lived in Singleton or Broke or Bulga and then came up from down the Hunter further. But it was a pretty raw operation – I mean, compared to now. They took the mufflers – we talk about noise – they took the mufflers and they took the baffles out of the mufflers on these great bulldozers and – trucks, I mean, the trucks – so they would roar all night.

25 You could hear them in the best protected house out in the valley there. You could hear them. And people got used to it actually, but they didn't like it. No one liked it. And then, you know, it became necessary for that to change and they did change it. But Mount Thorley in the last five years – 10 years, 10 years, did a fantastic job with  
30 attenuation of the jewellery that they call it on the bucket and on the reversing clatter on the bulldozer and especially that beeper when they reverse. How's that.

MR MARTIN: We had many meetings with Coal and Allied and other mines about the noise minimisation and, like Tony said, they spent a lot of money on that.

35 MR PEARSON: Yes.

MR MARTIN: And it was effective. I mean, if you've got a combustion engine you're going to get some noise but it's – they've got it to a minimum now and the  
40 noise of the tracks on the bulldozer and so on. So they were very good at it.

MR McNAMARA: Apparently if you take the mufflers – the baffles out of the mufflers on a Detroit diesel you get a 12 per cent increase in power and when they're 250 tons – no, they're 400 tons – they won't fit up the Golden Highway. One got  
45 jammed in the bridge the other day at Mount Thorley – too wide.

MR ADAMTHWAITE: I did a CCC meeting last week and I won't mention any names but it's out of town and it bothers people in Jerrys Plains – although they all do – it bothers people in Jerrys Plains and I think the year ending – just finished – there was 30 complaints. And the – there was – the majority were dust, the next one  
5 was light, then there was noise, then there was blasting. So dust was just a big one and then there was the light, believe it or not. That comes from the light – lighting plants that light the area up for night time work could be pointing and look in – and look in at the house or something like that. And then the blasting – well, it's over-  
10 pressure or whatever that – yes.

MR PEARSON: So did you get your answer, Tony?

MR McNAMARA: I did, yes.

15 PROF O'KANE: I think we're - - -

MR McNAMARA: Thank you. No, no.

20 PROF O'KANE: I think we're probably close. We're really grateful. It has been a fantastic meeting, and so can I again say thank you to all of you for coming and if there's other things we're sort of open for comment till 5 pm on Tuesday next week so we would love to hear. Thank you.

25 MR ADAMTHWAITE: Well, we all better go and get our overalls on and go to work.

**RECORDING CONCLUDED**

**[6.46 pm]**