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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING

RE: RIX'S CREEK SOUTH CONTINUATION OF MINING PROJECT

PANEL:

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

ASSISTING PANEL:

**RACHEL MANSTED
DENNIS LEE
CALLUM FIRTH**

LOCATION:

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

DATE:

9.59 AM, MONDAY, 29 JULY 2019

PROF M. O’KANE: Good morning. Good morning and welcome. To get – well, in starting, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Wonnarua people, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and future. Before I get in to the formal business of the opening statement, let me read
5 the evacuation material. So in case of an emergency, for example a fire, please evacuate the building via the marked exit doors. The order to evacuate may be signified by an alarm siren or announced. An instruction to evacuate to a marked area should be followed without delay to assist council in ensuring that the health and safety of all staff and visitors is maintained. The muster areas are on the grassed
10 areas each side of the auditorium. Thank you. Sorry.

As I said, welcome. Today is the public meeting on the development application from Bloomfield Collieries Proprietary Limited, referred to later on as the applicant, which is seeking to extend open cut mining at Rix’s Creek Mine for a further 21
15 years to – sorry. Yes. I will read that. My name is Mary O’Kane. I’m chair of the Independent Planning Commission and chair of this panel and we are determining this proposal. Joining me are my fellow commissioners Andrew Hutton waving and Tony Pearson. We’re supported by Dennis Lee and Callum Firth from the Commission’s Secretariat. And we’re also being supported today by Rachel
20 Mansted, who’s sitting behind me, who is here to assist the Commission in directing the hearing as counsel assisting.

Before I continue, I should state that all appointed Commissioners must make an annual declaration of interest, identify potential conflicts with their appointed role.
25 For the record, we are unaware of any actual or perceived conflicts of interest in relation to our looking at this development application. Further information is available on our website. You can find information on that website also on how we manage conflicts of interest and our policy regarding that. Another matter – those of you who have been here before are familiar with this, that in the interests of openness
30 and transparency, today’s meeting is being recorded and a full transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission’s website. Just a little bit about what the Commission is.

The Independent Planning Commission of New South Wales was established by the
35 New South Wales Government on 1 March 2018 as an independent statutory body. The Commission plays an important role in strengthening transparency and independence in the decision-making processes for major development and land use planning in New South Wales. The key functions of the Commission include determining State Significant Development applications, conducting public hearings
40 when requested to do so by the Minister or the Greater Sydney Commission and providing independent expert advice on planning and development matters when requested by the Minister for Planning or the Planning Secretary.

The Commission is the designated consent authority for State Significant
45 Development applications under certain conditions and these conditions – or these – each of these three conditions can trigger it: more than 25 public objections,

reportable political donations by the applicant, objections by the relevant local council. The Commission is the consent authority for the Rix's Creek Mine expansion project because more than 25 public objections have been received and the applicant has made reportable political donations. So, now, a quick summary of where we are in the process. As you're aware, the Commission at the Minister's request previously held a public hearing in relation to this project. As such, no merit appeal may be made under division 8.3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act in respect of any future decision made by the Commission as consent authority under this EP&A Act in relation to the carrying out of this development.

After the public hearing, the Commission produced a report on 31 August 2018. The applicant has responded and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, known as DPIE now, has produced its final assessment report on this matter. This public meeting gives us, the Commission, the opportunity to hear your views on the response from the applicant to the Commission's review and on the Department's final assessment report, plus any other matters to the project before we determine the matter. So next steps after today. Following today's meeting, we will endeavour to complete our determination as soon as possible, however, there may be delays if we need further information. After this meeting today, we will be meeting with the Singleton Council and tomorrow, we will be carrying out a site inspection. After that, we may convene with relevant stakeholders if clarification or additional information is required on matters raised. Records of all meetings will be published on the Commission's website.

A couple of things about written submissions. The Commission will continue to accept written submissions or comments until 5 pm on Tuesday, 6 August 2019. Anyone can send written submissions or comments to the Commission before that time. You can do so by sending your submissions or comments by email to ipcn@ipcn.nsw.gov.au or by post to Independent Planning Commission, level 3, 201 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, 2000. As you may be aware, the Department recently wrote to the Commission that further assessment will be needed on the air quality impacts of this project. Once this assessment has been completed, it will be posted on the Commission's website, along with details on the length of time allowed for any comments you might have on the issue.

Now moving to today's ground rules. Before we hear from our first registered speaker, I will lay out these ground rules of what we expect of everybody taking part in today's meeting. First, today's meeting is not a debate. Our panel will not take questions from the floor and no interjections are allowed. Our aim is to provide maximum opportunity for people to speak and to be heard by the panel. We understand and appreciate that public speaking is an ordeal for many people. Though you may not agree with everything you hear today, each speaker has the right to be treated with respect and to be heard in silence. Today's focus is public consultation. Our panel is here to listen, not to comment. However, counsel assisting and Commissioners may ask questions for clarification.

It will be most beneficial if your presentation is focused on issues of concern to you. If somebody has spoken in the registered speaker order ahead of you and you agree exactly with what they say, you could just say, "I agree with so-and-so and my comments are the same" and that will be recorded and taken into account. You don't
5 have to repeat everything you said, but you have every right to repeat it if you wish. It's important also that everyone registered to speak receives a fair share of time. Counsel assisting will enforce the speaking times that were nominated in this instance for each speaker. We've made a small number of adjustments to the order
10 this morning, as people have had to change things and have kindly let us know, so there's just a tiny set of rearrangements.

As chair, I reserve the right to allow additional time where I judge it is needed. A warning bell will sound one minute before the speaker's allotted time is up and again when it runs out. Please respect these time limits. Though we will strive to stick to
15 our schedule today, speakers sometimes don't show up or decide not to speak. If you know someone will not be attending, please advise Dennis and Callum and they will adjust the schedule accordingly. If you would like to project something onto the screen, please give the memory stick or whatever to Dennis or Callum before you make your presentation. If you have a copy of your presentation, whether the words
20 you're going to say or overhead slides, it would be appreciated if you could provide a copy to the Secretariat after you speak and thank you to all of those who have already provided copies of what they're going to say. We appreciate that.

Please note that any information given to us may be made public. The Commission's
25 privacy statement governs our approach to your information. Again, if you would like a copy of that statement, you can obtain one from the Secretariat or from our website. As I noted earlier, everything will be recorded on transcript through Auscript and put on our website. And, finally, I request that you turn mobile phones to silent and I will now pass over to counsel assisting, who will direct the conduct of
30 the meeting. Ms Mansted.

MS R. MANSTED: Thank you, Professor O'Kane. We have an order of speakers today and the meeting schedule has been distributed. I notice there are a couple of
35 spare copies on the chairs at the front if anybody is missing a schedule of speakers and would like one. There is one error that I should indicate at the beginning and that is that Mr Geoff Moore will be speaking on behalf of the Bloomfield Group. There are some other speakers indicated on the list as being from the Bloomfield Group. Those people will be speaking in their personal capacity as while they're employees of the Bloomfield Group, they are not speaking for or on behalf of the
40 company. For anybody who hasn't yet provided a copy of their speaking notes or PowerPoint presentation, please do feel free to come up and provide that to Dennis and to Callum. The first speaker will be Mr Geoff Moore from the Bloomfield Group and I invite him to come forward.

45 MR G. MOORE: First of all, thank you to the Commission for the opportunity to speak today. And I would like to start just by providing a little bit of an overview of the operation – if that works. So Rix's Creek South is part of the Rix's Creek Mine.

It has been owned and operated by the Bloomfield Group since 1990, with the majority of the area on the northern side of the railway, which – hopefully, that’s the pointer – yes. So the majority of the area on this side, having been mined and rehabilitated since that – since the mine started in 1990. 70 per cent of the
5 employees reside locally, with about one third coming from Singleton. Rix’s Creek Mine has a trainee program which will be expanded as we go forward. And the business currently supports about 30 apprentices in a program that has operated for more than 40 years, even through some fairly challenging times. So that’s obviously through the Bloomfield Group as the – as the business.

10 The current consent for Rix’s Creek South is to 24 March 2020. And I will just draw attention to the – to the green line on the plan, which is the current approved disturbance boundary for – for the mine as it sits now. So some changes to the project since the EIS was originally submitted. With the purchase of the Integra
15 Open Cut by Bloomfield in 2015 – that allowed a reduction in the maximum extraction level sought from the four and a-half million tonnes ROM to 3.6 million tonnes.

20 This resulted in a reduction in noise and air-quality impacts. The purchase also allowed the integration of acquired sound-attenuated equipment, and it removed the need for a rail loop as part of the approval. Changes were made to the North Pit to remove the need to divert Stonequarry Creek and to the West Pit to avoid Deadman’s Gully. The footprint of – of the project is small. It’s about one-eighth of the size of the current approved area.

25 As – as you noted, the, um, independent – well, sorry – the Independent Planning Commission’s review report from last year had 26 recommendations, and it did conclude that if the applicant can satisfactorily address the various recommendations contained within this review report, the project may have merit. So we’ve
30 considered each of the recommendations and included actions and commitments to address these, ah, in our response to the Department of Planning in December last year. One of the Independent Planning Commission recommendations included a revision to the mine plan, and I’d like to cover that recommendation now. So recommendation 16 spoke to a change to the mine plan, effectively in line with, ah,
35 this option 1.

So this involved removal of the need for the western out-of-pit dump – this area through here, um, and had the – the waste that, ah, would have reported to that in the original plan, ah, being placed on the North Pit in this area here – North Pit dump –
40 and also in the South Pit. That, ah, waste would obviously increase the – the height of the, ah, the current – these current emplacement areas. Um, and it did involve covering, um, previously rehabilitated areas. We also considered another option, our option 2, which removed the need for the southern half of the western out-of-pit dump, um, and the volume that reported to that part of the dump was then placed on
45 both the South Pit dump and the North Pit dump in a similar way to opt – as option 1 proposed.

The – the difference with, ah, option 2 is that the – the footprint of the – particularly the North Pit dump, ah, was – is less than what was proposed in option 1, um, significantly avoiding, ah, some previously, ah, rehabilitated woodland area, and also the dump height is less, ah, in – in the North Pit in that case. So the trade-off study
5 was completed as a like-for-like comparison, with the same parameters that, ah, we used in the EIS. Equipment quantities were unchallenged, except where they were modified for haulage lengths. And the results of both the air quality assessment and the noise impact assessment indicated no significant or – or reasonably measurable, ah, change compared with the EIS.

10 So the benefits and impacts of the – the two options compared to the EIS proposal are presented on this slide. So for option 1 the results were reduction of 34 per cent in the biodiversity offset credits required, significant increase in truck haulage and cost, due to the volume, distance and elevation, with 92 per cent of the volume going
15 to the North Pit emplacement area, and eight per cent to the South Pit emplacement area. It required re-disturbance of 24 hectares of established planted woodland on the North Pit overburden emplacement area, and has a re – reduction in class 4 and 5 landforms for post-mine. The option 2 results produced slightly less reduction in the biodiversity offset credits, but still a reduction of 24 per cent.

20 Option 2 also has an increase cost associated with the haul distance, but this is – is lower – a lower increase than for option 1, as only 41 per cent of the volume, ah, actually reports to the North Pit. Option 2, ah, is re-disturbance of four hectares of younger planted woodland, ah, on the North Pit overburden emplacement area, but
25 preserves the more-established woodland that, ah, we will look at, ah, tomorrow on the – on the site inspection. Option 2 has more usable final landform compared to option 1. So option 2 was our preferred option and was recommended, ah, with the benefits being the reduction in required credits, as mentioned, of 24 per cent compared to the original proposal, and a minimal loss of the established, mature
30 vegetation.

From visual impact and final landform assessments, option 2 provides a better outcome than option 1, with the lower 10-metre, ah, North Pit dump. And option 2 provides the greatest operational flexibility, with multiple emplacement destinations
35 that will provide options to mitigate weather impacts and best manage noise and dust potential. Option 2 is essentially cost-neutral, compared to the original proposal. So the following, ah, three slides show the development over time for option 2. In 2020 active mining will occurring in the – in the West Pit, ah, operation, and it will be progressively moving towards the North.

40 Capping of the tailings then in the South Pit will be, ah, ongoing at that point and the dumps will be starting to get established in the – on the western out-of-pit dump area, as well as on the North Pit, um, and progressive rehabilitation will occur as these dumps are, ah, completed in lifts. The lower sections will be – will be rehabilitated,
45 and that will be the same – similar case for, uh – for the north pit. In 2023, mining is still progressing towards the north. Uh, the south pit would be finished at that stage and rehabilitated, and the western out of pit emplacement area, and also the north pit,

will, uh, continue to be raised. 2023 is the year of the highest – of highest production, uh, nominated.

5 In 2026, active mining rates decrease as the area of the west pit starts to become more re- constrained. Dumping on the western out-of-pit emplacement area, and also the north pit areas, are getting close to being finalised. Um, but as – and as mining continues past this point, this – uh, this area continues to, um, to reduce, and there are further reductions, uh, in the production levels going forward from that point. The final landform compared to the EIS case has the reduced out-of-pit
10 dump area and this area here, but has increased height in both the south pit and also the north pit areas. From a biodiversity point of view - - -

MR PEARSON: Mr Moore - - -

15 MR MOORE: As previously noted, adoption of option 2 would reduce the required credits by 24 per cent.

MR PEARSON: Sorry, Mr Moore. Could – I’m not sure if this is working. Could I – could I go back another couple of slides, where you talk about option 1 and option
20 2, and you step through the different – that one there. On the third point you indicate noise and dust impacts. You will be aware that the department has identified, in the air quality assessment, a number of omissions. Are you aware of what changes, uh, may arise to that assessment of noise and dust impacts as a result of this omission?

25 MR MOORE: Uh, I do actually address that later in the – in the presentation in terms of – of – of what that is, but what we’ve – what we presented was that the, uh, be – between option 1, option 2 and the original EIS case, they – the – the lines of impacts were essentially the same. There was nothing – no significant difference between those. But I will – I will come back and address that, if I could, towards the
30 end.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MR MOORE: So with the, uh – with the biodiversity, as mentioned, credits will
35 reduce by 24 per cent compared to the original. A – the four-stage approach is proposed for – for offsets associated with disturbance for mining and emplacement areas, and these are as per the recommended consent conditions. For the offsets, we have in place two land-based offset sites which would fulfil the majority of credits required – this, of course, pending the assessment of reasonable equivalents that
40 needs – needs to be done. There will be a need to purchase some credits that don’t meet the particular, um, classification – PCT classifications, and they will be either purchased through market or via the biodiversity conservation fund.

45 On the rehabilitation, the rehabilitation strategy has been updated to include the principals of the strategic framework objectives and practices and knowledge-based, and also stakeholder engagement and a review of the final void. We will continue to actively graze cattle on rehabilitated land. That’s what we’re targeting as our final

landform use at this point. There has been some recent media reports around rehabilitation forms, following a resources regulator blitz audit, Rix's Creek mine was issued with an improvement notice, noting that there were areas of high weeding density, low species diversity, pasture and a disconnect in results.

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So, to put some context to this, the predominant areas of weeds were on the edge of the rehabilitation areas. We spent a lot of effort and money in managing weeds. The weed management is an ongoing task, and certainly in dryer conditions without water, as – as any person on the land knows – any areas are a target for weeds, and it's a case for prioritising the important areas. But, uh, we have a – an ongoing program of – of managing that, but it's – it's focused where it needs to be at this point, given the, uh – the conditions we're in at the moment.

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On the species diversity issue, we had a pre-planned assessment organised by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries New South Wales Agriculture, and that's part of a – an ACARP project that has been ongoing for a number of years looking at the physical, biological and chemical aspects of the soil profile development of rehabilitated pastures. And they serve a – the same area that was inspected by the resources regulator.

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They know that there were 27 species in that same area. I think that's certainly not what you would call low species diversity. On the monitoring results, we will need to update our mining operations plan, but what was raised on the date of the audit was that our monitoring sites we were required to take a photo to the left of the transect, another photo to the right of the transect, and what we had actually done is taken a panoramic photo, so, you know, obviously it was a – a disconnect from – from that regard. I'm sure people make up their own minds, uh, on this, but I certainly don't consider that that's – was reported as failed rehabilitation. We're proud of our re- rehabilitation, and, again, look forward to showing you that on the site inspection.

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In relation to, uh – to noise and the recommendations, we note that a copy of the noise management plan can be found on the website. The website also provides contact details for the 24-hour community and blasting hotline. The current attenuated equipment list has been provided, and timing for additional attenuation works is being confirmed in the recommended conditions. Cleaning of the preparation plant has now been completed, and in relation to how the noise will vary of the life of the project, the – the noise levels, uh, to the south and southeast are expected to reduce one to two dB over time as active mining areas progress to the north, away from Singleton.

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Conversely, an increase to the northwest of a similar magnitude is, uh – is expected as mining progresses generally in that direction. However, the active mining areas in the west pit are located a significant distance from, uh, receivers, so that increase is – is likely to be minor in that area. And as the operation moves further to the north as I mentioned previously, uh, the actual, uh, concentration of equipment also reduces over time.

45

These are considered as trends, but the meteorological conditions, including enhancement, will override these, and this is where our off-site monitoring process will continue to manage within our limits. So we will continue to, uh – to monitor noise as the off-site receptive locations during the evening and night times, and as
5 part of our ongoing management we will continue to make operation and modifications, including progressive shutdown, as and when needed.

The, uh – the final point on – on this, uh, slide relates to a recent audit by the New South Wales EPA, where they noted that we have a robust and comprehensive noise
10 management system. In relation to air quality and, uh, to – I guess present how we view that will vary over time, uh, that's probably a bit, uh – not terribly clear with the – with the plan, but, uh, essentially, uh, we have, uh – these are the, um, 25-
15 micron levels presented for the different years. And while there is not major variance over time, there's a slight increase to the northwest in the initial years as the production increases, and then we see a contraction of those levels, uh, with time. And, uh, further reduction will be anticipated when the north pit and, uh, the western out-of-pit dump areas are complete, and as production levels continue to reduce in the latter third of the project.

