Submission to IPC re Tahmoor South Mining

Commissioners, as a property owner in Bargo, I reject the SIMEC mining proposal that has been presented to you.

I acknowledge that mining does provide employment and helps the economy, but do not understand how this outweighs the potential resulting damages from the mining operation, such as damaging our environment, including poisoning our waterways and causing major subsidence to the land.

The economy would also benefit from the growth that Bargo was experiencing and could experience in the future with an increased population if there are no detrimental aspects created. Along with the natural growth, people have been moving into the area, decentralising out from Sydney and its suburbs. My wife and I did that ourselves 23 years ago. Bargo appeals to people moving into the area because of its proximity to the expressway for easy access to driving to the city. With the prospect of the mining operation and its residual damage, there will be a hiatus on this growth because there will be no prospective buyers interested in acquiring property that could suffer from damages resulting from subsidence. A lot of work would be generated if there was continued growth in housing constructions, and spending in the area would increase substantially with the increased population.

I believe that the best scenario would be to re-examine SIMEC’s mining proposal and determine whether or not it is feasible to undertake the mining under unoccupied land away from the immediate precinct of Bargo and not under land with housing. If this is possible, then the economy would benefit from both the mining operation and growth of Bargo from the influx of new residents.

I resent the recent comments of the deputy mayor of Wollondilly Council, Michael Banasik, when he was critical that homeowners “don’t seem to understand that they live in a mine subsidence area … that it’s on their land titles when they bought the property”. Council had the ability of refusing the construction of houses in the “mine subsidence areas”, but no, they gave approval for the houses to be built. They now sit back and say it is all the fault of the homeowners, when they could have managed the situation by either not approving the constructions of the homes, or advising prospective homeowners of the possible outcomes from a mining operation.

I also want to comment on the system of compensation for property owners whose properties suffer damages from mine subsidence. My interpretation from reports that I have heard from people whose properties have suffered damages is that the system for compensation appears to be biased against the claimant. I understand that the onus is on the claimant to prove that damages incurred are a result of subsidence caused by mining. If it is agreed that damages are resulting from the mining, then amounts awarded are much less than the costs of remedial work quoted by independent builders. The impression I get is that the mining companies are being protected so that the repatriation costs don’t get too high, which means that property owners are the ones who end up out of pocket and incur a lot of stress in the process of getting compensation. This does not give the impression of how a democratic system should work.