To the Independent Planning Commission,

I am writing to show my support for the Rixs Creek South Continuation of Mining Project SSD 6300.

As a mature age University student who is presently about to complete a three year Environmental Science and Management degree with the University of Newcastle, Rixs Creek has afforded me an opportunity to gain experience in my chosen field of study by offering me vocational work experience as a Student Environmental Officer. Originally it was a short term contract over the University Summer holiday period, though they were more than happy for me to continue working with them after University went back in 2019 on my free days.

The Bloomfield Group, as a whole, not only extended this offer of invaluable work experience to myself, but to 2 undergraduate accountants, 2 undergraduate electrical engineers and an undergraduate mechanical engineer all from the University of Newcastle. Having spoken to my fellow students about this amazing opportunity of work experience with a family owned Australian company, we agreed it offered us a practical insight into many areas of our skills base that other larger opportunities possibly couldn’t.

Our accounting students were given the opportunity to view all areas of the Bloomfield Groups financial and budgetary responsibilities, not just payroll or invoicing but a whole suite of the company accounting role. The mechanical student was allowed to view all aspects of the Bloomfield Group’s mechanical operations from the Rixs Creek South, Rixs Creek North, Bloomfield, Kings and Four Mile operations. The electrical engineers were allowed the same opportunities, that we believe would possibly be achievable only at a smaller operation like Bloomfield Group and its subsidiaries.

As a mature age student, I have quiet extensive work history and resume, which crosses the financial markets of Sydney, The Newcastle Permanent Building Society Head Office, an Exploration Geological company, the Construction industry with Fulton Hogan asphalting the Hunter Expressway, to mining with Rio Tinto Hunter Valley Operations as an operator, where I was able to begin putting myself through University. At a number of these companies I have felt that I was a ‘number’ and on arriving at Rixs Creek as a Student Environmental Officer, I have been overwhelmed by the family atmosphere and the friendly nature of the company and their operations. Nearly everyone is on first name basis, from the senior management to the trainee operators and a student enviro!

This atmosphere and nature in no way belies their dedication to the safety and wellbeing of their staff and that of their neighbours and surrounding communities. In my role as an Environmental Officer, I have been able to see the environmental measures that the mines, South and North, have in place to protect their immediate neighbours and the Singleton community as a whole. I have participated in night time attended noise monitoring which encompasses the outline of the mine leases, which is based on a predictive, weather based, inversion modelling system, which allows the operation to respond accordingly to any possible impacts on our neighbouring streets and suburbs.

I have carried out surface and ground water sampling on behalf of the mine itself and know the strict regimes that are required to be complied too, not to mention the independent sampling and testing of local contracted companies. These same local companies also monitor our air quality and weather stations. The fact that Rixs Creek mine has a water cart per haul cycle speaks volume about their commitment to the community where dust is concerned. I have seen the level that all the staff go to in performing their roles, to the best of their abilities with the technologies available to them to reduce or eradicate the mining process impacts on the community, because we are the local community.

The Environmental department has involved me in all aspects of their roles, involving me in our local contractor management for activities such as weed spraying, fence building, seedling planting, pest management around administration and maintenance buildings, waste and scrap material management, bio-solid deliveries for the rehabilitation of site, sediment control and water diversion. They have taught me important management skills such as document control, small and large vehicles or plant escorting, risk and hazard management, and other areas that are not taught in a classroom but on-site.

Due to the open and friendly work environment, many staff have been with the company for a long time, which brings decades of local knowledge and experience to the operation, and enhances that family orientation of the staff. The management are approachable and have implemented systems to assist the staff, professionally and personally, and to move in unison with our local community. From my short time at the Rixs Creek mine the company has a high retention rate of their staff due to all the reasons I have catalogued, and this wealth of experience is nurtured and utilised daily.

I would hope that Bloomfield and Rixs Creek are allowed to offer the opportunities that I and my fellow students have been afforded, to next years and many more years of undergraduate students from our local University, building and enhancing their skill base, allowing hands on training and also being generous enough to pay these students while they receive this invaluable opportunity. Such an organisation should be allowed to continue this beneficial industry based training that they offer to the Hunter Valley community at all levels, be they apprenticeships, traineeships, or internships.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission,

Regards,

David Holmes.

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