20 Meteorological condition – conditions will continue to be monitored to manage and minimise impacts, and, uh, we will continue to use our proactive and reactive systems and tarps. We, uh – we utilise a predictive model system, which forecasts dust risk. This is reviewed daily to inform modifications to operations. We have, uh, protocols on the website linked to the, uh – linked to the Upper Hunter Air Quality
25 Monitoring Networks as well as details for the EPA environmental line and a link to instructions on how to use the environmental line.

As was mentioned before, and certainly been in the media, the Department of Planning has asked Bloomfield to assess additional receptors northwest of our
30 proposed operation, as show on the plan. The operation is this area here, so this – this is the location that we've been asked to, uh, do further assessments. Uh, we note that these are further from the mine than other receptors that were assessed as part of the air quality monitoring. But Bloomfield – we've always acknowledged that the assessment process has to be thoroughly, and willingly addressed – request for
35 additional information, uh, throughout the process.

The air quality impact assessment has been the subject of many reviews over – over the years. We consider it sound, and the model does not require any change to provide the additional information requested. And the report here has been with the
40 Department of Planning and in the public domain since 2015.

While it's disappointing that this has been raised at this stage, we have nothing to hide and we will provide the addendum to the – the Rix's Creek South Air Quality Reports as soon as possible. So, I think in – I guess – sorry. In response to your –
45 your previous question, uh, that – we've had all this area here with respect as, uh, in this location, and it's really just to provide a bit more information covers off what you were after?

MR PEARSON: It does to a degree, yes. Thank you.

MR MOORE: Yes. Regarding greenhouse gas – gases, the annual scope 1 and 2 emissions for the project are quite large, as you will see up there – 0.009 per cent of Australia’s annual emissions, and 0.011 per cent of Australia’s 2020 commitment under the Paris Agreement.

Our – our coal is exported to Japan, both metallurgical and thermal coals; Taiwan, metallurgical at the moment; and South Korea thermal coals. Japan and South Korea are both signatories to the Paris Agreement and have reduction targets said. Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as they have been actively denied participation by China’s influence. Nevertheless, Taiwan has developed greenhouse gas reduction targets under its Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act, and has committed these in their domestic laws.

I think, actually, they’re probably more, uh – more than what, uh, many of the, uh, countries within the Paris Agreement have said. Going forward, though, the metallurgical coal, uh, of which we produce 60 per cent from Rix’s Creek South, the demand for steel manufacturing is still required throughout the project life. For thermal coal, the customers demand will still continue. New power stations are currently being commissioned in both Japan and Korea.

MR PEARSON: Mr Moore, if I could ask – sorry. Um, you’ve listed, obviously, the Paris Agreement countries as the destination for your coal, um, presumably because you feel that’s important. Um, how – could you provide any comment on, um, what your position might be if, um, those countries ceased to be Paris Agreement countries?

MR MOORE: Uh, look, I – I – are you asking as a personal comment on that or company policy?

MR PEARSON: No, company – company – what would the company’s position be if the export destinations for the coal ceased to be Paris Agreement countries?

MR MOORE: Perhaps I would like to take that one on notice. So, in conclusion, through its operations, activities and actions over the last 30 years, Rix’s Creek South has demonstrated support for the local council businesses and community and charity groups. The group and its employees provide substantial and ongoing support in cash and in kind to community initiatives. The project will provide employment for up to 217 site-based fulltime employees, and up to an estimated 56 fulltime equivalent external contractors. It also provides employment for the Bloomfield corporate personnel and internal engineering services.

Significant economic benefits are provided to the Hunter community in the form of wages and expenditure for supplies and contractors. In the current year, the group expenditure there is just under 290 million, and Rix’s Creek allocation – that’s 114

million. Bloomfield Group is an Australian-owned company and contributes to federal and state governments with royalties and taxes. The current year group costs 102 million, and Rix's Creek allocation of that was 49 million.

5 As far as the project, the option 2 project area is only 15 per cent of the current
approved disturbance area. 43 per cent of the current approved footprint is
rehabilitated with approximately 60 hectares already sustainably grazed. The project
will provide a logical extension of the existing operation, recovering additional coal
resource and allowing for a systematic sequence to provide a long-term, stable, final
10 land use. Thank you.

PROF O'KANE: Just one – sorry, can I – I can now be heard. Just one question, if
I may. You discussed the differences between option 2 and option 1, and indicated
that the applicant's preferred option is option 2 because of the advantages that you
15 outlined of that option. Are there, to your mind – and as far as the company is
concerned – is – is – is it your view that there are any advantages of option 1 over
option 2?

MR MOORE: The, uh – I guess the main focus, as we understood, for option 1 was
20 really to avoid having that out-of-pit dump area. So there is a – uh, I guess there is
advantage from that point of view. But, uh – I – I think an – an – probably like the
Commission to have a look at the – the area that we're pro- that option 1 needs to
cover on the north pit. Uh, and I think when – when that site inspection is done, that
will tell the story of what – what, uh – what the real benefit of option 2 is over option
25 1. Obviously, there is also, uh – less costs associated with the option 1 as well.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. One further question in relation to the rehabilitation.
Following the resources regulator's, um, determination – the recent determination to
which you referred in your remarks, have systems been put in place that have
30 changed regarding rehabilitation? For example, changes in governance practices and
how – if – if those systems have changed following that – that audit by the systems
regulator, could you explain how they have changed?

MR MOORE: No, there have not been any changes at – at this stage. As I
35 mentioned, the – the weed management is an ongoing process. The – the other two
aspects that were raised, it was – even though there was a consider – or a thought by
the resources regulator that the species diversity was not – was not good, I think that
has been proven not to be the case from the – the work that was done by New South
Wales Agriculture. They're – they're agronomists, they're – they're there to – to
40 actually make an assessment independent of the resources regulator report, but
coincidentally it was on the same area. So, you know, they – they will be responses
that we're providing back to the resources regulator.

MS MANSTEAD: And one final question, unless the – in relation to greenhouse
45 gas emissions and in particular scope 3 emissions, and following on from a question
from the Commission, what if any are your views on an appropriate way to mitigate
scope 3 emissions from the mine, and in particular taking into account that the miner

appli – the – the approval grant – the application for approval is for a number of years and there may be changes not only in respect of various countries' signatory status to treaties, but also in respect of countries to which the mine's product is exported, and the compliance by those countries with their treaty obligations or their
5 other publicly stated policies at this stage, and are there any proposals in place to mitigate those risks?

MR MOORE: Again, I think I'd have to take that on – on notice, but it's – it's – it's a fairly difficult question looking forward on – on what may happen in – in the
10 future. I'm not aware that the current countries that we export to have indicated any desire not to be part of the Paris Agreement, and I think on a recent – recent visit to Taiwan they certainly were ahead of the game in terms of – of their focus on – on greenhouse gas reduction programmes. Obviously, they've got them in a – in a domestic law as I mentioned, but the – the companies – the customer we visited was
15 very focused on that part of their business.

PROF O'KANE: And we have a question here.

MR PEARSON: One final question, if I may. In an earlier side you indicate the net
20 present value of option 2.

MR MOORE: Yes.

MR PEARSON: Are you able to provide information in relation to the net present
25 value of option 1?

MR MOORE: Yes. There's a – a response that will be coming back to – to the Commission from our previous meeting – that's certainly in there. I recall the number I think on an NPV basis was around about 6.8 for option 1, but I'll certainly
30 confirm that in the – in the information that will come back to the Commission this week.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

35 PROF O'KANE: Thank you.

MR MOORE: Thank you.

MS MANSTED: Our next speaker is Deidre Olofsson.
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MS D. OLOFSSON: Do I – do I start, do I? Okay. My name's Deidre Olofsson. I live in the little village of Camberwell. I have 38 years of experience in the energy industry, and here I am today to represent my community of the land – of the private landholders. Now, looking at the document Rix's Creek South Continuation Mining
45 Project, I refer to the – the statement by the – statement by the department. The department considers that Bloomfield has approx – appropriately implemented or otherwise addressed the Commission's recommendations.

The consultation with key government agencies and the Department considers that all the residue – residual assessments and issues have been resolved and can otherwise be conditioned. Then I go to New South Wales Health. Now, it states here:

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Advise that it's continued to have concerns about – over the project's predicted air quality impacts and Bloomfield's ability to comply with national environment protection measure and goals of particular matter. The Department consideration of the air quality impacts is addressed following a review of the conditions and New South Wales Health advised its concerns had been addressed.

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Now, I've looked on the website and I was not able to find a letter stating this. The only letter I could find on the website was 25 – 21st of December 2018 from Kathleen Taylor, stating:

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In our letter the 29th of June 2018, we detailed particular concerns relating to air quality impacts of residents of exceedance of Nippon PM10 goals. We note the air quality mandatory actions PM10 triggers actions, and overall we – the concerns we have raised previously regarding impacts on air quality from the proposal continue.

20

Now, there is no other letter. Now, I go to the transcript between Howard Reed and the IPCM, which gives the indication that this quote from the – in the book in your thing is not correct, because you refer to Howard Reed's comment really call the balancing act, look at all values and all impacts of benefits of costs whereas other agencies are – many other agencies come from single issue that's their legislation. The very degree advocate the under-air values that underpin their legislation. Every officer within the agency would take the same view – some stronger advocates. So that's not a really impressive statement.

25

30

But then I go to Professor O'Kane's response. Every time – everything – we've been wondering – wondering and we haven't settled on it yet, but this sort of early notice that we might get you to organise a meeting with us and Health to talk this out because they always say every time I've been involved in a case that there's no safe letter of particular matter. And yet you know, even in the Hunter – it's not Beijing – well, Camberwell must be feel like Beijing. We have so many exceedances it's unfair to – that statement I find disgusting.

35

It's still air quality – it – it is, but it probably means that some sort of standard condition is needed to – in the notification of the people, the each location's side of things. Now, should we actually look at this. Please refer to World Health Organisation ambient. Ambient outdoor and air quality and health, dated the 2nd of May 2018. Key facts: air pollution is a major environmental risk to health. By reducing air pollution levels, countries can reduce the burden of disease from stroke, heart disease, lung cancer and both chronic and acute respiratory diseases including asthma.

40

45

The lower the level of air pollution, the better the cardiovascular and respiratory health our population will be, both long and short term. The WHO – the WHO air quality guidelines global update 2005 provide an assessment of health defects of air pollution and thresholds for health harmful pollution levels. In 2016, 91 percent of the world population was living in places where WHO air quality guidelines levels were not met.

Now, I refer to “Health effects”, which actually:

10 *There is a close, quantitative relationship between exposure to high concentrations of small particulate –*

matter:

15 *...(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and increased mortality or morbidity, both daily and over time...small particulate pollution have health impacts even at ... low concentrations – indeed no threshold has been identified below which no damage to health is observed. Therefore, the WHO 2005 guideline ... aimed to achieve the lowest concentrations of PM possible.*

20

Now, I – that’s where Health, I presume, got their information from. Are you stating that WHO is incorrect? WHO guidelines – they are stating annual average is 20 for PM_{10s} on the guideline. And the definition for particulate matter is:

25 *...a common proxy indicator for air pollution.*

So the comment in there, in the needs to be looked at again. There’s no way I believe that Health has changed their position and there’s no documentation to prove it otherwise. And the other part is when Howard Reed sends an email one day before registration stating that it needs to have an air quality assessment updated, actually impacts the community of – to make a submission. And it should have been available today and this meet should not – would have gone ahead. Now, go to a letter from New South Wales Health also related to Mt Owen continuation project from Dr David Durrheim. He said:

35

...although the proponent predicts that excess PM₁₀ concentration will be less than two and that the proposed modification would not be contribute to the annual average PM₁₀ concentrations at location, the proposed modification does increase the public health risk to residents in the area, particularly the remaining Camberwell residents –

40

so:

45 *...the proponent notes that the modelling an annual average of PM₁₀ concentrations are predicted to exceed 25 –*

and that is on another mine proposal still hasn't been finished – assessment. So Camberwell is under extreme concern. Then you look at the air quality statement in 2018 from The Argus:

5 *Last year Camberwell had the dubious honour of recording the highest number of days over –*

PM₁₀ particulate matter pollution – for 44 days. Now, I've got to say, Camberwell is impacted by cumulative impacts. And it should be actually noted that we should not
10 be treated in this manner. Now, I go to the Jacobs report from Glendell Mod 4 which you look on page 14, which is to do with – it states here:

...the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network ... 2012 – 27 ... 2013 – 28

15

this was all related to PM₁₀ annual average:

...2014 – 25 ... 2015 – 22 ... 2016 – 25 ... 2017 – 25.

20 But when I looked at the AGL report with Bayswater, it said 27, so I'm not quite sure there:

...2018 – 31.

25 Now, that exceeds World Health Organisation guidelines and yet you think it's a joke that Camberwell has to be covered in that much dust. The air pollution is in
exceedance and these people need to be addressed. We need a proper cumulative
impact study, not the one from 2010 which is now a joke but something that actually
30 addresses the cumulative impacts of air quality. It has not improved at all in the last seven – six years. So you're telling me adding another mine, more dust, is going to
make an improvement – that's ridiculous. On the other matter, actually in the
document it says that Camberwell has acquisition rights under Rix's Creek North so
please provide the – where that's stated. Camberwell residents in the village only
had mitigation rights - - -

35

MS MANSTED: Ms Olofsson, I don't wish to interrupt you, but I would just say that this is – the determination has not yet been made.

MS OLOFSSON: No.

40

MS MANSTED: Please - - -

MS OLOFSSON: But it does - - -

45 MS MANSTED: I understand – I understand that you feel strongly about this issue but can I ask that you address your comments to the application - - -

MS OLOFSSON: Yes, it is - - -

MS MANSTED: - - - rather than – rather than to the Commissioners - - -

5 MS OLOFSSON: Yes.

MS MANSTED: - - - in the form of rhetorical questions.

10 MS OLOFSSON: Yes – no – but it say in there that Camberwell has acquisition rights under the North project. It's in the book.

MS MANSTED: That's – I'm quite happy for you to make - - -

15 MS OLOFSSON: Yes. And that - - -

MS MANSTED: - - - the submission that you wish to make - - -

MS OLOFSSON: Yes.

20 MS MANSTED: - - - and you should do so. But the guidelines for this public meeting - - -

MS OLOFSSON: Yes.

25 MS MANSTED: - - - just ask that - - -

MS OLOFSSON: Yes. Okay. I understand.

30 MS MANSTED: - - - you not address the – you not address the comments to any particular person in a - - -

MS OLOFSSON: I'm not.

35 MS MANSTED: - - - in a derogatory manner.

MS OLOFSSON: No. And I could not find – there is no reference to – or anything in the Integra thing consent conditions that Camberwell residents have acquisition rights at all. So I cannot find that, so I don't know what the Department was saying. In relation to biodiversity credits. Now, in the biodiversity credits, it states that the company would need to purchase four credits for bulk oak, narrow-leaved ironbark 4276 credits – this is and on grey box grassy woodlands 28 credits and spotted gum 120 credits. Now, in the recent – because I didn't understand what a credit was. It was very difficult. So – I've just got to find my document. At the last CCC meeting at – community consultative meeting, we – I asked the company – because recently we can remember in the Land and Environment Court, they had to purchase 2716 credits.

40

45

Now, the – my question was Bloomfield to the credits required under consent orders – advised she had not heard anything about what has happened. And the company confirmed they require the credits were purchased through the Biodiversity Conservation Trust – or fund. Bloomfield had purchased some properties

5 described process with the office of the – process with the Department. So I wrote to the BCT Trust, which – trying to find my letter. I'm so disorganised. And it was very upsetting where – sorry – I can't find the letter – here it is. To understand how the Trust works. So the question I asked:

10 *...in relation to credit purchased by the developer is set where the credits must be in relation to the development?*

So I understood where they came from:

15 *...in relation to the credits, is there a credit – is there a criteria that the certain land and flora and fauna must be acquired as part of the credit purchase –*

and that meets the land that on in the development:

20 *...in relation to credit purchased by a developer, is there a set timeframe that the BCT must acquire the land ... in the case that BCT is unable to acquire the land, is the biodiversity credits purchased by the developer refunded?*

The response from the dev – from the comp – from the BCT is that they had received the payments from the Biodiversity Trust for what was just said in the minutes. Now, the interesting part was:

30 *...the legislation does not set a timeframe which offsets must be secured, however, the BCT will make every effort to deliver offsets in a timely fashion ... there are no provisions under legislation to refund the development payments and we will report our progress through annual reports –*

Now, we're talking about a lot of biodiversity credits in this proposal. I – today, I don't know whether they're going to be – it's a concern that they might never be able to purchase them, where they're going to purchase them and there's a lot of other questions I didn't quite get is how they're going to make the compliance. Is there enough land available in the Hunter to meet all of what is required in their proposal on if they can't and there's no legislation requirement to meet – to secure with any time, we could be waiting in the Hunter, maybe, 10, 15, 20 years. So, to me, this is unfair. We might not ever get these biodiversity credits addressed, and that letter was sent from Maria on the 1st of July. So she responded very quickly and it was very understanding.

45 MS MANSTED: And can I ask that if you haven't already provided a copy of that letter to the secretariat, that you - - -

MS OLOFSSON: Yeah.

MS MANSTED: - - - do so if you wish.

MS OLOFSSON: Okay. But it does state, you know, they tried to do everything they can, but the issue is they might not ever meet the requirements. The other issue
5 is related to rehabilitation, and I think we've already discussed – we've heard from Bloomfield about their regulatory problems with compliance – compliance blitz, which is a concern, because in the report it says how much they talk about rehabilitation. But it says:

10 *The coal mines were issues S240 notices –*

and that was Ravensworth, Rix's Creek. Related to Rix's Creek North, it states:

15 *...was issued to update the current mining operation plan and to direct – address risks to satisfactory rehabilitation progress identified during the review and the rehabilitation monitoring against completion criteria.*

And then the north is also run. That used to be the former Integra:

20 *The inspection identified areas of high weed density, unexplained areas of low species diversity –*

this is what we're talking about, offsets –

25 *and pastoral rehabilitation.*

Relating to Rix's Creek South, it states on page – that was on page 10. On page 11:

30 *An inspection identified areas of high weed density, unexplained areas of low species diversity, and with pastoral rehabilitation. A disconnect between monitoring records and rehabilitation area against completion criteria and rehabilitation maintenance and activities, and a notice was issued. Current mining operation plan to address the risks.*

35 I mean, the only thing I didn't know or I couldn't find is how long this has been going on for. Now, this is extremely important. We're talking about rehabilitation of land in this proposal – whether it's 1 or 2 – that they're going to meet it. And they're talking about – the other part of the rehabilitation is what classification of land it's going to be, 4 or 5. When I actually looked in documents to find what a
40 classification is, with a final void in a land form, I couldn't find it. The only thing I could find was in an old document in 1995, Camberwell Coal, stating that the classification with a quarry was classified 6, which I didn't understand what that was.

