

② cr Kiwa Fisher

*UPPER HUNTER SHIRE COUNCIL  
SUBMISSION*

**DRAYTON SOUTH COAL PROJECT  
HEARING HELD AT MUSWELLBROOK**

**16 NOVEMBER 2016**

**CR. KIWA FISHER**



## Drayton South Coal Project

I'm Kiwa Fisher, I am a councillor with the Upper Hunter Shire Council on whose behalf I speak. I am also a former General Manager of Vinery Stud and worked in thoroughbred racing and breeding for well over twenty years in the UK, Ireland, Kentucky and here in the Hunter Valley.

Whilst acknowledging that this project lies entirely outside our Shire, I thank the Commission for this opportunity to speak to our Shire's ongoing concerns regarding the impacts the Drayton South Project will have on us, our community and our economy.

Council acknowledges the coal mining industry is and has been a vital economic driver of our region, and that this may continue for some years to come. However, Council has also made numerous submissions to both Bickham and Drayton South PAC hearings, to the Strategic Regional Land Use Policy, to various Mining SEPP amendments and indeed to the Planning Minister directly.

All those submissions have consistently argued that the continuation of the coal industry must not come at the expense of other established sustainable rural industries which depend upon fertile soils, clean water and pristine vistas, that these agricultural activities warrant and need protection and that exclusion zones offer the most effective means to give it. Those submissions are also entirely consistent with Council's Community Strategic Plan, our Position Statement on Coal and Coal Seam Gas and our overall, if somewhat long-winded, vision

*"A Quality Rural Lifestyle in a Vibrant, Caring and Sustainable Community".*

The position statement notes

"The Upper Hunter Shire Council recognises that the dominant land use in the Shire is agriculture (most notably the beef and equine industries) and further recognises its role as custodian and guardian of all its established rural enterprises, our unique 150 year old identity based around "the Horse Capital of Australia", the critical mass of thoroughbred breeding ventures and interrelated services located within the Shire, and the pristine natural environment which supports those industries and enhances the Shire as a preferred place to live and work.

To that end, the Position Statement commits Council to

- Protecting our unique identity based around "the Horse Capital of Australia".
- Protecting our clean and green identity as a unique point of difference in attracting industry, tourism and residents to the area.
- Protecting the community's health, amenity, social and emotional well-being in keeping with the aforementioned vision
- Providing a certain investment future for all sustainable industries, especially agriculture and the jobs that support and grow our unique reputation and identity.
- Protecting the wider equine industry and therefore the gazetted Equine Critical Industry Cluster in our region by opposing coal mining developments that have the potential to adversely impact upon those major thoroughbred breeding farms located outside the Shire.

Make no mistake, that really is the crux of the issue for us, that this mine threatens the integrity of the cluster and thus the ongoing success and quite possibly the viability of the industry in this region. That is a big call to make but we're not talking about two bit players here, these are the two dominant studs in the industry not just here but worldwide. Coolmore effectively created the global thoroughbred industry with their partnership with Arrowfield and the perfecting of the shuttle stallion concept, they are the number 1, and they've been a powerhouse since the 1970's. Where they led, others followed, none to better effect than Darley with their massive staged investment in

Australia. To suggest, as Greg Houston has done, that a). They won't leave and b). it's not the end of the world if they did because someone else would pop up and replace them is beyond ridiculous, it is terrifyingly stupid. I know from experience how early you have to get up, how cleverly you have to box just to get anywhere near these guys, let alone compete with them. Let alone replace them. You'll shortly hear from the last bloke who tried to give them a run for their money, in the process he lost most of his own.

Our fears are widely shared, you will hear, as the previous commissions did too, from many other businesses, practices and professionals from within our shire all saying the same thing. Of course these arguments found favour with previous commissions, who all agreed that these two farms - on these two properties - were "highly significant", "vital", "critical", "essential" etc to the cluster and the industry and who all agreed that this mine should not proceed. We urge you to find the same.

It would be remiss of me not to share our growing frustration with the Department of Planning and their prescribed assessment process. We are now several years into this saga, which is but one of many, one which has collectively cost the mine's proponent and opponents and indeed the Government tens of millions of dollars and led us not to an outcome but this ongoing state of limbo where the area's major industries are pitted against one another, where neither industry has the certainty they crave and wherein the Department continues to push this decades old kick the can down the road assessment process, where they have still not developed or released the Cumulative Impact Assessment Methodology first promised decades ago and they continue to offer up ever more specious, disingenuous and pathetic arguments against the exclusion and buffer zones that have worked in other parts of the world to ease and even end land use conflict. This shemozle has many authors, politicians- some well meaning, others otherwise and indeed Mining Companies and their armies of lobbyists led by the Minerals Council, but fundamentally it is the Department to blame and they need to sort it out and quickly because this community deserves better and is tired of fighting these never ending, divisive and expensive land use battles.

It is time to end the division and draw some lines in the sand.