

Dear members of the PAC committee,

I am writing this to express my opposition to the proposed Drayton South mine in the Hunter Valley.

I have a number of years' experience working in the Thoroughbred industry, having worked for one of the country's top trainers and more recently at Coolmore stud. This experience, combined with knowledge gained from my degree in Animal and Veterinary Bioscience, provides me with excellent knowledge of the Thoroughbred athlete and what it needs to grow and succeed. In short, it is my opinion that anyone who thinks this mine would have no detrimental effect on these horses is kidding themselves. We can talk about theoretical limits and thresholds of what the horses can tolerate until the cows come home; but at the end of the day I ask you – do you think the risk is worth taking? I really believe it is not, and if the major studs are forced out of the Hunter there is no chance for recompense.

During my time living and working at Coolmore, I was made to feel incredibly unwelcome in the local community whenever I was in my uniform. I knew of other stud staff members who would go home to change their clothing just to go grocery shopping in town so as to avoid the jibes, rude comments and stares that I myself was also subject to. This is no way for a community to be. Countless other regions are home to miners and agriculturalists alike, and yet I have never witnessed such animosity as that which is currently dividing the Hunter Valley. It is past time that the government showed support for the studs and made clear to the state that mining will not always come out on top.

I am sympathetic towards the mining employees who stand to lose their jobs, and yet little thought is given to the stud workers whose livelihoods are also at stake. Contrary to popular belief, the studs are not full to the brim with Irish and English staff; they are also the work and home of local people like myself who worked incredibly hard to gain employment in such highly regarded establishments.

The studs in question are not simply hobby farms with little industry influence; Coolmore and Darley are integral to the international Thoroughbred industry and as such deserve the respect and protection to ensure their future.

I strongly urge the PAC to recommend that the proposed Drayton South mine not go ahead.

Kind regards,

Emma