45 Then I went to the Valuer General and asked him, "What would be the value of land with a final void?" and he couldn't give me an answer. So I had no – so my concern, as a landholder adjoining to any property with a final void, would that depreciate my land. Now, that I – today I still haven't got – I've spoken to an employee from the

Valuer General's office and he could not make a comment. He just said we'd have to wait till something that's appropriate comes available. But that's not going to help when we're talking about the final void. Then I went and looked into some from legislation to find where it states, "There must be a final void in the landform." To –
5 to my best of ability, I could not find anything. Whether it's there, it may be hidden.

I'm not sure. But there is nothing that states that there's – has to be a final void. The only thing I could find that was close, there should be no – you know, area that you could be polluting or anything else. So my concern is, if that's going to be the case,
10 the final void is going to be a polluting area, it should not be part of any form of landform, no matter what the water quality is.

MS MANSTED: Thank you, Ms Olofsson.

15 MS OLOFSSON: No worries. I didn't finish, but I can go back. Because I was going to discuss plan D, which was not – we're talking about two options, but there was a plan D, which was in my 10, where the employees would still have the option of employment on the other side, which has already been approved, just needs the mining operation plan put back in.

20

MS MANSTED: Thank you, Ms Olofsson. We do have a long list of speakers today and everyone needs to get a turn. So could I – if there are other matters that you wish to raise, please put them in writing and - - -

25 MS OLOFSSON: Okay.

MS MANSTED: And submit them in accordance with the deadline on the website. Thank you.

30 MS OLOFSSON: No worries. Thank you.

MS MANSTED: The next speaker, in a variation from the order of speakers in the schedule, will be Olivia Knight, who will speak for five minutes.

35 MS O. KNIGHT: Dear Commissioners, Council and members of our community. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Rix's Creek Continuation of Mining Project. I am a senior high school student at St Mary's Campus, All Saints' College, Maitland. I currently study environmental science, engineering studies and extension math, and I am si – sitting my HSC this year. I would like to talk to you
40 today about the benefits of coal mining for my family, which has been involved in coal mining for five generations in the Hunter region. The wealth created by mining has allowed the Hunter to develop into a prosperous area. Population is increasing and people are moving to the Hunter to gain employment.

45 The Hunter is a growing area with sustainable employment, but only with the continuation of mining in the region. My great-grandfather was Coogan Frame, a third-generation miner who started mining at the age of 15. My great-grandpop was

a tireless fundraiser for his community, Retired Mineworkers Association president, recipient of the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2005, and granted Freeman of the City of Cessnock. From the benefits of coal mining, my great-grandfather raised and supported his family, which allows me to be here today.

5

My dad is a coalminer who started work at a local coal company when he was 19. He started with three months work experience, which then continued and allowed him to help pay his way through uni, where he completed a Bachelor of Science majoring in geology. His job with this company ended up lasting 19 years. He now also holds a master's in environmental management, as well as other mining and technical qualifications. He now works for the Bloomfield Group. Next year, I too will be going to uni, hoping to do either civil, environmental, or mining engineering, and I hope that my dad has continued employment so he can pay for my uni fees too.

10

15 Coalmining has provided for my family. It has provided for my family to have a nice home, a high standard of living, and be able to go on overseas holidays. Coalmining has also provided for my two sisters and I to go to local private schools, study excursions to Japan, and receive a higher standard of education. Coalmining has allowed our larger extended family to stay together in the Hunter Valley. Without coalmining in this area my parents would have had to move away from their family to find work in their specialised fields.

20

My uncle Eric works at a local coalmine and supports my aunty and two cousins. My dad has six cousins, which five of them or their partners are all directly employed by local mining companies, each of them raising a family with children. We are so lucky to have all our family based locally. We now have six generations in the Hunter Valley who have benefitted directly from coalmining, and hopefully I can be the sixth generation involved in coalmining in the Hunter Valley. My dad is always telling me stories about how they showed a busload of schoolkids the rehab areas and the frog ponds at Rix's Creek Mine, and how they show the students drill core from exploration, and tell them all about explor – exploration, the benefits of mining, and the careers that are available in coalmining.

25

30

35 My year 12 earth and environmental science class will shortly be visiting Rix's Creek Mine as a part of our HSC studies, where we will learn about the rehabilitation of land after mining, and the cattle grazing which is occurring at Rix's Creek Mine. Rix's Creek are actively involved in supporting local school visits, either through the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue, or through direct association and contact with local schools. In my view, as a student who has seen the benefits from coal mining, we need to continue to mine coal for the economic benefit of our community. Without coal, the Hunter Valley stops. Renewables will not create enough jobs for the long term.

40

45 Activists talk about inter-generational equity. As a sixth-generation Hunter Valley resident, where is my intergrational – inter-generational opportunity to follow in my family's footsteps of coalmining? Where is my opportunity to benefit from the wealth of mining, go to uni, raise a family, own a home and have the ability to put

my kids through schooling and university? My family have been involved in coalmining in the Hunter Valley for five generations. I hope that I can be the sixth. Please approve the Rix's Creek Continuation of Mining Project. Thank you.

5 MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker will be Beverley Smiles from the Hunter Communities Network and she will speak for 20 minutes. Is Ms Smiles in the room? Then we'll move then to the next-listed speaker, who is Mary McGill, who will speak for 10 minutes.

10 MS M. MCGILL: Thank you very much. And I'm – I'm CEO of the PHC Group. I've been asked to speak in support of Rix's Creek expansion by our company, which is owned by Carol Campbell, and at the moment she's very ill. So as CEO, I'm now taking over all responsibility. We currently employ 165 employees and have been in the industry for over 34 years. We work on Rix's Creek six days a week and also
15 work Newcastle, a Hunter Valley coal industry – for example, Port Waratah Coal Services, NCIG, Glencore, Centennial, including underground, Peabody, and these are only some examples – there's others, including manufactural, metal, water, etcetera. So we're across a number of industries because of being a 24/7 business.

20 Employees and – employees – sorry, Centennial Rix's Creek also employ employees, many of them, and they also, like ourselves, would be looking for a future of job stability. People of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley did – did shift here to work in the coal industry. They also – you see, their sons and daughters, as you've just heard from the previous speaker, that also want to grow up wanting a life working in the
25 coal industry. We at PHC Group over the years have lost employees to the coal industry. You do not hear of too many people being forced from Centrelink office and – and from the dole programs to work in mines.

The PHC Group also support a safe and healthy workplace, as to Rix's Creek. We
30 employ a fulltime safety officer who attends all sites that our employees work at. We there have – we – this month alone, we have conducted 32 site visit inspections, checking that they're wearing correct protective clothing, working in a safe area and ensuring also that the employees that they're working with are also safe.

35 I know people are concerned about our employee's health in the industry, but in the coal industry we've put all our employees, as the coal industry do, through medical section 43, which they are thorough – which they also have a lung test and a respiratory test when required to also wear – wear masks on particular job. In – in the – which – sorry. Which are very thorough; no employees in our 34 years of our
40 company have ever had any issues relating to this industry. I urge people who are frightened of expansion to work with Rix's Creek and job creation. This is what we need. This is not new. We've worked together for years, through State Dockyards, BHP, mineral sands, power stations, mining, fabrication in the manufacturing industry, etcetera, and we've worked together to overcome these issues.

45 PWC – which is Port Waratah Coal Services, sorry, for the Commissioners that may not understand the initials – they were going through building the T4 terminal

recently. All environment issues were worked through, and the government accepted that this was carried out in a correct and even thorough way, even though the T4 did not proceed at this stage. I would also like to say that in relation to the support also – or additional business that benefit from Rix’s Creek and the coal industry, we as
5 contractors buy food, fuel, accommodation when we have long shifts in both the Singleton and Muswellbrook areas, and also country establishments along the way in relation to some of the other services. I know this is – I know this for a fact from receipts, and when we clean our work vehicles, when they come of an afternoon from the – some of the materials that’s left in the vehicles.

10

I would like to also have the point of being supportive of the expansion. We do not want to see unemployment numbers growing, additional problems and social problems from coal miners downsizing or closing – closing up. Employees losing their houses when cannot pay their mortgages, families falling apart through
15 financial stress. We also have no alternative but to totally support Rix’s Creek expansion, and the future coal expansions when needed for the region.

We also are not alone. Just – we are no different to Queensland, and if we rely on the coal industry and employment, the last election supporting the coal – the expand
20 – for job opportunities even in their areas. I would like to now finish on – be proud of our region and the opportunities in the coal industry and at Rix’s Creek, and also for the contractors and also for the businesses that feed from the industry. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

25 PROF O’KANE: Thank you. The next speaker is Dr Bob Vickers from Doctors for the Environment. He will speak for 20 minutes.

DR B. VICKERS: Good morning to the IPC and members of the public here today. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Rix’s Creek MOD 10. I would first
30 like the acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and water that we speak on today, the Wonnarua people. I would like to pay my respects to the elders past and present. I also speak today representing Doctors for the Environment Australia, as well as being directly affected.

35 PROF O’KANE: Excuse me, Dr Vickers.

DR VICKERS: Yes?

PROF O’KANE: Are you speaking to MOD 10 or to 6200?

40

DR VICKERS: Sorry.

PROF O’KANE: But it’s 6300, presumably?

45 DR VICKERS: Yes, yes, yes. Sorry, that’s not updated. Yes, yes, yes. Yes

PROF O’KANE: Yes. No, that’s fine. Just clarifying.

DR VICKERS: Now, Doctors for the Environment Australia is a national non-profit organisation of Australian doctors and medical students. A lot of the doctors who have previously commented on these projects like Dr Ben Ewald, Dr John Van Der Kallen, and many of the doctors from New South Wales Health who make comments
5 on these projects are members for Doctors for the Environment as well. Now, it appears that some of what I said at the last public meeting – I'm not sure if it was misheard. It's unfortunate there was no reference to any of that information in the determination about the last Rix's Creek extension of mining, despite the fact that there were references to other comments made at the public meeting. So I do hope
10 this information is taken into consideration.

The International Panel on Climate Change has already accepted, um, that we're likely to have a rise in global temperature from the pre-industrial age of 1.5 Celsius. They know that we've already lost that battle. This projected rise in global
15 temperatures is already going to lead to an increased number of temperature-related deaths compared to 1990 levels. We know this. If climate change continues to worsen without dramatic action to reduce global carbon dioxide emission, we will see a significant increase in the number of temperature-related deaths. This is undisputed.

20 Europe, in the last week, has just seen heat – heatwave records smashed by four degrees in some locations. This is unprecedented. Heat records are usually made by less than half a degree, not four. This is the – the temperature data from Europe on the left in the last week on their records, and that's the NASA monitoring of average
25 global temperatures, um, since the 1800s. As you can see, we're clearly not winning.

Nothing has changed since I last spoke with regards to the climate emergency that we're seeing and its effect on the Australian landscape. Most of rural and regional New South Wales is still suffering through immense drought conditions. I notice
30 that the Bloomfield Group are blaming the drought conditions on difficulties controlling weeds, and it's frustrating that they fail to see the irony of continuing greenhouse gas emissions and the problems they're having with drought.

Large population centres in central New South Wales are at level 6 water restrictions.
35 They're having to truck in water just to have access to safe drinking water that isn't boiled bore water. Heatwaves, as a health risk, do discriminate. They target the youngest and the oldest of us, and it targets those with chronic health conditions. And as per the Bureau of Meteorology, it has been the second warmest January to June on record for Australia, and rainfall is also below to very much below average
40 over most of the country.

To achieve a reduction in emissions that would limit the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius or less, we're currently on target for six. Use of coal would be reduced to zero per cent for global electricity by 2050. Emissions – they do come
45 from many sources, but reducing emissions from energy generation – IE thermal coal – is the easiest first step to take. Bloomfield consider that the project is not inconsistent with climate change policies of Australian or New South Wales

governments. That's because there are none. We have a federal energy minister who does dodgy accounting with per capita emission, which by the way Australia is still nowhere on target for, to weaken effective efforts.

5 We have a Federal Government who wants to use carry-over credits from Kyoto to meet our Paris targets, the equivalent of which is like saying, "I didn't smoke in my twenties, so it's okay if I take it up at age 40." I should be able to stop my presentation here. This information should be enough to halt progression of this project, but I'll keep going. Here's some data on just how dangerous this project is in regards to its contribution to the climate crises we're currently experiencing. I
10 note that Bloomfield failed to include scope 3 emissions in their presentation – that would be deliberate, because it dramatically changes their numbers.

15 Giving a percentage of total Australian emissions is irrelevant. The Alan Jones trick of giving a percentage of carbon dioxide in the air is irrelevant. I can give you an antibiotic that's less than .01 percent of your bloodstream concentration but it would potentially save your life. I could equally give you a dose of a narcotic that is a significantly small percentage of your bloodstream and it would be a lethal dose. It's dodgy accounting.

20 Using scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, we can see the true effect. The proposed project would emit 72,000,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent greenhouse gases. This is the same as 600,000 extra cars driven for a year. Or we can use the Federal Energy Minister's method; the average Australian emission per capita is currently 18 tonnes
25 per year. To reach our targets based on the IBCC's recommendations, worldwide emissions per person – so per capita – need to be dropped down to three tonnes per year per person.

30 We need to assume that Australia as a developed nation needs to be below this, as developing nations don't have the value of existing infrastructure and emissions reductions. So this project would give each of those employees a per capita emissions rate of 11,000 tonnes per year; not quite three. It is staggering and bordering on ignorant that the Department of Planning in their assessment considers this level of emissions as being acceptable.

35 I'd like to spend a few minutes dispelling some myths which have come out from documentation between the Department and the IPC. Professor Kane, I quote you as saying that the Hunter – even in the Hunter it's not Beijing. You're true – you're correct; Beijing has had a steady decrease in air pollution since 1998, as they
40 recognised it was a serious health issue. They've implemented coal-fired pollution control measures, and they have days where you're not allowed to drive.

45 The Hunter on the other hand, has had a steady increase in our air pollution for the last three years, and despite the advice from health experts that it is harming our community, we continue to increase the number of sources that contribute to the cumulative effects. It doesn't matter how many people you ask from New South Wales Health, you will continue to get the same answer.

I'd like to quote another quote from the transcript between the Department and the IPC:

5 *I know that in the Hunter Valley, a significant proportion of the particulate matter in the air derives from sea salt.*

This is from Howard Reed's comment. That is false. It doesn't really show up – I don't know if you can read those percentages there on that table – the evidence actually shows that 50 percent of Singleton's 2.5 – sorry – PM2.5 particulates come from fossil fuel sources, one fifth comes from the combination of wood, smoke and bush fires, and under one-tenth comes from fresh sea salt, so that statement is incorrect.

15 The statement from the Department of Planning is misleading. The advice from the Department on air pollution should not be taken into consideration if these are the comments that they're making. This is the most concerning quote for me, though, from the transcript on social and economic impacts:

20 *If there was that unexpected interference or impact on the market on business as usual, then I'm not quite sure that we have a trigger to pull at that time to bring forward these closure planning requirements.*

25 Despite not actually elaborating on those requirements in the transcript, I gather that would include the rehabilitation costs and the wages of current employees. Now, the Department talks about unexpected market changes. I wonder if they mean these: Bloomfield talks about having long-term contracts with buyers of its thermal coal, but what happens when Bloomfield attempts to negotiate a new thermal coal contract in five years time when, as you can see in the top left, every dataset is telling us that the time, the cost of new solar will be below the price of new coal. If you're a private sector energy provider and you're willing to make a good investment for a return on profit, why would you bother buying thermal coal from overseas when it's cheaper for you to build solar in your own country?

35 Japan, one of Bloomfield's buyers, has made both Government and private sector moves away from thermal coal. I note that Bloomfield in their – in their presentation spoke about Japan building new power stations; that's actually not correct. This is from the global energy outlook from the IEEFA, they've made note that in March 2019 that the Japan's Environment Ministry announced that they would not sanction any more coal fired power stations or upgrades to existing ones, and most of the private sector in Japan are actually moving towards renewable.

40 BHP in the last week, their CEO has come out saying that to ignore scope 3 emissions would be dangerous. Suncorp has just announced divestment from thermal coal. Glencore has capped their thermal coal production. The market is moving away. Will Bloomfield in five years' time, when they can't get an appropriate price for their thermal coal, pull a stunt like Peabody Energy did in the U.S.; claim bankruptcy and pass on the cost of rehabilitation to the taxpayers? Or

will they put another common trick, the mine into “caretaker” mode and hope for an inevitable bounce in thermal coal that will never eventuate.

5 The minimum net profit value of this mine covers roughly one tenth of the calculated health costs that the air pollution costs the Hunter. These were calculated by Tim Whelan and this information was provided to the IPC at the Dartbrook meeting, but I’m happy to email that through as well. It actually costs Singleton \$47,000,000 in health costs as a direct result of air pollution.

10 What contribution to air pollution do you think that this mine creates, given it has the closest proximity to the monitoring station that consistently performs the worst? As a GP, personally I see multiple local patients with diseases that are known to be exacerbated by poor air quality, including upper airway diseases like otitis media, sinusitis, lower airway diseases like asthma and emphysema. These patient
15 populations suffer exacerbations in clusters, which I can attribute to spikes in air pollution.

