**Hunter Valley PAC Speech**

**Members of the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC), organisations and concerned individuals.**

**From the outset I will make one thing clear: I believe the role of government is to unite communities, not to divide them as we are seeing here through poor legislation and the repeated appeal process.**

**I understand the concerns the miners and their families have around employment, and my role is not to prevent individuals from finding jobs in mining in Australia, but rather to achieve more certainty surrounding these jobs.**

**This cannot be accomplished with the ad hoc way in which governments of the past have granted mining licenses. We all need certainty and that’s why my organisation, The Hunter Environment and Local Protection group (or HELP), has been pushing for a reasonable protection zone from mines, for farming, agriculture, viticulture the thoroughbred horse industry and tourism – in established areas.**

**Can you imagine how much easier the process would be, how much of a saving for NSW taxpayers if the Mining companies knew that they had to allow for an 8-10 KM protection zone? Mining Companies could simply apply for a license with greater confidence and certainty. There would be far less division of communities as we are seeing here today.**

**PAC members, HELP represents farmers like Ian and Robyn Moore from Appletre Flat near Jerry’s Plains, people like Diane Gee, a fifth generation dairy farmer and her family and all those that travel to here to visit what the Hunter has to offer.**

**I have done many things with my life. Today I was to be presented with an A.M. from the governor of New South Wales for my services to charity, ultra-marathon running and to the parliament of Australia. However, this hearing is far more important to me than self-recognition.**

**I have run from the North Pole to the South Pole via the Americas. I have completed ultra-marathon events around Australia, across Australia, from the top to the bottom of Australia and most places in between including the Simpson Desert.**

 **I have used my running to support awareness in raising funds for many worthwhile causes.**

 **The media has often asked me, if I am raising money for diabetes or heart disease or cancer or lifeline, do I have depression or cancer or heart disease or diabetes?**

**My answer to them is always the same – No.**

**You don’t have to have diabetes, heart disease or cancer to understand how difficult it is for those who do, its just part of being a humanitarian and sharing this country.**

 **This is the reason why I’m here in the Hunter today.**

**I don’t live here but I visit regularly, like many Australians. I have enjoyed the wineries the cafes and restaurants, the outdoor music festivals and the rural lifestyle.**

 **We are all concerned about the future of the Hunter Valley for many reasons but none more pertinent than to protect it so that our children and future generations can experience the same things that we, their decision makers, have taken for granted.**

**According to research from Barclays, the value of non-mining, non-farm export has climbed 7% in the past 12 months and services such as tourism are leading the way.**

**Chief economist of Barclays, Kieran Davies, says that tourism has overtaken coal to become Australia’s second largest export and if the trend of tourism continues, it may soon overtake**

**Iron-ore as Australia’s largest export.**

**So, why are we going to risk the organisations that make up the booming tourism industry which is sustainable and accounts for the employment of 12,000 people and earns $1.3 billion annually in visitor spending in the Hunter Valley?**

**According to the Hunter Valley Wine Association, the Hunter Valley as a wine region attracts over 2 million visitors per annum, it employs approximately 12,000 people and attracts $1.3 billion annually in visitor spending. There is no doubt that the tourism industry is thriving in New South Wales and is a huge part of that trend.**

**According to Destination NSW, visitor numbers for the year ending 30 June 2013 included over 2.2 million domestic overnight visitors, 114,200 international overnight visitors and over 4.7 million domestic daytrip visitors.**

**The Drayton South mine will directly impact one of the other Hunter’s key vineyard/ Restaurant/ Reception and function centres, Hollydeen and we will see a domino effect occur which will damage the wineries, Di Gee’s Dairy farm that is just down the road and in close proximity to the proposed new mine and tourism in this region, ultimately costing jobs.**

**Large areas of the upper hunter vineyards have already been demolished because of mining.**

**With the increasing demand for Australian wine in Asia, it is critical that Drayton South does not destroy any more important land for wine production and agriculture. During the past month Anglo-American announced that it is cutting 53,000 jobs, Peabody energy is cutting 550 jobs and Newport consulting manager director David hand has said that they could cut as many as 30,000 jobs across Australia over the coming year.**

 **Newport consulting annual report also found that 80% of the CEOs surveyed plan to reduce staff and 78% plan to cut capital spending over the next 12 months.**

**When the China-Australia free trade agreement goes ahead, the Hunter Valley’s agriculture will be essential. If the agreement goes through, Chinese tariffs on imports of Australian dairy, beef, lamb and wine will all fall by more than 10 percentage points.**

