

SUMMERHILL STUD

29th August 2014

The Honourable Premier
Mr Michael Baird,
State of New South Wales,
Australia

Good Morning Mr Premier

Forgive me, as a foreigner, having the temerity to comment on a matter which is clearly the preserve of you and your constituents. However, I do so from the perspective of an ardent follower of racing and breeding in Australia, as a twice-a-year visitor and customer, and especially as an admirer of the great beauty of the Hunter Valley.

To put all of this into perspective, I should mention that my business, Summerhill Stud, has been the leading breeder in South Africa for the past ten seasons, and that our clients who keep their horses on this property include leading breeders and owners from Japan to the United States, among them a number of your countrymen. I am writing to you out of concern for the intrusion which mining is imprinting on the landscape of the Hunter Valley. Everything that has to be said about environmental degradation, the impact on the breeding industry, the potential loss of income etc. has been said, but the one thing I have not noticed from the reports I've seen, is the impact it is having (or will certainly have) on the region's attraction for tourists. Racehorse breeding is, pound-for-pound, one of the most labour-intensive economic activities anywhere, demanding highly specialised skills at which Australians are especially adept. Players in the breeding industry in Australia, and in the Hunter Valley in particular, have not only displayed this particular talent time and again with remarkable effect, creating in the process one of the world's most admired racing industries, but they've done so with a taste and a style that matches anything on our planet.

The farms of New South Wales are as spectacular as you will find, and they are magnets for tourists from across the globe. It is an often overlooked fact that, together with their counterparts in the wine trade, your breeders have invested billions of dollars in the beautification of their properties, guaranteeing a stream of tourists to the area which grows with every passing year. You need only drive up the back roads and towns of the Hunter to witness the burgeoning growth in accommodation establishments, eateries and the commercial enterprises visitors flock to. I've always believed that the one thing that sets Australia apart from most other countries, is that you have enshrined country life in a way that few others do, and the Hunter Valley is one of the finest expressions of country Australia at its best.



Land of Legends

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Yet I have to say, I was shocked on my most recent visit as to how conspicuous the mining ventures have become, how close they are now to damaging this pristine heritage irreparably, and how irreversible this process will be if it doesn't find its finishing line soon. I visited the racecourse at Muswellbrook and I couldn't get over the omnipresence of coal dust and grime on the running rails, in the stands, everywhere. If it's happening in Muswellbrook, imagine how the acreage on the great farms of Darley and Coolmore will be affected, and in their case, we're talking of the contamination of animal pasturage, too.

Living where we do, I know only too well the financial imperatives behind the discovery of new ways of growing the economy, and I am comforted by your awareness of the impact of short-term decisions on long-term outcomes. I know too, that in the dispensation your government recently granted New South Wales Racing in the promotion of their championship days, you have a keen understanding of the envy the rest of us hold for the culture of Australian racing. I urge you Mr Premier, to do what you can to preserve this, and to preserve what is left of the atmosphere and the beauty and especially the spirit of the Hunter Valley's best ambassadors. When the extraction is over, the miners will find other pastures: left to their present pursuits, your horsemen and your tourist industry will be there until doomsday.

I wish you all well in your deliberations; I'm sure there is still a God up there!

With my best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mick Goss'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

M.J.B. GOSS

CEO SUMMERHILL STUD

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