There have been recently fines for breaches of air quality standards for local mines. Frustratingly, the numerical value of the fines pales in comparison with the profits
20 made from these projects. It took the EPA three years to financially punish Whitehaven for a dangerous blast plume, and the fine was 0.001 percent of annual revenue. It’s not a significant financial deterrent to further breaches of conditions.

25 Air pollution has been associated with multiple dangerous to human health. Most people are now aware that poor air quality contributes to upper airways diseases, lower airway diseases and heart disease. PM10 and PM2.5 particulates enter the lungs and the bloodstream respectively, and can cause heart disease, lung cancer, asthma and accurate lower respiratory tract infections, as well as lung cancer in non-
30 smokers.

When combustion of coal is added to the consideration, we also need to look at increased levels of sulphur and nitrogen-dioxide and their specific effects. These chemicals are known to cause airway irritation, shortness of breath, headache, asthma exacerbation, and in very high-level exposure to nitrogen-dioxide, for
35 example after a blast plume exposure, dangerous levels of lung inflammation can be fatal. That’s Rose Point Park – that’s in town – that’s how close the coalmine is to Rose Point Park.

40 Now, as a GP obstetrician living in a town without a neonatal intensive care unit, this study here is terrifying. Infants born to women exposed to high levels of air pollution in the week before delivery are more likely to be admitted to a neonatal intensive care unit. Our nearest one is one hour away. Have you ever tried to bag ventilate a newborn baby for an hour? It’s quite difficult.

45 There’s no lack of data showing that birth weight and air pollution are directly linked. Beijing funnily enough was a great natural study during the Olympics. The city went to great lengths to dramatically reduce industrial pollution during that time,

and what they saw was a statistically significant increase in average birth weight over the subsequent months.

5 A recent study by Ben Auld, a GP and public health expert from the University of Newcastle, showed that combustion of coal in New South Wales could lead to 233 low birth weight babies annually. These photos accompanying these slides have all been taken in the last two weeks from the Singleton area, by the way. This was Saturday morning looking south from Maison Dieu. This is towards the mine pits southwest of Singleton, so this is not towards Rix's Creek, but as you can see – it
10 doesn't really show up well in that light, but this is what everyone talks about with the brown haze that we get of an early morning in Singleton, and the course particle pollution that – that settles.

15 This is Saturday morning. This is at Maison Dieu, looking north directly towards Rix's Creek. Now, apparently we heard at the last meeting from the employee, with no data to back up his claim, that operations are altered or shut down when conditions are bad. Camberwell has had 37 air quality alerts already this year. Last year was a recording breaking year with 44, and we're in July at 37 already. Have Rix's Creek shut down their operations during these alert periods? I have no
20 confirmation of this. These 37 alerts also don't include the alerts that we have for Singleton, Maison Dieu and Singleton Northwest monitoring stations.

25 There has been a steady increase in the number of monitoring stations recording particle levels above the recommended annual average. Continuing this project in a local area and expanding further towards Maison Dieu to the south, with its close proximity, poses a health risk to the area due to the cumulative effects of increasing air pollution.

30 Concerningly, the Department of Planning has even noted that Bloomfield clearly can't take responsible steps to limit air pollution. They can't even adequately assess the impact that they can have. They've already been caught out mining outside the consent conditions. Both Rix's Creek north and south pits were recently pinged on inadequate rehabilitation activities.

35 So what we're assessing is whether a company that can't accurately assess its impact on air quality, doesn't really follow the rules, and as we've heard today, doesn't feel the need to update their air quality impact assessment – we're trying to assess whether they're able to safely mine a product that is falling in value at the expense of the health of the community. Singleton does not need more mining jobs. What we
40 need is a transition from current mining jobs into long-term careers before external pressures force us into an external crisis. This isn't a decision we can make for ourselves.

45 When a local population with vulnerable members of the community are given no warning as to when a possible blast plume might carry over the urban centre, the risk is severe airway illness in high numbers. What promises can Bloomfield give that it isn't going to send a potentially lethal dose of sulphur or nitrogen dioxide over my

house while my daughter is playing outside in my front yard? My house falls within the photos of the new extension. There's not many that do, but mine does.

5 Are these promises they make going to be the same promise when they breached
they original consent conditions? The same promises they made to adequately assess
the impact on air pollution and address concerns? Our local health systems are not
designed to cope with a health crisis like we saw in the thunderstorm asthma event
recently in Sydney and Melbourne. If a blast plume was to carry even further over
10 Singleton or Muswellbrook with little warning, I have no doubt that there would be
critically ill patients who may not be able to access required treatment, and we could
see lethal results.

15 Thermal coal combustion needs to dramatically reduce to have any hope of avoiding
climate heating that is unsustainable for most life on this planet. This project spits in
the face of global efforts to address this. The air pollution is getting worse in
Singleton. We know what is contributing to it, and the Department of Planning are
sticking their heads in the sand and trying to weasel their way to a New South Wales
Health statement that isn't "air pollution is causing harm".

20 The most effective way to reduce our air pollution is to reduce open cut coal mining
and processing in close proximity to town. The economics of this project don't stand
up in a world that is hastening its divestment from thermal coal. Decline this
extension, make Rix's Creek finish the rehabilitation of the existing pit, give the
current employees a chance to find new long-term careers before they join
25 Australia's rising unemployment rate. As a doctor and nearby resident, it is both my
professional and personal opinion that this project should be rejected on health
grounds, on climate and greenhouse gas emissions, and on economic grounds.
Thank you.

30 PROF O'KANE: I – Dr Vickers, I have a question.

DR VICKERS: Yes.

35 PROF O'KANE: From your own experience – paediatrician, correct?

DR VICKERS: GP.

PROF O'KANE: GP. But with a particular emphasis on paediatrics, is that right?

40 DR VICKERS: I'm a rural generalist. I have sub-specialised fields in obstetrics,
gynaecology, emergency medicine and anaesthetics.

45 PROF O'KANE: Rural, okay. All right. I was – thank you. I was particularly
interest to know, with increased pollution that you talked about, what are you
particularly seeing as health effects in the population, particularly with the very
young and the very old, and the workers that were referred to? So what are you seen
over time? What developments?

DR VICKERS: Um, what I can find is that when patients present with asthma exacerbations that are severe enough to require hospitalisation, what we would generally do is we would swab – what’s called an R10 swab – so we would look for common viral cause. We will generally culture their sputum, and we would try and
5 find an infectious cause. If we don’t, the diagnosis is an environmental exacerbation of asthma.

I have patients who live in Muswellbrook and the Singleton area who have had intensive care admission to hospital with environmental exacerbations of asthma. I
10 have a patient from Muswellbrook who had this happen to her. In the two days leading up to her admission, the levels of PM2.5 and PM10 monitored at her closest monitoring station in Muswellbrook were exceeding safe levels. So in the – the Upper Hunter air quality monitoring chart, where we go from green, yellow, orange, red, the two days prior most of the time was spent in the red.

15 The problem with this statement that we’ve never been able to show – that was made by one of the previous speakers – that we’ve never been able to show that the negative health effects of mining on our employees – this is the problem with that statement. Most of the diseases are chronic illnesses and they have other
20 contributing factors. It’s very easy to step back and say that person had a stroke because they smoke cigarettes, they drank alcohol, they didn’t exercise enough; it definitely wasn’t the 40 years they spent working in an open cut pit. It’s cumulative impacts. We have larger-scale data from around the world that confirms the negative health effects.

25 Reducing it down to case studies in Singleton is never going to provide enough weight in terms of hard data, but there are absolutely case studies where I am confident that air pollution in higher alert levels – and levels that are known to be hazardous – from around the world, if they were reaching those levels in Beijing, the
30 government would make official reports saying you need to be wearing your PM2.5 masks, and you’re not – need to stop burning pollution, and you need to stop driving.

So other governments make recommendations based on the levels we see in Camberwell about changing activity. And the whole point of the Upper Hunter Air
35 Quality Monitoring Network is the alerts are sent to people who need to know about it, because we know there’s a risk. So to ignore the alerts when they’re set up to alert people when there’s a problem, it’s problematic.

40 PROF O’KANE: Thank you.

DR VICKERS: You’re welcome.

45 PROF O’KANE: Thank you. Has – I just will check that the speaker who wasn’t here before isn’t here now, and – is Ms Beverley Smiles in the room? The next speaker, then, is Rod Green, who will speak for 15 minutes.

MR R. GREEN: Thank you to the Commission for letting me speak here today. I just want to start by saying I'm a 37 year coal miner in the local Hunter Valley area. I've lived in Singleton, Camberwell and close proximity to Rix's Creek, at Glennies Creek Road. I'm here today to support the Rix's Creek continuous, and my
5 experience with Rix's Creek – I'm employed with Rix's Creek. Have been for the last – sorry, the Bloomfield Group for the last eight years, and give years at Rix's Creek as a production supervisor. My experiences here was managing our environment, and sort of like my main task were our noise, our dust, our rehabilitation and our lighting.

10 With our noise, we have a very good model out there. We have a predictive model that we work to which allows us to predict weather patterns, wind changes and variation of inversions out there. We closely monitor that and we work strictly to it. One of the other things – we have a – a monitoring system out there. It's a real time
15 monitoring system. We have people out in the community with, um, sophisticated noise equipment, given data feedback to, uh, myself and other supervisors on regular basis, which allows us to make decisions on whether we modify our operation, whether we change our operation, or whether we stop our operation fulltime.

20 If we're getting close to our noise limits there, well, we modify, and if that doesn't sort of bring our noise down we – we shut our – we should our operation down in that area. We don't start back up until our – the inversion either moves over or we get a change in the wind which allows us to start monitoring again, and if allowable we start kicking back up. With the dust we have – we have ongoing training to all
25 our team members out there. We have our mobile water carts that keep our dust under control. We, ah – and we train these people in them. We have, um, toolbox talks. Ah, we monitor our, uh – our weather – our weather stations to see how many, uh, water carts we need to run on the day. And we have the ability to upsize water carts to downsize as required.

30 We also look at our Upper Hunter Dust Monitoring Model there to make sure that, uh, Rix's Creek isn't adding to the, uh – the downstream, and monitoring the upstream as well. There is, um – we have a few, uh, modifications to our water carts. We have high-powered cannons set up, uh, around the water cart, which
35 allows us to shoot, uh, 60, 70 metres to create more of a – a haze to settle dust if we can't get that with our – with our mine equipment.

Lighting. We've spent a great deal of money on – on lighting in the – just in the past, to update our lighting, to make sure that we're good neighbours, we're not
40 shining lights into our neighbours – their properties or up public roads or annoying anyone in – in the vicinity. A good deal of investment – we've new technology with lighting plants and they seem to be working very well. We do do regular inspections when we do – do a handover with supervisors, just to ensure that the lights are staying on our property and not annoying our neighbours.

45 With our rehab – that's another task that's with us. And, look, I got involved in the Stoney Creek rehab when I was at Rix's Creek there. That's – if the local people

know where Stoney Creek Road is. And when we took over Camberwell, it was an area that had not been rehabilitated and there's a few people put their hands up and said, "That's going to be – that's going to be part of us. We're going to reshape that, redesign it, modify it and make it look sensational". And I had a personal interest in that because I lived opposite it for three or four years and had a hand in the reshaping, redeveloping and the outcomes were sensational. Every time we drive past it now, we can look up and say, "That's something that we're proud of". And – and everyone that, sort of, like, had a hand in that can say exactly the same thing.

10 Previously stated, look, the Bloomfield Group is an Australian owned company and family run. A lot of people may not know that the trading opportunities that have come through the Bloomfield Group. We have 31 apprentices employed at the moment and over 300 that has gone through previous years. That's 300 jobs for local people, next generation kids that are coming through. They don't have to move out of the area to seek good employment. They gain valuable skills, trades and crafts that take them into the future. We also train trainee ship – trainee operator apprenticeship. We have 10 currently employed at the moment. And since it has been running, we've had 20 go through the system and that's more local jobs, local people, families that stay together, kids that don't have to move away from home. We've also got a graduate engineering program. There has been 20 – 20 graduate engineers come through.

Now, these are people that are, sort of, like, four or five years together at university and very tech savvy. They get the opportunity to come out there in the field and demonstrate some of those skills that they've learned in their books and see how people do it on the – on the ground. The Rix's Creek Group as a whole – we have a – a sister mine. It's called the Bloomfield Mine and it's – it's down at Maitland and there's 64 people there. And we rely on Rix's Creek surviving, as well, because if Rix's Creek don't survive, well, then we don't survive, either. And that's 64 people all looking for new jobs and it's also the flow-on effect to other local people like OEMs that supply machines, the lady that supplies our down the road, people that supply our hi-vis clothing, the motor vehicles that we buy, lease and rent off them all contribute to the flow-on effect and that's why I'm here today to support the Rix's Creek expansion.

There's a few other things that people may not know about the Bloomfield Group. We have something called the Bloomfield Foundation which supports a lot of local schools, junior sporting teams, town festivals and community projects. I won't go through them all, but there's a few close to my heart – the Rescue Helicopter – a great deal of money goes to that. And, trust me, when you're laying on the side of the road, you want to make sure that someone is helping you put fuel in that helicopter to make sure you or your family or – you know, it could be your daughter, your son, your brother, your dad that needs that rescue helicopter. And also the – the Cancer Council is another one. If you – if you look around some of the hospitals and you see the donations from the mining industry, not just Bloomfield alone, you will – you will be aware of how important that donations from the mining mining sector are.

Just in recent times, the Bloomfield Group changed our – our visions and values and that's something like every employee lives by here. And it was a major event, a great family day, when we – when we announced it. And, sort of, like, the Bloomfield visions – values is – like, we care and we deliver. And what we care
5 about, we care about our environment, we care about the community, we care about our workforce and we care about everyone else that supports us. And what we deliver on, well, we deliver on best practices and we also deliver on compliance and they're – they're high on our priority and the Bloomfield Group – they – they get a tick in all the boxes in – in my experiences and they're very approachable. There has
10 been a little bit on weed management here today. Just that – just that we do have a – a – a big interest in it but in the Bloomfield Group there, we have over 70 cattle grazing on some of our lands. They all seem to be fat and doing – doing very well. So the rehabilitation is right up there, as well. And that's about all I've got, so thank you today for – for letting me speak.

15 MS MANSTED: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Could I - - -

20 MS MANSTED: You mentioned that – you mentioned that you were responsible for noise and dust mitigation – that that was part of your tasks. Could you – is it possible for you to tell the Commission on the days that have been over-tolerance of the Camberwell air quality monitoring station, what activity was taking place at Rix's Creek on those days?

25 MR GREEN: I'm not quite sure what days they were over there. I haven't worked there for the last three years. But normal practice when I was there was we shut the pit down. If we couldn't manage our – our dust that was happening on-site with – with the equipment that we had, there was a sequenced shutdown. We would start
30 shutting down this area to the left and if our dust levels still weren't coming down, we would shut down completely.

MS MANSTED: And walk me through the process of what happens. What's the
35 feedback loop, effectively, from the – the monitoring stations to the – the shutdown process? How does that work?

MR GREEN: Okay. I worked permanent night shift, so we could keep an eye on our – our dust monitors and if the PM levels looked like climbing, something we can't control, the first step we will do, we put additional water carts on. The next
40 step if we can't control it that way, we will start tipping lower in the pit, so our dust doesn't rise up. The next step would be if we were still climbing there, we would start shutting operations down. That may mean the – the dirt and waste area be shut down first. And if we still haven't controlled it then, coaling – coaling operations would shut down, as well, to the point where we might just have a couple of ancillary
45 pumps and drills and stuff like that running. And, if they were still adding to the dust, then they would be shut down, as well.

MS MANSTED: And does a similar process take place in relation to modifications for noise?

5 MR GREEN: Yes, it does. We rely on the data very heavily that comes from our people out in the community that send the data back through our noise modelling. They're trained in this equipment. They send – send real time data back to the – to the supervisor on shift. We're watching it. If it starts to climb, we do exactly the same process. We will start shutting areas down or moving operations to lower in the pit. And – and if it still doesn't come down, we – we shut the – we can shut the
10 pit down. There has been a number of occasions from 20 minutes to two to three hours – it's usually a – an inversion come moving through or a slight shift in wind – different wind patterns and - - -

MR PEARSON: Mr Green, thank you for your presentation. It was very helpful. If
15 I could ask about the information that we've heard from other speakers around the increasing incidences of noise monitoring events, if you like, the greater frequency of exceedances or alerts, if you want to call it. Are you seeing a similar correlation in terms of that impact flowing through to the Rix's Creek project? So is there a correlation between the curtailment activities that take place at Rix's Creek and the
20 increase in exceedances and alerts that are being reported at a macro level?

MR GREEN: Look, I'm not 100 per cent certain of that, whether people are more vigilant now. I'm – yes. I'm not 100 per cent certain of that.

25 MR PEARSON: And, then, my only other question was in relation to the matters that your role covers. Are you able to comment on the preferability of option 1 or option 2 in terms of the mine plans that were put forward?

MR GREEN: Yes – no, I'm not. That's a bit out of my league.
30

MR PEARSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR GREEN: Okay. Thank you for your time.

35 MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker is Wendy Wales from the Denman Aberdeen Muswellbrook Scone Healthy Environment Group. Ms Wales, could you please come forward to the lectern. Ms Wales doesn't appear to be present. The next speaker in that event is Joshua Dagg, who will speak for 10 minutes.

40 MR J. DAGG: Thank you. Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Josh Dagg, my role is a plant operator for the Bloomfield Group. I work directly in the Rix's Creek South operation, and I'm here today to show my support for the Rix's Creek South continuation of mining project SSD6300.

45 I was lucky enough to do a traineeship out there in 2007, and I came back to the company in 2010 and have worked as a permanent operator for the last nine years. I've also got family that I work alongside; my father has been with the company as a

plant operator for 15 years, his cousin Tim has been an operator there for 25 years, and my brother is the contractor and audit manager and he's been out there for 14 years.