**We are putting current and future jobs at risk for an industry that admits it is cutting jobs and significantly downsizing.**

**Anglo American’s own CEO Mark Cutifani announced at their recent annual general meeting that they would be cutting 53000 jobs because of the global downturn.**

 **Anglo American, a $68 Billion dollar international company, has no allegiances to Australia.**

**We need to remember that these big international companies only hold an allegiance to the country they were founded in and the profits they can extract from other countries.**

**Newcastle Council has withdrawn its investment in future mining projects, reflecting the feeling that the region is looking towards more sustainable industries.**

**According to Angus Grigg, a journalist at the AFR, China imported just 16.6 million tonnes of coal from the likes of Indonesia and Australia, compared to 25 million tonnes the previous June.**

**That equates to 129 fewer coal ships (carrying 65,000 tonnes each) arriving in China each month from Australia.**

**The Chinese and Indian Governments have openly stated that they want to drastically reduce their dependence on Coal. Our coal has sat on the ports in Newcastle with nowhere to go and yet we insist on digging it up and destroying prime agricultural land.**

**The Price of our coal has consistently dropped over the past five years from $142 per tonne to almost half at $80 per tonne and yet we are expected to believe that these international mining companies will still employ the same amount of people that they said they would five years ago and pay the miners the same wages.**

**When you also consider the poor record of rehabilitation the sterilization of the land and the possible contamination to local water supply plus the decline in coal related jobs.**

**According to Anglo American’s own annual reports over the past five years, they had more than twice as many mine workers die at Anglo American sites world wide than BHP and Rio combined. (65 deaths at Anglo sites compared to at 13 BHP and 16 at Rio Tinto) Does this show their regard for anything other than profits?**

**It is only right that the premier and planning minister protect the Hunter Valley through sensible legislation and consideration of tourism agriculture and environmental opportunities.**

**HELP is not against mining as I’ve said earlier. Rather, we are advocating mining in the right place and there is nothing right about the proposed location of the Drayton South mine.**

**The president of the Hunter valley wine and tourism Association states the tourism industry is booming at a rapid rate and if Drayton South mine is approved it will have a detrimental effect on tourism in the Hunter Valley, one of Australia’s most well known tourism regions**

**It seems almost comical that the New South Wales government would even consider risking an industry that is destined to become close to Australia’s top export over Coal and creeping very close to the Iron Ore, especially when the coal industry is significantly reducing its operations and handing out mass redundancies worldwide.**

**Liberal MP Fiona Scott has openly said that the mine would jeopardize a strong pipeline of thoroughbreds foaled in the Hunter and then trained in western Sydney.**

**The thoroughbred industry employs 5633 people in Western Sydney, pumping an estimated $322 million into the local economy. [[1]](#footnote-1)**

**The Scone Equine Hospital, which employs over 80 people and supports over 50 community groups and organisations will be hugely impacted if Coolmore / Darley Horse studs were to leave.**

**(This came from their original submission to the planning department). Yes we have been here before.**

**Members of the PAC, we don’t grow Coal. When the Coal is gone and the money is spent and the farmers have all been moved on…**

**When we are importing our dairy, food and wine from other countries because we have destroyed what would have replenished itself…**

**When we have killed and eaten the goose that laid the golden egg what then? Where do we get our revenue how much do we pay the multi nationals for our food.**

**What then? What future for our kids?**

**As reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, “Mr Chris Hancock, the managing director of Rosemount Estates winery in the upper Hunter Valley, put this week: ‘You go into viticulture expecting a certain ambiance. We just want to live up here without having to stare into the bowels of a coalmine, breathing sulphurous fumes as night or having black coal dust settling all over our plants.**

**James Manning said, “Enough is enough. I was born and bred in the Hunter Valley. My dad was a coal miner, my brothers are coal miners and I work in the rural industry. If we keep digging new mines there will be no water, no land and no food for the future.”**

**Susan Pritchard said, “I am sick and tired of all the dust and crap at Denman destroying prime land.”**

**A 15 year mine license creates a deficit forever.**

**HELP group calls on the PAC to refuse this mine for the final time and respect the previous decisions for exactly the same reasons it has been rejected in the past: The demise it will cause of agriculture, viticulture, thoroughbred horse breeding, tourism and the environment.**

1. http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/national/anglo-americans-plans-for-coal-mine-could-see-hundreds-of-jobs-at-risk-in-sydneys-west/story-fnii5s40-1227500253990 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)