

My name is Aaron Edwards I am writing a submission to the IPC for the proposed underground mine at Maxwell. My concerns for the approval of this mine relate to food production, water quality, air pollution, noise pollution, aesthetics, and income prospects, I am opposed to the mine approval.

I have lived and worked in the Hunter Valley for the past 17 years at the farm known as Woodlands, owned by Godolphin, directly adjacent to where the mine is proposed. My wife and I have raised 3 children since living on this farm, and for me it is their direct health and wellbeing that is my main concern. There are around 30 residential buildings on this farm and it is like living in a small community, all of which will be impacted by this mine if approved. Woodlands has around 200 years of history of providing sustainable employment through dry and irrigable agricultural through production of sheep, prime beef cattle, dairy produce, stock feed as well as the thoroughbred industry along with a few other enterprises that have been tried along the way and will continue to be sustainable for many years to come, without there being some other intervention. Clean water for irrigation and stock and domestic use is paramount for these industries to be productive. I myself work in the horticulture industry and clean water is essential for this as well.

In my role as head Gardener on the farm aesthetics is my main responsibility and this will be directly affected by the impact of having a coal mine immediately adjacent to the locations in view of the areas that I am responsible for, and need to be kept maintained to an extremely high standard, in keeping with our business model and is an expectation of the industry as well as clientele.

Prior to moving to the Hunter Valley, we have traveled extensively abroad and with-in Australia. This part of the world truly is remarkable. I still vividly recall the stark contrast to my first visit here, where I was impressed by the majestic beauty of the landscape on the farm with the river and its tributaries, the alluvial flats, grassy hills, and the ruggedness of the mountains in the background, then by contrast a trip to Muswellbrook showed as you approach the township what I thought then were massive piles of over burden and huge holes in the ground where 2 existing coal mines were operating.

I travel to Denman, Muswellbrook and Singleton on a regular basis to do shopping and for kids' school and sporting activities etc. and have been astounded at the speed at which a pile of over burden from a coal mine can grow. On a trip from Denman to Muswellbrook today the moon scape that simply cannot be missed over 20km away is astonishing. The dust that is blown from this uncovered earth must be immense. I have hiked to the peak of Woodlands Mountain directly the south of the farm, on several occasions and from there the view from the peak is dominated to the east, north and north west by evidence of coal mines, all in the middle of the cooling stacks from the coal fired power plants outside of Muswellbrook.

There is no doubt that the land in the Hunter valley has been extremely prosperous for human existence for a millennium, especially in recent times having many industries flourishing there with the majority being Mining and Agriculture. I recently read an account of the contrast with how Aboriginal people understood the fragility of the land and its ability to produce either a glut or a famine for human existence, but never taking more than can be sustained for the future, compared to the mentality of taking from the land until there was no more to take and never giving back. In the years that I have lived in this area I have witnessed extraordinarily little land rehabilitation let alone any decommissioned mine productively reproducing food once again.

Given the world's current population and the inevitability that it is only going to increase in the future. It is my opinion that the ability to produce food will be, one of the most valuable commodities that any government can secure for the future, and it is this reason that I most object to any mine being approved that could render land barren or dramatically reduce its ability to produce food. This was the first and foremost concern of the original inhabitants as well as the first Europeans that came to this part of the world.

Water security is something that we as Australians should not take for granted, something that has been in the forefront of every person's mind over the recent experienced drought. My concern for this mine being approved is that where this mine's footprint is proposed to be, there is a natural water course (Saddlers Creek) where surface water runoff, flows directly into the Hunter River right where the stock and domestic water sources for the small community where I live are drawn from. It is impossible to say that a mine in this location would not affect this water quality, be it from the surface or underground aquifers. At Woodlands we do harvest and use rain water on site for domestic use however I also have concerns for its quality as well, as currently the nearest mine to Woodlands is less than 10 km away and there is still a considerable amount of coal dust that settles on anything that is stationary, my point being the contaminants that settle on the roof spaces for which this rain water is harvested and my family use for drinking, cleaning, and domestic use. This is evident when the "Clean" rainwater filters on the residents are changed and they are blackened from coal dust in the water that has washed in from the catchment of roof spaces.

Noise from blasting and operations of a mine in such close proximity to this farm is also a concern of mine. The constant drum of mining operations and percussions from blasting is not something I would choose to live near. I have many accounts since being involved in the day-to-day operations of a thoroughbred farm where the flight instincts of thoroughbred horses must be seen to be believed. For example, on a calm afternoon when my family were going for a leisurely walk, one of my children pushed along on a scooter in front of us when we heard a crash and commotion off to the side where some horses had been feeding and resting in some yards. One of the yearlings had been startled by our approach and had bolted straight through a solid post and rail fence, injuring itself and rendering the fence unfunctional. In my work this is something that you must be cautious of on a daily basis and will have a direct impact on operations of the farm.

Given that government's and major companies around the world are looking to change the way in which we procure our energy sources it astounds me that the approval of a coal mine would even be a consideration. As I'm sure you are aware scientific evidence points to a bleak future for humanity if we continue down this path of a lack of respect for the environment with no respect for our future generations.

I personally know the family that have leased the farm known as Bowfield from the Mining companies that have had ownership of this property. There is a long agricultural history on this property as well and I have watched them productively farm this land for over a decade, producing meat sheep and beef cattle as well as stock feed. I am worried about their ability to continue these sustainable ventures and provide income for themselves and continue living where they have made their home and raised their family. This farm is immediately on top of where the mine is proposed to be.

As stated in a book called Homo Sapiens, we as humans have always had something that we trust or believe in or turn to when we are questioning what is happening in our lives, in recent times it has been

religion, though now and going forward our strength in trust has turned to specifics that we can see and are tangible and backed up by evidence, Science. All the science points to a desperate need to change the way in which we interact with the environments which we have influence over and therefore I believe that the use of fossil fuels should be fading and more trust put into the science and our ability to come up with other ways to sustain the comfortable life style that we in Australia currently experience by developing renewable energy sources and respecting the environments which we live.

I believe that we have a responsibility to make conscious decisions to make positive changes in this direction, and that is why I do not approve of this mine application.