5 It is a family company. That's not the only story, there's plenty of father and sons that work out there. We've even got a grandfather, father and – and son that are working out there together now as operators. Why is this project important to me? Obviously as security for me and my family and all of my co-workers as well. Another role that I have out at Rix's Creek, I'm the lodge secretary. We have 249
10 members. I've got a bit of a unique perspective on those guys, you know, I – we have monthly meetings and I get to, you know, talk to them on a monthly basis, and I've definitely noticed with the uncertainty and – and stress around this project, it has affected some of my co-workers. Yes.

15 Righto. Rod – Rod Green, he did talk about the – the Bloomfield Group and the great work that they do. Our lodge also does similar work for charities, schools, sporting teams, festivals and country shows. Some examples where the company and our lodge have donated include to Our Care Services, a volunteer group in Singleton. We both donated to the Buyabale.com cause, which I think everyone was
20 aware about, and recently we both contributed money to the Atkins Family who tragically lost – yeah, I think a lot of people know the story there, they lost their kids in that fire in Singleton. So we are a – a local company and we support the local community.

25 We also – I recently received an – an email from Danny Eather, who works for the Westpac Helicopter. Rod did mention that charity, but last year the Bloomfield Group employees donated \$23,953 to that cause, and the Rix's Creek Lodge will be the gold sponsor for our Rix's Creek Rattlesnakes football team that will be playing in October for the charity day that they hold annually.

30 I'd like to just highlight a few of the recommendations that were made by the Department of Planning and Environment. A few quotes from there. The Department considers that the benefits of the project outweigh its residual costs and consider the project is in the public interest and is approvable subject to strict
35 conditions of consent. The Department is confident its preliminary and final assessment reports provide a robust assessment of the merits of the project, and I'd like to note the Department consulted with key Government agencies during this process and also consulted with Bloomfield.

40 Probably a perspective I can give as a plant operator, like, our company, you know, they talk the talk, but as a plant operator I'm in the cut every day and I can tell you right now we do walk the walk as well, and I will provide examples of how we do this. So probably the biggest issue which has probably been discussed today is air quality, so it's actually a principal hazard under the Work Health and Safety
45 Regulation 2014. So it is a big one – a big hazard on our job.

So what do we do on the job as plant operators? So we've got a MySafe job book, which is our little own risk assessment. Quite often on a day to day basis dust is probably one of our main hazards, so we have to consider that. Activities that we conduct that produce this hazard, the movement of machinery on roads, loading
5 operations, discharging materials into hoppers, transporting material on conveyors, coal preparation activities, drilling and shot firing.

How do we control those hazards? Watercarts. We have sealed cabs fitted with air conditioning. Prevailing wind direction is taken into account, and I'll actually note
10 on the 14th of July this month the wind conditions were really high and we actually had a shot that was scheduled to be blasted that day and we postponed that – that shot, so we do take those sort of actions. PPE, dust suppression systems, fixed water sprays. Our drills are fitted with dust curtains, dust collectors, deck seals, but if
15 there's dust coming from – from the drills we will – we have taken the action to stop that operation as well.

Noise. It's been spoken about a little bit today – sorry, I'll just find my notes on that one. Okay. Geoff Moore mentioned that, um, there is – there is a copy of our noise management plan on the website. We also, um, have a trigger action response plan
20 when, ah, noise complaints are made. Um, our personnel review predictive 3-D noise models and metro – meteorological, ah, conditions for any potential for Rix's Creek to exceed compliance limits.

And often speaking to a – speaking to a lot of the night-shift guys, um, it is a reality
25 that when we exceed these compliance limits, the supervisors take the action to, um, stop operations. That's quite common. Um, hearing protection for our – for our workers, um, that's – that's a hazard, and – and we all use hearing protection on the heavy machinery. Ah, finally, ah, the social impacts. I did mention how, um, the uncertainty on the project had taken a direct effect to my co-workers, which I've seen
30 firsthand. Um, the company have, ah, offered everybody, ah, the opportunity for a half an hour, um, session with Mindset, um, who are psychologists – psy – um, and – and that happened, um, very recently.

Um, so that was a great initiative. Um, yeah, as I said, having witnessed a lot of my
35 co-workers deal with the stress and uncertainty of not only their job security, but other personal issues, and having experienced the dangers of stress and anxiety myself, um, this was a great initiative with the Mindset program. Um, and that's from me. Thank you.

40 MS MANSTED: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Could I ask - - -

45 PROF O'KANE: Mr - - -

MR PEARSON: Sorry.

PROF O'KANE: Mr Dagg, thank you. Question: tell me about the noise complaints that you get? So how many would you typically get in a – in a week, month? Some – what unit?

5 MR J. DAGG: Well, I - - -

PROF O'KANE: And does it vary through the year?

10 MR J. DAGG: I'd probably refer that question on to – um, I've spoken to a lot of our night-shift employees. Um, and they've told me that it's not uncommon for them to have to deal with those complaints. I don't know the numbers, myself, on the complaints that the company receive.

PROF O'KANE: Right.

15

MR J. DAGG: But I know it is – it does happen out there.

PROF O'KANE: Thank you.

20 MR PEARSON: So two questions from me. You mentioned, um, this initiative around Mindset. Um, are you able to tell me how many employees have availed themselves of that – that initiative?

25 MR J. DAGG: Well, I know that, um, we've got – my last count we had about approximately 250, um, workers in – in either production and engineering. Um, and I would – I don't have an – an official number, but I am pretty confident it would've been over 95 per cent of the – those employees would've, um, participated in that program – in that half an hour session.

30 MR PEARSON: Thank you. We heard earlier in relation to option 1 and option 2, um, the – one of the benefits was around mining – mine – mine – mining flexibility. Um, given your role as a plant operator in the pit, I was wondering whether you could provide the Commission with some more information around the – um, the mining flexibility that's lost and/or gained through each – each of the two options.

35

MR J. DAGG: Yeah. I – I'd probably leave that question to someone like Geoff Moore. Um, so, no, can't comment on that. Thank you.

40 MS MANSTED: One question from me, which is when a noise complaint triggers a shut-down procedure, how long does that take before the noise generation stops? Is it immediate? Or is there a lag time? And, if so, what – what is that time?

45 MR J. DAGG: Yeah, it definitely would just depend on the circumstances. But I – I know our, um, personnel that are trained in the noise monitoring, um, once the compliance levels – levels go under what they should be – but that may vary from half hour to a couple of hours, as – as I think Rod mentioned in his, um, answer.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker will be Bob Murphy, who will speak for five minutes.

MR B. MURPHY: Ah, thanks for your time, Commissioners. Um, Bob Murphy,
5 plant operator at Bloomfield, East Maitland. Ah, I've worked in the mining industry
– well, worked for Bloomfield Group for 15 years. As a mine worker, I know the
importance of the Rix's Creek expansion to the local families and Singleton
community. This will not only secure hundreds of mining jobs, it will give a big
10 boost to the local and small businesses, like cafés, newsagencies, engineering, car
dealerships, and other family businesses. I know of one of these take-away shops
where we've been getting our workers' overtime meals for approximately 20 years.

They buy their cars from the local Toyota dealership for as long as I can remember.
The same tyre company for 20 years, all from the Hunter Valley. They always
15 support local charities, like Cancer Council, PCYC Mai-Wel, um, recently Maitland
Football, Westpac Rescue and many, many more. I've worked in the mi – Hunter
mining industry for 24 years, for many different mines and companies, including a
little while at Rix's Creek. I have – while I found over this time the Bloomfield
Group to be the most community-minded company I've ever worked for. I think the
20 reason for this is they are an Australian company, with the owners living right here in
the Hunter.

We recently went through a long process of revisiting our company values, and we
came up with: we care, we deliver. Which means, as Rod said before, environment,
25 community, best practice and compliance. The Bloomfield Group – Group
employees around 600 people. There's 65 at Bloomfield, around 300 at Rix's Creek,
and the rest in engineering company. Without the Rix's Creek extension, these local
jobs will be gone. That's 600 families with no work. On the environment, I've
watched them go far and beyond anyone I've previously worked for. If there's noise
30 problems, we stop. If it's dusty, we stop. The rehabilitation work is second to none.

Where I'm currently working, we have some 20 year old rehabilitation. And being a
keen bushwalker and bird watcher, I can tell you I've seen more wildlife on this mine
site than I've seen in most bushland I've walked in. I've often taken overseas friends
35 here to look at the native wildlife. This year alone I've seen echidnas, goannas,
snakes of black and brown, carpet, kangaroos, falcons, parrots and wedge-tailed
eagles, which only I can put down to good rehabilitation and the control of feral
animals, giving the native wildlife a sanctuary to breathe – breed in. One last thing:
I often hear people against mining say we don't need them. But everyone in this
40 room relies on mining. Your car, your mobile phone, even your jewellery, it's all
made out of mining products.

Mining at world's best practice should be a positive, not a negative. We all want to
live in a town with a great community, but a community needs people, and people
45 need jobs. Thank you for your time.

MS MANSTED: The next speaker will be Tim Dagg, who will speak for 15 minutes.

MR T. DAGG: Um, I was going to say good morning, but it's good afternoon now.
5 Um, my name's Tim Dagg. I thank you for allowing me to speak in favour of the Rix's Creek South Continuation Mining Project SSD 6300. I live in Muswellbrook, although I was born in Singleton, July 1958, and raised on the family farm in Scotts Flat, and later at Lavington. My grandparents, my mother's parents, also farmed a couple of kilometres down the road from Dad's – Dad's farm. In tho – those early
10 years at my grandparents' farm I have some great memories, one of which I particularly remember was going to the top paddock with my grandfather, pick up lumps of coal off the ground, load into the old ute and take back to the homestead to burn in the open fireplaces, keeping everyone warm.

15 I will always remember what my grandfather said to me back then. That was: one day this barren land, with all this coal, would bring good fortune to the surrounding community and families. That is certainly the case today, because my family and many other families have had great opportunities from working at Rix's Creek Mine. My gran – grandfather would be amazed with the rehabilitation work that has been
20 done around the mine site. Even some of my friends, driving past, cannot tell which is natural land or rehabilitated land. I think most people would be surprised to see how well the land looks now after rehabilitation, supporting cattle even in a drought.

My family has a rich history around the Singleton area, and now many of my family
25 members work in the mining industry. I have worked at Rix's Creek as an operator since April 1995. I have seen many advances in the mining industry over those years. The monitoring of mining conditions such as dust, noise and blasting has improved in some of the most outstanding ways, compared to 24 years ago when I first started at Rix's Creek South Mine, and a far cry from what it was like when I
30 started in the mining industry 36 years ago. At Rix's Creek the management have set up many policies for the production workers to adhere by, in all conditions of mining.

I can tell you the production workers will monitor all conditions by themselves. For
35 example, if it gets dusty they will stop work until the problem is solved with water carts. As noise limits are monitored all night, production workers will stop immediately if noise gets close to our limits, regardless if they are on a normal shift or an overtime shift. Once the noise level goes down we never start all the machinery back up at the same time, but we will slowly bring our machines back
40 online one at a time, to ensure we satisfy noise conditions. Rix's Creek South Mine is a family-based and Australian-owned mine, which is unique.

The company employs many members of the same families to work at the mine, also employing many women throughout the company, in such roles as production
45 workers, engineering, office staff, senior management, board of directors and, in fact, all the way to ownership. The company has many contracting companies working around the mine site, and these companies employ many women as well. I

particularly like how the company helps out don – with donations to the charities around the Singleton area and the surrounding communities.

5 We have a large focus on sport for the Cancer Council. Most recently, the company has contributed to the appeal, which was helping out the family involved in a tragic Singleton house fire. I would also like to mention how the workers themselves at Rix’s Creek South mine are the most generous when it comes to donating funds, to worthy causes around the district. For example, in the past 24 years, myself and many other workers have donated on a weekly basis, direct from our pay packet, to
10 the BCYC, Youth Off The Street, and the Westpac Helicopter Rescue Service.

Rix’s Creek workers have raised \$246,000 for the Cancer Council through golf days held over many years. The Bloomfield Group employees have given in excess of \$400,000 to the Westpac Helicopter Service since 2002. And have been donating for
15 years before that, but records were not kept before 2002. Rix’s Creek alone have just passed \$100,000 in donations to Youth Off The Street. Therefore, I believe the continuation of the Rix’s Creek South mine has many benefits for the Singleton community, local contracting companies and business owners around the Singleton district. I thank you now for allowing me to give my opinion on this matter.

20

MS MANSTED: Thank you. One question from me. You mentioned that when you recommenced production following a stoppage for noise reasons, you start up equipment gradually. I’m wondering when the shutdown occurs, do you wait to execute the shutdown until the noise has exceeded the allowable limit, or does a
25 progressive shutdown commence prior to the exceedance?

MR T. DAGG: The shutdown starts prior – it – prior to when it hits the – the limits. Once we get a call from our monitors, the supervisor would tell us over the two-way system and they will – a lot of the times the – all the machines shut at once.

30

MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker is David Stein, who will speak for three minutes.

MR D. STEIN: Morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is David Stein. I’ve lived in the Singleton area for about 40-odd years. I hold numerous qualifications at university level. I’ve worked in the local area as a police officer, as a mechanical engineer, and as a safety and risk management specialist for state governments, local government and large corporations.

40 I stopped work in 2017 following a spinal tumour which has left me partially disabled and relying on my wife as the new primary breadwinner for our young daughter and myself. I humbly thank Rix’s Creek and the Bloomfield Group for employing my wife. I now use my safety and engineering and mining experience to provide technical support for compiling plant safety documents – documents for
45 mines from my home office, allowing me the ability to manage my condition from home while still providing me the opportunity to contribute through work-based services. None of this would be possible without mining.

Whilst I can only do a couple of hours a day, it is great for my physical and mental health and wellbeing to be able to contribute in some way. Ultimately, it is a fact that employment impacts of mining extend well beyond just those in hi-vis at Rix's Creek Mine. An example of this is where Bloomfield Group have demonstrated, for
5 me personally, their genuine heart for Australian doing – for Australians doing it tough. When my wife and I recently gave \$500 to drought-affected farmers, her employer heard about this, along the – with other employees, and they in turn donated \$15,000 for the cattle feed – for cattle feed. These farmers are doing so tough. I could go on with a number of other examples, but ultimately without Rix's
10 Creek and the wider Bloomfield Group, none of this would be possible. It's truly a great Australian organisation. I'm here today because there is little if none sustainability for my family if Rix's Creek South is no longer allowed to operate.

Hundreds of other people employed by Rix's Creek will be in the same boat.
15 Hundreds of support business, their employees and their families will be in the same boat. There will be a reduction in indirect consumer services and further job losses further afield. Finally, real estate values are likely to drop, and with it consumer confidence, just like what happened to Muswellbrook after Drayton was forced to close, from which the real estate market is yet to recover.

20 Our house up there is worth less than what we paid for it 10 years ago, and I was even – I was never a direct employee; merely affected by the irrational decisions of others. Drayton's closure had a drastic economic impact to use personally and to many other people I know. I'm here today out of concern for the wider community
25 and my family from the potential impact of those persons that would seek to influence decision-makers with claims of evidence that are unscientific, unobservable, and collectively unfactual.

30 As humans, we all need to be mindful of our own predispositions and biased tendencies toward relativism. We live in a day and age where more and more decisions are being made on the basis of feelings and self-gain rather than the identification and careful analysis of all relevant facts. You only need to take a quick look at the recent tabloids and see how certain social media groups employ strategies to sway public thinking opinion. I implore you today to continue to seek a validated
35 and corroborated, all evidence put forward, including mine – real facts and practical application are the key.

Regulatory oversights helps Rix's Creek in their operational practices to manage any risk to employees, the community and the environment effectively and practically, so
40 that Rix's Creek can continue to contribute economically to the community and broader Australian population the benefits of Rix's Creek mine far outweigh any disadvantages, and not just for me but for everybody.

45 It would be socially and economically irresponsible to not support Rix's Creek so that they can, in turn, continue to support their community. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity in allowing me to share the facts of modern day mining here in the Hunter as I know it to be.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker on the list, Carl Talturry, will not be able to speak today, and so the next speaker is Heath Brock from HCB Rural and Land Management, who will speak for five minutes.

5 MR H. BROCK: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to thank the Commission for giving me the opportunity to speak today. Good afternoon. My name is Heath Brock, and I'm the manager of HCB Rural and Land Management, a Singleton family-owned business employing six staff in fulltime employment. Our business provides fencing, property management, weed control and vertebrate pest control services, has had – and has been engaged to assist the Bloomfield Group with their land management project since April 2016. Although we have worked at several Bloomfield sites, the majority of our work occurs on the Rix's Creek North and South leases. In the past three years, HCB has been particularly proud to work with the Environmental Department to achieve some really good results across both sites, controlling not just noxious and problem weeds such as saligna acacia, Coolatai grass, prickly pear, cotton bush, green cestrum, just to name a few.

This work has occurred on mine rehabilitation by the off – biodiversity offset areas, and unmined land within the mining lease and around Rix's Creek's ongoing commitment to improve the biodiversity of plant species on the land that they manage. HCB strongly supports the proposed continuation of Rix's Creek South. The ongoing work that the extension will provide is not only important to us, but for all the local small businesses that Rix's Creek engages. For our business, working for the mine has been a win-win situation.

25 Certainly, there is a significant investment required, both financially and in resources to meet the high standards of safety expected by the Bloomfield Group, but at the end of the day our own work, health and safety management systems are all the better for the involvement with the mine, and we have been – we have benefited financially from a regular stream of work which is difficult to maintain in the private sector.

35 Last year, weed management alone on Rix's Creek North, South – North and South equated to 10 per cent of our company's total revenue. To lose this amount of work would definitely require us to reassess our business structure, possibly letting go staff or spending a lot of valuable time seeking out new opportunities. To complete our weed management work at the mine, our business in turn supports local produce stores for chemicals, retail stores for PPE and uniform supplies, training providers for the first aid and chemical training that we provide our employees, fuel providers and auto part suppliers for servicing and repair of our equipment.

45 Consider, then, how this problem is repeated throughout all of the many local small businesses that are engaged by Rix's Creek Mine and the impact on our community soon becomes quite real. For us, the commitment by Rix's Creek Mine to engage local businesses, and in doing so actively supports local community, is one very positive reason for granting the Rix's – Rix's Creek South extension.

