

19 November 2020

To the Independent Planning Commission

My name is Caroline Searcy and I would like to put forward my submission as to why the Maxwell underground mine must be rejected by the Commission.

As previously referenced by Coolmore's Tom Magnier the past three years of drought were extremely tough on the Hunter Valley's thoroughbred breeders with big farms such as Coolmore and Godolphin able to continue the management of thousands of breeding stock thanks to irrigation from the Hunter River.

If the water table is lowered as Maxwell has admitted it could be, it would cause enormous hardship for these huge employers and vital part of the Australian thoroughbred breeding and racing industry.

I am certainly not anti-coal as I believe coal mining is essential in this country given the very poor efficiencies of renewable sources of energy to date. However to place an underground mine in such close proximity to two of the most important agricultural properties in Australia is both economically and physically untenable.

I have several roles within the industry from which I derive the majority of my livelihood. I am also on the committee of Thoroughbred Breeders' New South Wales which supports both the major farms such as Coolmore and Godolphin and the many smaller breeders who make up the industry. In fact the big stallion farms rely enormously on the smaller breeder with around 76% of Australian racehorses bred by breeders who only own between one and three mares.

These small breeders may be called hobbyists but the people using these stallions to breed new foals from their mares spend \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year on each individual mare for their agistment foaling, weaning, sales preparation, vet work, transport and more. When you think around 14,000 foals are born a year that's more than \$280,000,000 going into the breeding industry every year from mare owners, driving huge employment throughout Australia.

The majority of the best mares in Australia and indeed the world reside in the Hunter Valley and many of these are agisted at Coolmore Stud or are privately owned by Godolphin Stud.

Were the business of both Coolmore and Godolphin to be threatened by water shortages in future years and they were forced to move to another state it would be an enormous loss of jobs and livelihoods in the Hunter region.

As President of Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders' Association Cameron Collins told the Commission this is a multi-billion-dollar industry with one in every 2 thoroughbreds born in Australia bred in the Hunter Valley.

That in itself creates around 5000 direct jobs in the Hunter region but the ongoing effects are far, far greater than that. Of course, vets, farriers, trucking companies etc are all reliant on the business within the region but I myself also derive much of my own income, and that of my employees, from the Hunter region and the studs therein.

My company SearcyMedia produces two national television programs for Sky Racing. One show, Bred To Win tells the stories of the breeding industry to viewers, promotes the stallions every season and previews and reviews yearling sales of horses bred, in particular in the Hunter Valley.

Another important component of Bred To Win is to engage with and educate new people to the racing and breeding industry so they are encouraged to breed their mares and continue to support the Australian racing industry with more horses and therefore more income from wagering for our state and federal governments.

My second program Thoroughbreds Are Go (TAG) is supported by Godolphin Stud as one of my sponsorship partners and is a vital program for the Australian racing and breeding industry given the huge importance that must be placed on horse welfare when thoroughbreds exit the industry.

I fund both programs through sponsorships and paid stories as Sky Racing does not pay for the entire production and if you know television, it is extremely expensive to put these program together.

So not only do the programs support me as I endeavour to support the industry, but during the Covid-19 period I have also been able to keep employing camera operators to film the stories. My main camera operator has relied on the income I have been able to provide for him in the past 5 months to support his family including his wife and two children.

I am just one example of the many thousands of extra individuals who derive income from the Hunter Valley studs and Coolmore Stud and Godolphin are two of the major contributors to stories within both my television programs every year.

My third "hat" is as a small breeder myself having bred three racehorses, all of whom made it to the racetrack therefore generating wagering income for the industry. Neither of the three made enough money to pay for themselves so myself and my co-owners basically paid for their racing careers with very little return.

The mare I bought as a yearling who produced the three foals is by a stallion who was bred and raised at Coolmore Stud, Thorn Park. He went on to become a champion sire in New Zealand and his sons are also making their mark at stud now throughout Australasia with a number of grand sons of Thorn Park winning at the elite Group 1 level.

My point is that the breed in the Hunter Valley has always been superior to that in other parts of Australia and a move by two of the biggest stallion stations in the land to another state would dilute the breed as the best mares in New South Wales would not travel interstate to the stallions owned by Coolmore or Godolphin.

Currently the Upper Hunter breeding industry is the largest exporter of premium thoroughbreds in Australia with, as Cameron Collins pointed out, 80 to 90% of yearlings sold through the massive Australian auction house businesses sired by stallions standing in the Hunter, in particular at Coolmore and Godolphin Studs.

If the pedigrees are altered by the removal of the best stallions in Australia from the best mares in the country international buyers will dramatically reduce their spend and direct it towards other breeding jurisdictions, having a drastic effect on employment and the performance of Australian bred horses in the elite races world-wide.

When you think of the huge influence of Winx in attracting new people to the racing industry, this is a mare who was born and raised at Coolmore Stud and is a product of Godolphin stallion Street Cry who also sired Melbourne Cup winner Shocking in his time in the Hunter Valley.

Coolmore bring in some of the world's best international bloodlines to provide what's called an "outcross" to Australian pedigrees, including many European champions and more recently American triple crown champions American Pharoah and Justify.

When you talk about Godolphin's stars of the track, one of the world's current leading sprinters Bivouac is the fourth generation of a family developed by Godolphin at their Denman showpiece, while the property formerly known as Woodlands Stud provided some rich racing history by standing great champions such as Octagonal and his Horse Of The Year son and Champion Australian sire, Lonhro who was born and raised at Woodlands.

The Hunter Valley needs the huge investment of these large global operations such as Coolmore Stud and Godolphin and the Independent Planning Commission must agree with the former Planning Assessment Commission findings, that mining cannot co-exist in close proximity with these established and historic thoroughbred breeding operations.

I very much appreciate your time, thank you.

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