

**Robert McLaughlin**  
**Submission against Drayton South**

(1a) Robert McLaughlin

It's not until your land is directly threatened that you truly realise how strong the feeling of place is – and how irreplaceable the land is.

The NSW Government and its Department of Planning & Environment are inclined to assume that there is only one public interest – that of the entire state. It is obvious that small communities are systematically ignored by <sup>the NSW</sup> ~~both~~ state and <sup>GOVT</sup> ~~local government~~.

**The interests of localised and regional communities constructed around a shared sense of place should be given precedence over private interests not only of individuals but also the state's interest in promoting short-term mining activity.**

The NSW Government is confused on the true meaning of 'public interest'.

In the Hunter Valley we are witnessing the annihilation of historical towns and the environment as well as negative impacts to our health while financially distressed overseas mining companies seem to always obtain approval to extend mining operations. Many of these ~~large~~ mining companies obtain expansion rights merely to on-sell to another company who like them will leave behind massive final voids where once were rural towns and industries – places of deep attachment and history. <sup>ie throughout - as well as -</sup>

**Any activity that harms or 'makes over' a valued place, threatening the depth of a community's relationship with it by degrading the qualities of that place, is against the public interest.**

It is also felt in the negative health impacts of us all in the Valley and is felt in the desperation and anxiety of communities and industries under threat.

In the current climate, communities and even large, profitable industries, are systematically ignored by both state and local government when it comes to mining. This should come as no surprise when you look at the revolving door between the mining industry in NSW and ~~politics~~. <sup>the N.S.W GOVT.</sup>

It is an embarrassingly long list and one that has dire implication for our democracy. <sup>I BELIEVE</sup> Here are a few. Stephen Galilee, who was chief of staff to Mike Baird is now CEO of the NSW Minerals Council; Tony Chapel was the former chief of staff to NSW planning Minister Rob Stokes, and is now head of Government relations at AGL; Charles Perrottet, who is a Government Affairs Analyst for BP, and a current executive of the NSW Liberal Party; or Emma Browning, the Director of Government Relations for the NSW Minerals council, who was previously the media advisor for Chris Hartcher, the disgraced former NSW Resources and Energy minister.

It's a ~~corrupt~~ <sup>ie - throughout</sup> jungle out there and the implications are felt here in the Hunter Valley. The devastating effects of the relationship between mining companies and Government is very real to us, in the annihilation of our environment, historical towns, agriculture and it's associated industries and tourism.

The NSW Government and its Department of Planning views mining expansions to be in the public interest – ironically coming at the expense of the people.

We are constantly threatened with the reality of an open cut coal mine right at our backyard. So great is the drive to dig up coal, that **the NSW Government has even taken away the right for communities to appeal the merits of a mine proposal.**

The question is, how can there be a situation where communities face having their livelihoods destroyed so that a coal mine can render this beautiful, fertile valley useless forever.

When the coal is gone, the companies just pack up and ship out, leaving behind massive, toxic final voids where once were productive rural areas, places of deep attachment and history.

Planning regimes of local and state governments are blind to this, and proliferate mining permits up and down the Hunter Valley – and beyond. The fact that this attachment to place is so often ignored is why determinations made for the Hunter Valley typically generate so much political heat.

The beautiful Hunter Valley has unfortunately become the NSW Government's sacrificial lamb.

It's well recognised that the construction of place identity is a fundamental human activity, and the need to belong within a shared geography, is the equivalent to such basic human needs as liberty, sustenance, and security from violence.

The signing of the Paris Accord demonstrates that the Government knows we need to keep fossil fuels in the ground. If we are to keep global temperatures rises under 2 degrees, there is no valid reason to keep mining our coal deposits.

This offers the Government a chance to re-think their strategy of putting mining first and people second. A policy that has seemingly dominated our state in the past six years.

By honouring the strong and tangible public interest of local and regional communities like that of the Hunter Valley, future planning should entitle local communities to have the prime say in determining the future and evolving character of 'their' place.

The idea that climate crisis means **business as usual**, must change. Building the priority of place into planning and policy systems is a good place to start.

By working with local communities and allowing them a say in their future offers many positives. Including allowing communities to preserve the integrity of deeply loved local places, re-building a sense of pride in local community and developing and supporting the agricultural, thoroughbred, wine and tourism industries that will sustain us well into the future.

I RESPECTFULLY ASK YOU TO REFUSE  
~~the~~ the Drayton South application.