In regards to the community, on a personal level, I have witnessed how Rix's Creek mine has worked with local organisations. In this instance, the Mount Olive Community Centre to assist them with fundraising to improve the hall and to make it a viable venue for other groups to use such as the mobile pre-school, taekwondo, and the Mount Pleasant Public School. As a business owner I don't stand here today of what is ahead for the future – a move towards sustainable energy sources – but I do know that Australia has a lot of preparation to do to make that possible, and in the meantime communities like Singleton still need to survive and prosper so that the opportunity for change is possible. The extension of Rix's Creek South has positive flow-on effects that are wide-reaching, not only the stability it provides to its immediate workforce, but also for the local businesses engaged by the mine, their employees, the businesses they in turn support and the local community groups which have benefited from the mine's involvement. Thank you.

15 MS MANSTED: Thank you. Professor O'Kane, I note the time. Would that be a convenient time to take the luncheon adjournment?

PROF O'KANE: I – I think that would be a good idea.

20 MS MANSTED: We will now take a half hour break for lunch and recommence at approximately a quarter to.

25 **RECORDING SUSPENDED** [12.24 pm]

RECORDING RESUMED [12.58 pm]

30 MS MANSTED: Good afternoon, everyone. We will reconvene now. The next speaker will be Neville Jukes, who will speak for 10 minutes. While Mr Jukes is making his way to the lectern, can I just ask whether Wendy Wales or Beverley Smiles are in the audience and still wish to speak? They're on the speakers list. If they are here, could they please present themselves to the – to the Secretariat. Thank you. Mr Jukes.

40 MR N. JUKES: Thank you. My name is Neville Jukes. I was the managing director of PJ Welding for 45 years. I've recently retired for health reasons. I would prefer to speak from the heart as I'm passionate about the Bloomfield Group, but I have to provide a copy of my speech notes, so if you will bear with me, I will read from those notes. But before I do, I just wanted to mention that Dr Vickers mentioned about the dust – the elevated dust levels. I've just come back from Lightning Ridge and I can assure the Commission that the whole state is in a state of elevated dust levels because the place is a dust bowl. However, the Bloomfield Group has led me – fed my family for 45 years.

During that time, PJ Welding has some extremely lean periods and we've had to reduce the company to bare bones. Several times PJ Welding has been on the verge of winding up but the Bloomfield Group always helped by finding enough work to keep the company afloat. PJ Welding currently employs in excess of 20 people, one
5 of those is my son. However, some are more recent additions. When a local company went into receivership prior to Easter last year, some of their employees approached us to seek employment. In an effort to give them stability for their families, I approached the Bloomfield Group to see if they were able to help. Rix's Creek Mine supported these people by offering PJ Welding additional work.

10 Without the help of Rix's Creek Mine, there would have been another dozen people and families seeking unemployment benefits. PJ Welding has employees within excess of 35 years employment. Some of these older workers have little chance of gaining alternative employment should they become unemployed. It's a continuation
15 of mining at Rix's Creek that will offer these people an opportunity to work till retirement. PJ Welding employs several tradesmen who have spent their entire working life servicing the Bloomfield Group from their apprenticeship to middle age. They require – they rely almost exclusively on Rix's Creek Mine to feed their families.

20 Two of our apprentices have achieved Hunter Valley Apprentice of the Year Awards. The variety of work we receive from the Bloomfield Group, their focus on safety and their extensive environmental awareness have had a significant impact – impact on the training of these – these young lads. All – all our supervisors and tradesmen and
25 apprentices and labourers have been tutored over many years and they are the highest quality due to the support of the Bloomfield Group and the additional training they have supplied.

30 The Bloomfield Group is a wonderful corporate citizen. I won't go right into that because other people have addressed that. Your decision will have a far reaching impact on numerous families who – who rely on the Rix's Creek Mine. In our – in our case, as far reaching as the Central Coast, if mining is not supported in this area, towns like Singleton and Muswellbrook and other towns in the Lower Hunter will be impacted significantly, with serious unemployment.

35 I suspect some of those towns will struggle to survive, such is their reliance on the mining industry. In our particular case, PJ Welding employs partners and families amounted to – amounts to hundreds more people but considering the Rix's Creek employees and other contractors, you have the immediate future of thousands of
40 people in your hands. Add to that the flow-on effect of the local corner store, the paper shop and the Woolworths and Coles of this world – there will be a serious human impact for you to consider.

45 A very important issue that needs to be taken into account is the fact that Rix's Creek is privately owned – is a privately owned Australian company. The profits, taxes remain in Australia. We're not dealing here with overseas commercial giants. We're dealing with people who live amongst us, work beside us. They've always displayed

a strong community ethic and ongoing considerations towards their neighbours. We unreservedly support the continuation application and urge you to approve the mining lease extension and enable our children, grandchildren to be part of the Rix's Creek mining family. Thank you.

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MS MANSTED: The next speaker is Kevin Taggart, who will speak for 10 minutes.

MR K. TAGGART: Thanks for letting me speak. My name is Kevin Taggart and I'm a Wonnarua person of this country here and I love this country. And I would
10 just like to say when is this going to stop – giving the mine the go-ahead and that? They've – they've bugged our rivers, the air quality. They've – all the fish we had in the river have now gone. We they talk about "environmental", would that be environmental? All of our fish are gone for a reason – the pollution in the creek, in the rivers. And all of our culture, like the air quality we're getting and that – and if
15 you beat the Government in – in ways and that, they change the rules – the rules are changed – the rules get changed so you can't beat them.

And our – and you've got Environment – Environment and Planning – environment – well, what do they do to that? Talk about running cattle – 60 head and 70 head.
20 What about the big and that on the places. And for an Aboriginal person – if an Aboriginal person agrees with destroying country and that, well, his Aboriginality is gone. He – he – he's not an Aboriginal person as far as I'm concerned. And you've got Environment and Planning. Well, I think everything is already – sad to say, everything is already planned. And we're – and Bloomfield was talking about giving
25 money to children – to the schools and charity and that. Do they ever think with the – all the pollution – or anyone ever think with all the pollution and that, the life span of some of them children – it could be a lot less.

And they talk about giving money to – to – to schools and that. That's a load of
30 bullshit – just rubbish. And – and, then you've got farmers pumping water out of the – the Hunter River. And that water – that water has got to be polluted and going onto the ground and then all this adds up, all of our culture, everything. And you get the mines, all the excuses and bloody bullshit – and that's what it is – and for an
35 Aboriginal person like me respects the land and everything and that and – and – and they just go and do it – environmental terrorism. And they can get away with it – just – all the time they get away with it – Planning – Environment and Planning just seems to – how come all the time that – there's probably only one mine got knocked back, but all the time.

40 And the pollution and that is around there – you've only got to walk – get outside there and see the pollution and that – that around. And they always get the goer – always get the go ahead because of money. It's a terrible word to say – money – and with the whole situation right through the Aboriginal past, just – Aboriginal people – most Aboriginal people never had any money, and they get given a bit of money
45 from the mine or a big bit of money at times, which goes in a lot of times wasted to just a few people, and there's that many Aboriginal people there in need and don't get nothing. They don't get nothing.

The whole system to me is – is bloody corrupt – real corrupt, and that’s a terrible word and it’s a word that I wouldn’t say, but I’m not very good educated – been educated real well and that, but if that ain’t the case, well, there’s a – they just get – get away with corruption, just all the time, corruption, corruption, corruption. And
5 I’d like to say me sister she lives up at the Heights, and every day she’s cleaning – cleaning round the place there with coal dust and everything. They – they – and they tell ya – told us there today, you know, there’s no – it’s clean and everything is right and that – cleans up every day, and you know, I just – I’m going to make it short – make – I – I know we’re not gonna – we won’t stop it, it’s just through
10 corruption. There’s no doubt about that. It’ll come out – it’ll come out later on.

And – it’s just one of me days there today. I’m not real good at talking, but I’m that upset with things that to let everything go like this – and people get up here and say they do the right thing with air quality and all this and that. I’ve got a property out
15 there high in the mountains and that there, and everyone talks about the dust – dust coming from – or one fella was talking about the dust coming from way up there to somewhere, and the pollution – talking about coming up there because it’s dry and that, of course it’s dry.

20 But if you get up on top of them mountains there, you can see every one of them mines where the dust and the pollution is coming out of them. So I’d like of any you to get up there and look, you can see exactly where it’s coming from. There will be other dust coming from the – out west and that, but that’s – that’s all bullshit that’s coming from the – all of it.

25 You can see exactly what mines it’s coming out, out of this one there, the one over there, the one over there a bit further than that, and it just – it just keeps going – going on and it just keeps getting allowed to happen, and the – I’d like to see every person in Australia have a job – have work, but will we as a country gotta be
30 destroyed for them to have work? Just totally destroy – we’ll just totally destroy it. You’ve got the big boy there and you’ve got there they timber the rest of it up, it’s – to an Aboriginal person, the country is mean to be looked after. My dad learned me that. If he was around today and see what’s happening – to be looked after and to make – provide people – and provide people with tucker and that, and that – that’s
35 just – you know.

What happens when the mines stop, which they will one day – it’s getting close – what happens then? What about Singleton, Maitland, Muswellbrook? There will be
40 houses there worth 10,000 each and no one will want the bastards. But, you know, with the councils and that – the mines can persuade the councils, they can persuade everyone just through corruption. And to all Aboriginal people, it’s just corruption – it’s just corruption to us, and – and you can’t say otherwise. Thank you very much.

45 MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker will be Forrest Saunders, who will speak for 10 minutes.

MR F. SAUNDERS: My name's Forrest Saunders. I'm on the owner of a company KRH Mining Maintenance. I employ around 50 people; apprentices, tradespeople, administration, lady tradespeople, right across the board. We support schools – small schools, sporting groups, the local museum, Lion's Club and that sort of thing.

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Now, I wasn't sure – you hear about the same old things at these talks and things, everyone brings up, you know, why you build under an airport and you expect them to stop flying as the population is growing and that sort of thing, but what I wanted to share today is – and I didn't write it down because when I read you wouldn't hear it in my voice what I'm talking about. I'm a success story, okay. I've got a beautiful wife, three beautiful kids. I moved up here from Sydney in 2000, had \$500 in my pocket with a family and a pregnant – pregnant wife. I now have 50 employees, and we've been going for some time.

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So I've got a hot wife, my son's doing well, one's got an apprenticeship, one's got a scholarship for school and I've got a 10 year old daughter going on 40. But – so on the surface everything looks good, but I was part of another pact with Drayton and things like that and I've seen what goes on and how things turn out. Now, I'm a bit of a tough character physically – take things on and all the reset of it – but after that I was left pretty broken. Nearly lost everything. I ran out of things to sell to keep my family going. We still own – well, we don't own – the bank owns the house, but to keep people employed instead of sacking them I had to sell everything; cars, tractors, anything.

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I'm a farmer – I was a farmer without a tractor – lot of hard work. I've been through it where we've lost everything, rebuilt again, and my wife's picked me up on the floor, you know. I've been in – been in tears, I've been broken down, not sleeping, not doing anything and the reality is – I was diagnosed – I got some help 12 years ago with depression, so things don't come easily and I take things personally, and with those 50 employees I see myself responsible. They're – I don't like to say they're – they work for me, they work with me, because without them I don't have a copy. I don't have what we've got.

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On average there's about five people for a family, so that's 200 people at the end of the day that Rix's Creek is helping to support. They're keeping us going. They're – they threw me a lifeline when we were sinking badly. I've just finished off paying off the last lot of debt from the last mine that closed, and I was this – I was so close you've got no idea to – to just losing half of my – you know, the other half of my house that the bank doesn't have, but they've got everything else.

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When I say I was a big strong bloke, like, physically, I was pulled down mentally and to have been able to not pay your electricity bill, I know what that's like. I grew up in a house – and this was the hard bit, I didn't know how to get it out and I didn't know – financially struggling, economical issues, was I watched my mum get beaten to a pulp. We had no money, burst ear drums, broken jaws. I've been hit more times than a punching bag. I couldn't tell you – not by my – not by my mum.

But just growing up as a Housing Commission kid in an under privileged area, there was 180 kids on our street. And about two of us made it out and the rest just followed suit, their houses. They're going on to do anything. I've one on. I've got my kids. I've been in so many fights, I couldn't tell you how many, but I promised
5 my kids they would never grow up in that environment that I grew up in. They would never see what I – what I saw. And, to this day, my kids have never been in a fight in their life. They've never raised their hand. My wife is treated like a goddess.

10 But as I said, I came up here with absolutely nothing. No family support, no nothing. And I've got an opportunity to turn my life around and turn my kids' life around, and the family's – and other families like it, like the apprentices at work. I take kids under the wing, I have a chat with them. I coach sporting teams, deal with ratbags. Give them a clip over the ear – I don't physically but, you know, you get in trouble.
15 It's been on the news. But, you know, rouse on them, put them straight and, you know, teamwork is everything. My – the people who work for me are so important. I wouldn't be where I'm at without them.

And they – and the support I've got, the lifeline I've got from an Australian owned
20 company, owned by families, look after their people the same way, deserve every opportunity. They're not a foreign – you know, they're not – the money is not getting shipped overseas. They're supporting local people, local families, and giving people like – and families like myself, the opportunity to have a good life and to be able to supply – to be able to pay that electricity bill, to be able to do things. I still
25 drive a Mitsubishi Triton. By no means am I rich. But I am as far as my family. And I am very grateful to the Bloomfield Group for the opportunity to provide for them.

And as I said, I've been shattered. I'm lucky, 21 years with my wife. She has picked
30 me up when I have been broken at 3 o'clock in the morning, crying like a baby, because I don't know how to – how to keep paying the bills, how to keep working, living week to week, that sort of thing, and that's what it's like after a pack comes through and they shut down and you get rid of us. Oh, we'll get work elsewhere. It's – it's not that easy. It's not – I wish it was that easy. You know, we work horrid
35 hours. Deal with people with, you know, extreme demands.

And I do take it personal that I'm responsible for those people who work with me. I've got to make sure that they're paid every Monday. The pay goes in. And they can pay their board. They can pay their rent. They can pay their mortgage, feed
40 their families. Along with my job becomes, I'm their financial advisor, marriage counsellor, you know, you're generally just propping everyone up and I've got my support there, with the people that I work with and it's – we're a contracting company but I've got people that are coming up for long service leave because they've stayed with me. We're not a fly by night. We don't throw people in and out.
45 I've got long term clients, that sort of thing. And they come and go but they really are family, the people who work for me.

And honestly, I – mentally, I don't know if I could even – if we lost this work, which is the major of our work, I – I – I don't know how to get through the other side, a second time round, copping it, so it's not an easy – there's no winners. There's always two sides. I really hope you give thought to the – the social economical and –
5 and – and the family wellbeing and the family hub. As I said, we sponsor a lot of things from Newcastle to Scone, some indigenous things, some sporting things, hospitals, the Westpac helicopter is another one. Every year, year in, year out. So thank you to Rix's Creek and I hope you really take that on board and think about it. So thanks very much for your time and the opportunity to talk.

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MS MANSTED: The next speaker is John Hindmarsh, who will speak for 10 minutes.

15 MR J. HINDMARSH: Chair, panel members, council, ladies and gentlemen, my name is John Hindmarsh. I am currently a beef cattle farmer living in the Upper Hunter and a former member of the Singleton mining community, and I support the Rix's Creek South continuation of mining project, SSD6300. Over the past five years, I have leased 55 hectares of rehabilitated mined land on the Rix's Creek site and grazed my beef cattle on this land. The land leased at Rix's Creek has become a
20 critical component of my drought strategy, allowing me to maintain the nucleus of my breeding herd.

For those who don't know me, I believe my background is relevant to my presentation. I'm a fourth-generation landowner and beef cattle grazier, with my
25 family property being located in the Upper Hunter and continuously held in the Hindmarsh family since 1862. My professional credentials are demonstrated by a Bachelor of Rural Science and my employment history. Initially, with 12 years experience during the eighties and early nineties, working with the New South Wales Soil Conservation Service. During this time, I was directly involved in conservation
30 farming, when the ideas of minimal pillage and direct drilling of crops and pastures were in their infancy.

In the mid-nineties, I decided to see if I could make a difference using my skills and knowledge and took up a position as Environmental Officer at the Rix's Creek Mine
35 in 1996 and continued in the environment team until I retired in 2017. My initial role was to develop and build on the rehabilitation program at Rix's Creek and then, later, the supervision and implementation of the rehabilitation program.

I think it is important to remind ourselves of the legal commitments pertaining to
40 post-mining land use that Rix's Creek Mine currently operates under. As stated in the Rix's Creek Mine current Mining Operations Plan, referred to as the MOP, the operation is committed to reinstating the pre-mining land capability of grazing land, with stable landforms, compatible with the surrounding landscape, and allow for a range of possible post-mining land uses. Further to this, the objectives of the
45 rehabilitation program, as stated in the MOP, as they pertain to landform and vegetation in context of grazing and pasture management, include:

Landform. Rehabilitated land will be safe and stable. Land capability will be returned to a class similar to that existing prior to the commencement of mining. Mined land will be re-contoured to a landform compatible with the surrounding natural landscapes and to reinstate stable drainage networks.

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Vegetation. A sustainable vegetation cover will be established on rehabilitated land. Grazing areas will be established with a range of species suitable for pasture production in that area. Rehabilitated land will be topsoiled, fertilised and sown with grass species.

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Evidence of the success of the Rix's Creek rehabilitation program has been demonstrated through a range of activities and studies. The site and the rehabilitation program has been showcased via tours on numerous occasions, including the best practice ecological rehabilitation of mine lands conference. These tours have demonstrated to visitors examples of the success of the rehabilitation program, where grazing is the defined post-mining land use.

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From 2012 until 2017, a site-based trial was undertaken to assess the quality and quantity of pastures produced on post-mined land and to determine the suitability of these lands for grazing. These trials demonstrated that improved pasture sown on rehabilitated land can be more productive than those – than those undisturbed, native and naturalised pastures on equivalent soils. Scientifically based studies undertaken in partnership with New South Wales DPI, under the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue Grazing Trial, compared cattle grazing on rehabilitated mined land and unmined lands. The results from these studies, as published in ACARP project C23053, indicate cattle weight gains per hectare on post-mined pastures was more than double that achieved on the analogue sites.

