**Rixs Creek South Open Cut Mine Continuation, Independent Planning Commission**

I would like to whole heartedly support this proposal.

I have recently retired with the last 29 years of my employment being with Bloomfield Collieries, where the majority of my time was spent as the Mine Manager of Rixs Creek. During this time the company’s owners and employees continually demonstrated their commitment to working with the mine’s neighbours, Singleton Council and all government regulators to ensure Rixs Creek is a valuable part of the local community.

As the mine’s owners the Cant and Richards families were personally involved in many of these interactions with the mine’s neighbours. The high standards of mining practices, especially controlling noise, dust and blasting as well as best practice mine site rehabilitation were driven by the ownership.

The company has clearly demonstrated its willingness to fund the most up to date environmental monitoring procedures. Funding development of predictive noise, air quality and blast impact models (where existing technology was not of a standard required for a mine close the Singleton) and the associated real time monitoring has allowed Rixs Creek to manage its environmental impacts at a standard un-matched in the Hunter Valley.

 The air quality in the local area is of paramount importance. The understanding of the mechanisms of the total impact are very complex, however the 2012 Upper Hunter Fine Particle Characterisation Study that involved the department of Health and the highest level of scientific rigour available in Australia did demonstrate mining to be a part but not the main part of the air quality environment. Any independent review of the Upper Hunter air quality network site results will show Rixs Creek only plays a small part in total air shed. Dust levels entering the Rixs Creek area from further up the valley are magnitudes higher that within the Rixs Creek site.

I believe any far minded review of the air quality in the Hunter Valley would show Singleton is well served with Rixs Creek mine to its north west. The small comparative production levels combined with the efforts the mine undertakes to control its impacts seems to be in stark contrast to driving through the township of Muswellbrook. There the vast panorama of some of the largest mines, in the state, right on the edge of the township is breathtaking. All of these three mines have had extensions to their consents processed in the time Rixs Creek has been negotiating its continuation, that this is possible while the Rixs Creek Continuation progress shows there should be no impediment to granting the Rixs Creek Continuation.

The workforce at Rixs Creek is committed to working in a fashion that will allow it to continue to be a valued part of the Singleton Community. Many of the employees are Singleton residents and help re-enforce the highest standards of operation, they are very engaged in using the available monitoring programs and best practice mining and maintenance techniques to allow the mine to work within its consented environmental limits.

This proposal is a continuation of the life of mine plan that was submitted in the original 1990 EIS for commencement of Open Cut mining at Rixs Creek. All mining is contained within the original mine lease area, with the mining operations continuing to move away from the Singleton residential area. The small western extension, to allow for some overburden emplacement is well away from any residents. Bloomfield should be allowed to continue mining to maximise the resource recovery, in this western limit of the coal lease as was always envisaged in the 1990 and 1994 EIS’s. This mining holds no surprises for the community and has always been flagged by Bloomfield.

The development of the option 2 for overburden emplacement will assist in maintaining this good environmental practice. My past experience is that having several options for mining and emplacement areas, that are at different elevations and different parts of the lease area allows the best utilisation of the predictive and real time monitoring to ensure the operations are carried out inside of the environmental consent conditions, across a wide variety of atmospheric conditions.

This small scale (by Hunter Valley standards) mine proportionally delivers maximum value for the community and the state. By being locally owned and employing only Hunter Valley employees the community and the state of NSW is obtaining maximum economic value from the mining of this state resource. All the companies’ taxes and royalties as well as operational expenses are being spent in NSW, no other mining company offers this benefit. Employee spend is also maximised to the local areas within the Hunter Valley.

Bloomfield is currently and will in the future (if this consent is granted) continue to mine a state resource, within the states environmental standards and delivering the best environmental and economic outcomes. This consent should be granted.

Garry Bailey