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The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue Grazing Trial has now been expanded and I understand that the focus is to assess the capability of the land in terms of achieving post-mining grazing outcomes. These studies include land at Rix's Creek, where my cattle graze, and the photograph on there is of my cattle grazing rehabilitated pastures at Rix's Creek. When checking on my cattle recently, members of the research team were on site and provided me with an update on the studies. One finding that I found to be of great interest was the evidence of a sustainable grazing system, was the presence of earth worms and dung beetles.

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As a farmer, I understand that the key to the success – to a successful beef cattle program is all about weight gains and optimising economic returns when the cattle are sent to market. Monitoring that I have undertaken of my cattle at Rix's Creek reflect weight gains of between half a kilo to .7 of a kilo per day over the period the cattle were grazing on the rehabilitation land. These growth rates are similar to those results obtained from the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue Grazing Trial. It should also be remembered that these weight gains of my cattle have been achieved during times which include drought conditions.

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The value of the land that I lease at Rix's Creek has been reinforced to me by local graziers who view these rehabilitated pastures as highly prized grazing land and are a beneficial addition to any grazing farm business. The pasture areas and post-mine land that I lease at Rix's Creek are an integral and important component of my
5 farming business. The future success of my business would be placed in jeopardy if the Rix's Creek South Continuation of Mining Project is refused.

So probably more than anyone in this room, I understand firsthand, and from my 22 years site experience based at Rix's Creek, I know and understand the challenges that
10 are associated with the rehabilitation program at Rix's Creek. I know that soils can be problematic. Weeds can be a real issue. Yes, dust and noise need to be managed. However, at the end of the day, the ability to meet the objectives of the rehabilitation program and the underpinning results of the rehabilitation trials and studies speak for themselves.

15 As a nation, and more importantly as a region, we need coal mining. You will hear today from individuals whose livelihood and, in turn, their families rely on mining, whether they are not are an operator at Rix's Creek or a business that helps to feed and house the members of the mining community, the flow-on benefits are
20 enormous. Right across Singleton – the Singleton area, we witnessed the impact of the downturn of mining in 2013 – shops shut, sales of cars and non-essential items fell, house prices dropped and property investors fled the market.

The coal mining industry is highly regulated and constantly under public scrutiny,
25 however it is the status of the rehabilitation program that is often used as the gauge under which the entire industry is assessed. The rehabilitation at Rix's Creek has been repeatedly shown to have met the core goals of being safe, stable and non-polluting and the ability to develop sustainable pastures on post-mine landscapes. At an individual level, I have witnessed the success of the rehabilitation program. My
30 cattle are healthy, gaining weight every day and, all being well, their offspring will sell at optimal prices. So, in closing, I would like to make it extremely clear that I support the approval of the Rix's Creek South Continuation of Mining Project SSD 6300. Thank you.

35 MS MANSTED: Just one question if I may. Is the rehabilitated land that your cattle on being maintained by the Rix's Creek Mine at the moment and, for example, watering or weeding and – well, I will let you answer that question.

40 MR HINDMARSH: The lands – as already been discussed, there is a – a weed management control program that – that takes place across the entire site and the fifty 55 hectares that I lease comes as part of that program.

45 MS MANSTED: And that being the case, do you expect that the quality of the pasture would be sustained if that maintenance were to cease for any reason?

MR HINDMARSH: I think it comes back to an understanding of an agricultural grazing system and that involves grazing management, as well as pasture

management. And – and maintenance of that system is an ongoing activity in any case, whether it be on a mine site or – or whether it be at my farm at home. To – to – to maintain the – the – the long-term stability, yes, there is maintenance activities and that – that goes on to look – look at species composition, fertiliser applications and the introduction and the continuing introduction of pasture species like clovers and things like that to maintain the productivity. And that is just a standard practice of any agricultural grazing system. It is nothing different to mined land or – or to a – to an ordinary farming situation anywhere.

10 MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker is Shayne Mackie from Marathon Tyres. He will speak for five minutes.

15 MR S. MACKIE: Good afternoon. My name is Shayne Mackie. I'm the operations manager for Marathon Tyres. I've worked for the company for 34 years. I'm here to give my support and the support of my employer for the continuation of mining at Rix's Creek South. Marathon Tyres is a locally owned business that commenced trading in 1970 and has been proudly providing goods and services to the Bloomfield Group, including Rix's Creek Mine, since 1970. During this time, we have always found the Bloomfield Group and their employees, to have the utmost integrity.

20 Due to their local ownership, they demonstrated a very level of social awareness. Marathon Tyres employ 150 people of which 79 people are employed here in the Hunter Valley. The Marathon Tyres depot that has serviced the Rix's Creek Mine since 1990 is based at Mount Thorley where we employ 48 staff. Of these 48 staff, approximately 30 staff have regular interaction with Rix's Creek Coal Mine. Our local employees based in the Mount Thorley have an average length of employment with Marathon Tyres of over nine years. With 23 people and their families living in the Singleton area, the remaining 25 people living the Maitland and Lower Hunter region.

30 We also have another 10 staff at our head office in Newcastle that provide backup services to our Mount Thorley and to Rix's Creek Mine, these functions being payroll, training, safety, compliance, supply chain, for an example. Our employees that work in the Hunter Valley mining industry are lucky due to the fact that they can work in the local communities where they live. You cannot under-estimate the benefits of families that can live and grow together on a daily basis.

40 Unfortunately, this isn't the norm in the mining industry where the majority of workers work remotely from their local communities and that's a very strong point in – in the Hunter Valley, that people go home to their families after every shift. Local employment provides a great stimulus to the local communities and is vital for the future of any community.

45 From the Marathon Tyres Mount Thorley depot, we engage with approximately 90 local suppliers. This, together with a significant wage bill, means that \$7 million per annum stays in the local community. In summary, we ask that you give timely consideration and support for Rix's Creek South Continuation of Mining Project.

This project is vitally important to the local community, the employees, the sub-contractors and their families that work and depend on Rix's Creek Mine. Local jobs needs a strong local economy and a bright future for all. Thank you for the opportunity. Thank you.

5

MS MANSTED: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Mr Mackie. Sorry – sorry, sir. If I could ask just one question. Approximately what proportion of your business would you say derives from this project?

10

MR MACKIE: Well, it would probably be 20 per cent – 25 per cent of the business

15

MS MANSTED: Thank you.

MR MACKIE: Thanks.

MS MANSTED: The next speaker is Simon Davis, who will speak for 15 minutes.

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MR S. DAVIS: Good afternoon. My name is Simon Davis. I'm currently employed by the Bloomfield Group as a production superintendent. I've worked in the mining industry for the past 25 years, have employed and have been employed at Rix's Creek Mine since the beginning of this year. I would like to take this opportunity to formally submit my support for the Rix's Creek South Continuation of Mining Project SSD 6300.

25

As the production superintendent, I and my team of open cut examiners and mine production workers are responsible for the health, safety and environmental compliance of the Rix's Creek operations. During my time at Bloomfield, I've witnessed the commitment to minimising the effect of – the effect our operations have on the wider community and the environment.

30

I've worked in a number of mines in the Hunter Valley and in Queensland and by far, the Rix's Creek environmental monitoring system is the most proactive I've seen. This system enables us to proactively modify our operation at any time throughout the day and night. This is achieved through actively monitoring – sorry – this is achieved through active monitoring by our environmental officers continuously conducting on and offsite noise checks and dust monitoring of our system and feedback processes.

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This information is then proactively fed back to our mining operations team and from that, we are then able to make changes to our mining operation to ensure we stay below our compliance levels. I strongly believe that this process – this project should be approved as progression of the mining is away from Singleton and has a minimal increase in the disturbance footprint.

45

Careful consideration has been given in the mine design to minimising and mitigating environmental, health and social impacts on our local communities surrounding the mine site. We at Bloomfield are committed to generating high quality and timely rehabilitation following as closely as possible to our active mining areas. This allows us to generate pasture for our active grazing of cattle as per our current mining – as per our current practices.

This generation of timely, high quality rehabilitation allows us to keep our disturbance footprint and our airborne dust to a minimum. The Bloomfield Group are proudly Australian owned and have been operating successfully for the past 80 years. We are active in the local community organise – sorry – we are active in supporting local community organisations and charities and, as a proud employee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this project and look forward to continue operations at Rix’s Creek Mine.

MR PEARSON: Sorry, sir. If I could just ask one question. You discussed a little bit about the environmental monitoring system.

MR DAVIS: Yes.

MR PEARSON: Do you have a view in terms of option 1 or option 2 that was presented earlier, which of those might be better able to be monitored, if you like, from an environmental monitoring system process – process point of view?

MR DAVIS: So from a production superintendent’s perspective and also the – the Mining Department and my own personal view, option 2 – I support option 2 based on a couple of things: number 1, when you see tomorrow on your – on your site visit the rehabilitation that – that is underway in our woodlands and our frog pond area that will be – have to unfortunately be destroyed by option 1, I think that should not occur. And option 2 from an operational perspective gives us with the – the west pit dump gives us flexibility to be able to not concentrate our – our dumping operations in one area.

From my perspective, over time also the – the – the third point that I have is, with a decreased dump height in option 2 over the main area also takes away quite a bit of focus and enables us to – to manage dust in that process.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker is Matthew Stidolph, who will speak for five minutes.

MR M. STIDOLPH: Thank you. My name’s Matthew Stidolph, I’m the general manager Flurin, a local family owned business. We’ve been providing rehabilitation and mining services to the Rix’s Creek Mine since the early 2000’s. Rix’s Creek is a leader within – within the mining community when it comes to rehabilitation and the environment. Their rehabilitation is best practice returning mining areas back to their natural state. Our role is to work closely with the Rix’s Creek environmental team to rehabilitate the mine area. To do this, the area’s landform shapes are

designed and constructed to create a final contoured landscape that is stable and visually attuned with the surrounding natural area.

5 There is such a focus on the environment which is a positive for everyone. We need
a balance between mining and environment – sorry – mining and environment, and
the Rix’s Creek does this very well. I believe that Rix’s Creek and the Bloomfield
Group do an outstanding job of returning mining areas back into workable grazing
land and animal rehab – rehab habitat areas. They’ve created habitat corridors to
10 enable safe passage of fauna and install habitat trees which studies have shown are
regularly used by birds and other wildlife.

Not only are we benefiting from their care for the environment, the Hunter is also
benefiting – benefiting economically with the injection of employment through the
Bloomfield Group. They employ over 600 people directly and hundreds more
15 indirectly through companies like ours that supply additional services for the mine to
operate. We are just one of those – one of many businesses that are assisted from
Rix’s Creek being in operation.

Local employment is so important for our region and certainly for the younger
20 generation, we need jobs to keep them – to give them opportunities. I also believe
the economic value for Rix’s Creek in continued mining in the Hunter is significant.
The flow-on from Rix’s Creek getting approval to the local economy is substantial
and should not be underestimated. It will continue to boost our local economy and
that is exactly what the Hunter Valley needs.

25 The benefits of Rix’s Creek Mine flow right through the community, and with added
money flowing into local businesses, companies can afford to sponsor local sporting
teams and donate to charities. We – we at Flurin donate thousands of dollars to
charities and sporting organisations in the area. I know over the years the
30 Bloomfield Group has donated thousands and thousands of dollars to charities from
the CANCEL Council to the local SES to name just a few.

In summing up, approval for a mining extension to this mine is a real positive for the
people of the Hunter Valley and Newcastle area. It is nice to have an Australian
35 mining company do good things in our region. Thank you.

MS MANSTED: The next speaker is Brad Harris, who will speak for five minutes.

40 MR B. HARRIS: Good afternoon, members of the Commission and members of the
public. My name is Brad Harris. I strongly support the approval of the Rix’s Creek
South continuation in mining. 51 years ago, I was born in Muswellbrook, an area
that is fully surrounded by mining. Both my adult children are – were also born in
Muswellbrook, and we’ve lived all our lives in the Hunter and have always been fit
and healthy.

45 I did my apprenticeship as an electrician at Liddell Power Station, which is – was at
the time a Government owned coal fired power station, before moving into mining

and starting with the Bloomfield Group in 2007. I'm now the training and competency advisor for the Group, and my main roles are the wellbeing and development of our many apprentices and trainees. The apprenticeship programme has been running for more than 40 years, producing many fantastic tradespeople that mostly still live and work in the Hunter region.

Rix's Creek plays a major role in the development and training of these apprentices and trainees. This does provide the community with a great opportunity for local young people to develop a career. The Bloomfield Group, as has been stated on many occasions, is a proudly Australian owned company that places a high priority on the wellbeing and safety of all its employees. The Group takes the greatest of care with the environment while being actively involved in the community where all the Group's employees reside. I am proud to say that I work for the Bloomfield Group. Thank you very much.

MS MANSTED: The next speaker is Jake Eyb, who will speak for five minutes.

MR J EYB: Good afternoon. My name is Jake, and I'm a second-year plant mechanic who is employed by Kings Engineering. Kings is in a partnership with the Bloomfield Group, and this decision will make a huge effect in my career, as Rix's Creek supports the Bloomfield Group in more way than one. The Bloomfield Group is the only family-owned mine left in the Hunter, and family means a lot to me, so I strongly support the continuation of the Rix's Creek Mine.

Mining has been supporting families since day 1. Shutting down the mining industry will not only have an effect on me but the majority of my family as well. My cousin is now a supervisor at Ravensworth Mine, who is starting a family. It is apprenticeship through Maitland Diesel Service, which is a part of the Bloomfield Group. My uncle is a safety officer who travels to different sites, and represents the company he works for, as he is responsible for monitoring and assessing hazardous and unsafe situations to personnel. He completed his apprenticeship through Kings Engineering also.

My father and his father before him, and his father before him, have all had mining industry – sorry – had mining background, and for me to be able to be the fourth generation in my family and mining industry to be in a family-owned mine make sit that bit more special. My father started his business 20 years ago, and because he was mechanical and mining background has helped our family business through life. Our mechanical and mining background has helped our family – sorry. And this has had a major effect in the way I've been brought back. Without my family mining background, I would not be the person I am today, and I'm pretty damn proud of who I am. So I support the Bloomfield – sorry; I support the Rix's Creek continuation.

I believe that the Bloomfield Group has the best interests for me and my mining career as a mechanic, to be able to push barriers and continue a strong legacy, to be a fully operational and successful mine. As I've only been here a short time, I'm still

learning about the ins and outs of our mining industry, and I know that my knowledge, as well as the company's knowledge, can only grow further and better than what they are today. To be able to be the last family-owned mine in the Hunter and working for a company who has a strong reputation for its apprentices and all employees is a pretty good effort, if you ask me. I can't wait to see what they hold for us in the future. Thank you.

MS MANSTED: The next speaker is Olivia Rose Hannan, who will speak for five minutes.

MS O.R. HANNAN: So thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Olivia Hannon. I am 18 years of age, and I'm a second-year electrical apprentice for the Bloomfield Group. I'm very proud and fortunate to be given the opportunity that the Bloomfield Group Apprenticeship Program offers me. Undertaking an apprenticeship with the company has allowed me to obtain a more vast range of knowledge in mobile plant equipment, to switchboard building, all the way down to domestic-type work. Having all this knowledge within my grasp will allow me to grow and develop to my full potential as a tradeswoman, giving me the foundations for a successful career.

The company also allows me to further my education competencies through additional training and courses. If the Rix's Creek continuation was to sadly not get the approval needed, this would greatly impact my apprenticeship and potentially my future career. The opportunities I am now offered and the chances I have of developing my skillset as well as my knowledge would be greatly hindered.

This would be due to a lack of opportunities and exposure to working in the variety of equipment that Rix's has to offer. With the approval of the continuation, I look forward to hopefully continuing my career with the company and being kept on as a tradeswoman, as I do wish to have a long and rewarding career, and I know that the Bloomfield Group can provide that for me. Thank you.

MS MANSTED: Just one – one moment, Ms Hannon. Just one question from the Commission.

MR PEARSON: Ms Hannon, if I could ask, how – how – if you could provide some information around the process you went through to acquire the apprenticeship, and perhaps how difficult that was and how far away you had to - - -

MS HANNAN: Yes. So, like, the whole process of actually obtaining the apprenticeship?

MR PEARSON: Well, I guess just how – how difficult or easy that process was.

MS HANNAN: It's – you have to go through a few stages to be able to get the apprenticeship. So I first applied online through – called Seek – an app called Seek. I then was contacted about that phone interview. Then from the – from the phone

interview I then went on to aptitude tests as well as some other tests there where they do, like, group activities – a group interview sort of thing. And then from there I went onto a one-on-one interview with – like a four panel – lots of people – and then I was lucky enough to get the apprenticeship.

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MR PEARSON: And do you have to apply with apprenticeships with 10 mining companies to get one – one role, or is - - -

10 MS HANNAN: Well, I applied with a lot of different companies. I had a couple of offers elsewhere for an apprenticeship with them, but I, uh, took the apprenticeship with the Bloomfield Group.

MR PEARSON: Okay. Thank you.

15 MS MANSTED: The next speaker is Scott Anderson, who will speak for five minutes.

20 MR S. ANDERSON: Good aft – afternoon, all. My name is Scott Anderson, and I'm currently a third-year plant mechanic with Kings Engineering. I am grateful to the Bloomfield Group for all the opportunities that they – that I have had throughout my apprenticeship. I see myself – I myself see a future for me in this company if the continuation is to go through. But if not granted, then I see it having a massive impact on myself and my family, as three – as my three brothers, as well as my father, all work for the Bloomfield Group. Without the continuation, we would all be
25 looking for work.

In conclusion, all I would like to say is that the Bloomfield Group is a great company to work for and has a great apprentice program. In the – if the continuation is to go through, there will be future opportunities for employment for me, my family and my
30 colleagues. Thank you for your time.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker will be John Swab, who will speak for five minutes.

35 MR J. SWAB: Good afternoon, Commissioners. My name is John Swab, and I'm the managing director of PJ Welding. I'm here today to speak on behalf of an entire workforce at PJ Welding, and we are in full support of the Rix's Creek South Continuation of Mining Project SSD6300. We're a small, Australian-owned business located in the Hunter Region. We have 26 employees ranging from
40 boilermakers to painters to fitters. We have worked with the Bloomfield Group on the Rix's Creek Mine for over 40 years, and we've always found the directors, managers and supervisors and all their employees to all show us the utmost respect towards us, and we really feel like we're part of their family. All of our workers contribute heavily to the upkeep and maintenance of Rix's Creek Mine, and if this
45 approval isn't consented, like many others, we would all be out looking for new employment and/or on social benefits.

On a personal level, I started working as apprentice boilermaker for PJ Welding over 20 years ago and slowly worked my way up to where I am today. This would definitely not have been possible without the ongoing support of the Bloomfield Group, and in particular the Rix's Creek Mine, which has helped me through every
5 stage of my employment. So the Rix's Creek Mine have always been at the forefront of research and development in New South Wales. They've always upheld their environmental requirements and their safety procedures are always completed to the highest of standards. So the mine also provide many contributions and donations to the lives of the Steamfest, the rescue – the Westpac Rescue Helicopter and the
10 Cancer Council, all of which would be lost if the mining continuation is not approved.

By not approving this application, we – it would be detrimental effects not only to PJ Welding, but also to the Rix's Creek Mine and the wider community. If the approval
15 is granting, it will provide a safe working environment. It will provide permanent local jobs, and would be a massive benefit to the local community and the Hunter Region. For this reason, we fully support the Rix's Creek Mine and urge you to approve the mining lease extension so we continue – can continue to prosper for years to come. Thank you.

20

MR PEARSON: Mr Swab.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. One question from the Commissioner.

25 MR PEARSON: If I might, um, what proportion of your business would you say comes from this application?

MR SWAB: For us guys it would be 90 per cent of our work goes through Rix's Creek and the Bloomfield Group.

30

MR PEARSON: All right. Thank you.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker is Jane Davis from the Hunter Environment Lobby Incorporated, who will speak for 15 minutes. Is Ms Davis in the
35 room? Ms Davis doesn't appear to be present. So the next speaker will be Sue Gilroy, from the Singleton Business Chamber, who will speak for five minutes.

MS S. GILROY: Good afternoon. Sue Gilroy, President, the Single Business Chamber. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. The Singleton
40 Business Chamber represents the interests of business on a local level. Through Chamber's vast network, each Chamber member has a community voice. The Chamber represents around 160-member businesses. As a team, we are able to identify the concerns of – for – for – for business in our community, plan actions, and together, everyone is rewarded and has a voice.

45

The Chamber welcomes the opportunity to provide a brief submission to the Rix's Creek Mine, Continuation of Mining Project. The Chamber strongly supports

Bloomfield Group's application for the continuation of mining at Rix's Creek Mine, and acknowledges the Environment Assessment Report. It addresses a large number of key considerations. The Chamber understands that Rix's Creek Coal Mine sits five kilometres to the west of Singleton and has been in continued operation since
5 1990. The Chamber acknowledges the established relationships between the existing mine and the community of Singleton, and surrounding areas. We further acknowledge Bloomfield's commitment to support the community through the provision of funding to the local community, environment and education groups.

10 The current mine has long contributed to the ongoing – economic health of the community, and can – can – can continue to do so into the future. Extension for mining at Rix's Creek will ensure future viability and sustainability of operations, enabling continued contribution to the economic and social fabric of surrounding communities. We further acknowledge Bloomfield's commitment to ensure
15 "environmentally and socially responsible" operations, and support their initiatives to ensure all consent conditions are met, and operations are focused on minimising any impacts.

In conclusion, the Chamber is pleased to offer its support to Bloomfield Group's
20 Rix's Creek Mine Continuation of Mining Project. We welcome – the extensive Environmental Assessment Purport, and acknowledge the work that continues to ensure strong environmental performance at the site. The Chamber believes this is a crucial project in sustaining local employment, local and regional economic – benefit, and positive social partner shifts with various sectors of the community.
25 Thank you.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker is Sharyn Munro, who will speak for five minutes. Is Ms Munro present? Ms Munro doesn't appear to be in the room. So the next speaker will be Shane Davey, who will speak for five minutes.
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MR S. DAVEY: My name's Shane Davey. I'm here to speak in support of this, ah – ah, continuation. Thank the Commissioners for the opportunity to speak, and respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we meet.

35 With the recent determination to continue operations at Rix's Creek for only a short nine months, to March 2020, the workers in the overwhelming majority of the Singleton community are justifiably anxious about the positive progress and the outcome of this meeting and the proposal at hand. As stated in other submissions, the application is seeking approval to extend the existing mining operations until
40 2038, to increase peak production and recover an additional 32 million tonnes of coal, allowing the remaining resource to be extracted. That sounds very much like a standard mining continuation application, and the straightforward wording, while necessarily descriptive and precise, falls a long way short of what the prop – what the proposal fully means to this community, and how the dirt – determination should be
45 judged, in my opinion.

The Rix's Creek Continuation of Mining Project should also read that they are seeking permission – approval to extend a decades-long tradition of best practice and community pride; a decades-long commitment to people; a tradition of proud community support; and a continuation of striving to be the standard-bearers of how to do things right in a complex and challenging industry. In my opinion, Rix's Creek is not a coal business; it is a people business.

This is a company that fully understands that people in the community are the primary – primary reason that they are in business, and are successful in business. I believe that being a family company, that operates on family values, the big decisions and actions are taken from a proud personal perspective, as much as regulatory or corporate. In my opinion, this adds considerable additional, if somewhat intangible, commitment and better outcomes. However, when the sum of all those parts, the eventual outcomes are analysed, those intangibles become very tangible indeed.

At a local level, I've never heard – I've never had or heard a negative word about this mine or company. Not even once in the 10 or so years I've been active in this community. Not from their people, not from the community, not from other businesses. That is unique in Hunter mining in my experience. They conduct themselves with rare and outstanding integrity. I've never known a mining company that takes its obligations more seriously than this one, be it potential adverse effects on near neighbours, Singleton or the environment, they work to – to do it to the highest possible standards, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

They have the same approach to the futures and welfare of all who work there, too. They don't cut corners, and just enough is not good enough for this proud family-owned company. Doing their absolute best has always been their goal. When workers I know have secured full-time roles, as a whole they feel they have secured a support – a – a spot within the most coveted mining organisation, and work on the most coveted mine site in the region, if not the country.

Talking to the people from Rix's Creek, it's the genuine and heartfelt way they share their story and concerns that shines through, but it's a far from only company people that are supportive, as they are worried. Many community groups couldn't do what they do without them. When asked to help, they rarely say no, and in fact jump in to help, often before it is asked. When I personally went through some difficult times a few years ago, I can say that without doubt, I wouldn't have got through it without the guidance and support of certain Rix's people.

While I don't – I am a strong supporter of new mines, and then economic activity and jobs that come with them, that are well planned and been greenlighted and developed, I'm an even bigger supporter of sensibly planned existing operations extending their productive life. It allows for less overall development and disturbance on an already mining-affected land, and continued stability for their workforces and our community.

Waiting until the eleventh hour is not an option. We came within a week of hundreds of families losing their livelihoods, and a great Australian company being resigned to history. We could not allow this project to be cornered in activated – activist-related chaos or red tape delays. It doesn't matter if you're a supporter or
5 detractor of mining. The fact is that this unique mine makes an enormous contribution at a local – local community, state, national and even international level. And it goes far beyond money. This'll – and this will be the case for the foreseeable future. And – Rix's Creek should be a major positive part of that future.

10 Rix's Creek really is a mine of the highest standards, and should be positively supported to continue the great work that they do with their workforce. The Singleton community and New South Wales – well, mining in general. They generally are a showcase operator for the mining industry on best practice and integrity. Thank you.

15 MS MANSTED: Thank you, Mr Davey. One – Mr Davey, could I just ask you a question, please. Could I just clarify, what is your background and your relationship, if any, with the Bloomfield Group - - -

20 MR DAVEY: I - - -

MS MANSTED: - - - and how are you - - -

MR DAVEY: I publish a local – I publish a - - -
25

MS MANSTED: How are you - - -

MR DAVEY: I publish a local magazine.

30 MS MANSTED: Could you just let me finish - - -

MR DAVEY: Sorry.

MS MANSTED: - - - asking the question?
35

MR DAVEY: Sorry.

MS MANSTED: Thank you. And how – how are you able to, and what's the – what is your experience with the Bloomfield Group, and how are you able to talk
40 about them.

MR DAVEY: I – I publish a local magazine, called Coalface, so it's obviously pro – pro-coalmining. But, um, I – I – I'm strongly here – not talking in that capacity. I'm here talking as a member of the Singleton community, um, and as a – an
45 individual, who has come to know this company, and – and – and possibly, you know, um, more importantly, people within this company, and just the genuine way that – they've influenced my life, in – you know – in ways that I won't go into here,

because of – they’re personal, but, you know, it’s – I’ve just found them to be enormously supportive. They’re one of the reasons why – you know, I came from Sydney about 10 years ago – they’re one of the reasons why I continue – just – you know – this is where I – am. This is my town now – or, well, it will be in 30 years’
5 time, if the locals let me – let that, um, be the case.

But, um – but it’s – yeah. It’s just – they’re just a – they’re – I – I just really wanted to get across the – the difference between – and this is no – no disrespect to any other mining company, but the difference with – but – with how they go about business.
10 You know, um, and it’s the stuff that you hear in everyday conversation, the conversations that you have with them. There is no – you know – there’s no corporate line, okay?

There’s – you know – this is just a company and a workforce that – that’s – that strive their – their – their best, um – you know – day to day, in – in the mining, but in the – in – on – at a community level, it’s – it’s – they’re just so important. And if this mine – if this continuation weren’t – were to not be successful, um, I think it would be an enormous travesty, because you would be knocking out literally the best of the
15 best.

20 MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker is Greg Blais from Ace Tyres, Singleton, and Valley Tyres, East Maitland, who will speak for five minutes.

MR G. BLAIS: Good afternoon. My name is Greg Blais. As a small business
25 owner and director in the Singleton area, I support the Rix’s Creek expansion. I have worked for over 25 years in the industry which supports coal and mining. Today I represent two companies: Ace Tyres, Singleton, for which I am one of the owners, and Valley Tyres where I am the general manager. Valley Tyres is also a co-owner in Ace Tyres, Singleton. Valley Tyres is a family business now employing three
30 generations. Next year we will celebrate 50 years of servicing the Bloomfield Group.

In our group of tyre companies, we now have over 45 employees. Both companies
35 will rely on the Rix’s Creek expansion to contribute to the ongoing viability of the businesses. We have a wide range of very loyal, long-term employees within our tyre group, but we also have many ongoing apprenticeships with a strong focus on training youth employees. Ace Tyres, Singleton, supplies and services the Rix’s Creek road vehicles, and also many of the staffs’ personal vehicles. Valley Tyres supplies and services the open cut operations, and also the Bloomfield workshops
40 which provide maintenance to the Rix’s Creek Mine.

All our companies’ employees have adhered to the strict work health and safety policies of the Bloomfield Group. Over the past 50 years, neither Denis Wilton nor I
45 have seen any health issues reported from our staff working within the coal mines we contract to. Denis Wilton himself also changed tyres on the Bloomfield open cut mine and started in 1970. Now almost 80 years old, Denis has never had a health issue related to working within the coal mine. As a contractor to the Bloomfield

Group, we can state that safety and environmental policies are strongly implemented and enforced. The mine has always presented a safe working environment for all our staff and continue to work closely with the companies to ensure that the work health and safety policies are implemented and up-to-date.

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From a financial point of view, working within the coal industry has allowed our small businesses to thrive over the years. This year, we will even invest in over 75,000 into solar power for our main buildings. It may seem ironic that the coal industry has therefore enabled us to be a greener company. Without Australia's coal and natural resources, our government could not provide such generous grants for solar power and green incentives. Our companies also support over 40 suppliers in the Singleton and Hunter Valley area. These suppliers range from essential maintenance and transport right down to the local lunch supplier. In the Hunter Valley and especially Singleton, we all need to support each other in order to survive.

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The support from the Rix's Creek expansion would have a massive flow-on effect within the local economy and throughout many small businesses. Everything is interrelated and it could be said that the same dollar made from the mine support moves around many times within the community. I can't stress enough how the flow-on effect benefits small business right down the line. Singleton needs this expansion and the Hunter also needs it. Thank you for your time today and I urge all of you to support this expansion for Singleton and the Hunter Valley's future.

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MS MANSTED: Thank you. The next speaker is Tony Lonergan who will speak for five minutes. It doesn't appear that Tony Lonergan is present, so the next speaker will be Anne-Marie McLachlan who will speak for five minutes. Ms McLachlan doesn't appear to be present either, so the next speaker will be Robert McLachlan who is listed to speak for 10 minutes. And the following speaker, since Robert McLachlan does not appear to be present, is Daniel McLachlan who is listed to speak for 10 minutes. In that case, I will move on to the following speaker, which is Phyllis Setchel from the Mudgee District Environmental Group – Mudgee District Environment Group – I'm sorry – who will speak for 10 minutes. Ms Setchel doesn't appear to be present, so the next speaker will be Anthony Mason who will speak for five minutes. Mr Mason, are you able to stand or would you rather sit? Yes.

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MR A. MASON: No. I'm – yes.

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MS MANSTED: You can have my roaming microphone and - - -

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MR MASON: No, I'm quite fine. Thank you, and before you speculate, Madam Chair, I'm not going for the sympathy vote. This was an interim fall. Madam Chair, panel members, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to, ah, support the Rix's Creek Continuation Project. Ah, by way of introduction, I'm a recently retired person after 40 years spent working mainly in the mining industry and, ah, specifically, from 1992, in the coal mining industry based in Singleton. I retired, ah,

last August from my position, ah, with Glencore, as the director of finance for their coal assets in Australia. Um, my wife and I have recently moved to Nelson Bay, where I've taken up a role as a poor old pensioner but, for the 26 years from 1992 to 2018, lived and raised three boys in Singleton, where two of the three boys and their families still reside.

So why am I speaking? I'm a beneficiary of mining. My family is also, and, as I believe, most if not all the people in this room. I do have an interest, in that my three children are involved in the mining industry, directly or indirectly, and so continuous and continuing attacks on the industry affect my life and their life, so that's my selfish motivation. On a wider point, I think we're all beneficiaries of mining, whether it be metals, light or power, so, tonight, when you sit down at the table with warm food in a well-lit place with a knife and fork, maybe we should reflect on where it comes from. That's my little, ah, grind on the mining industry, where too often, it seems to me, the industry is demonised by people with their own agendas. Whilst I acknowledge that they are not without their good intentions, this is quite often exacerbated by unequal reporting in the press and the media generally, so there have been plenty of people willing to denounce the industry, but I believe supporters are in the majority.

I also talk to people who increasingly resent lobby groups who attend meetings and often arrive, or in some circumstances don't arrive, with unsubstantiated and often spurious claims that further their own agenda and regard people's livelihoods as dispensable if their own ends are served. In this context, I think it's important that those people who support mining should say so, and that's why I'm here. I don't think it's a point of contention that the coal industry has brought serious economic benefits to Australia. The communities benefit from the various programs and contributions they make, not to mention the – ah, sorry, the employment that – that is brought to Australia by the coal industry.

More specifically, ah, on Bloomfield, I don't know a great deal about Bloomfield. What I do know, though, is, ah, I have worked in the industry for a number of companies, Glencore, Xstrata, BHP, Rio Tinto, so I can say that I have had knowledge, an outsider's knowledge, of Bloomfield, and in all my dealings with them and the reputation they have, they have a long history, over 75 years, which, for a coal mining group is quite some time, and over that time they've developed a reputation for integrity. They do what they say. They've developed a reputation as a good employer. I think the company should be proud of the number of employees speaking in support today, and as an excellent corporate citizen. I'm aware that the commission has heard this today, but I just wish to take an opportunity to reinforce the positives and, again, urge your support for the project. Thank you.

MS MANSTEAD: Thank you. There's one question for you. There's one question from the commission.

MR MASON: just fall over here my beautiful assistant. Thanks.

PROF O’KANE: Just a question: you said you don’t know a lot about the Bloomfield group, but you obviously know a lot about the mining industry and other companies. You know something about the Bloomfield group. Do you – how is it viewed compared to the other companies, in terms of its quality of what it does, in particular the quality of rehabilitation and, um, the way it manages environmental impacts? So how is it viewed from the industry?

MR MASON: I wouldn’t be quite as ebullient as one of our speakers, and the, um, owner of Coalface, who said they’re the absolute best of the best, but they are very, very well respected, and they have a – a good name, and, as I said, ah, from doing what they say, being people to deal with, and I have had, ah, commercial dealings with – with Bloomfield, and, ah, as far as their rehabilitation, yeah, I think that’s probably – they are right up there with the – with the best mines.

PROF O’KANE: Okay. Thank you.

MR MASON: Yeah. Thank you.

MS MANSTEAD: Thank you. The next listed speaker is B.F. Atkinson, who’s listed to speak for five minutes. B.F. Atkinson was the last speaker on the speaker’s agenda, so if I can just check that none of the earlier speakers who had registered to speak aren’t in the room, and that, um, Beverley Smiles, Wendy Wales, Jan Davis, Sharon Munroe, Tony Lonergan, AnneMaree McLaughlin, Robert McLaughlin, Daniel McLaughlin and Phyllis Setchell, none of those are present? So that concludes the list of speakers. I might just hand over to the chair to sum up.

PROF O’KANE: All right. I might just speak from here. Thank you for all for contributing today. It is very much appreciated. We’ve heard a lot and, um, it’s given us quite a bit to think about. Remember, if you have further submissions, comments are open until 5 pm on the 6th of August, and you can send submissions either by email or by post, and we look forward to receiving them, so, I think, with that, we’ll, ah, call the meeting closed. Thank you.

RECORDING CONCLUDED

[2.21 pm]