

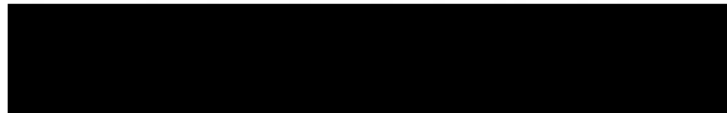


(39) Angus Adkins

Scone Equine Hospital

Dedicated expert care

Speech Notes: PAC Drayton South Coal Project: November 2016
Dr Angus Adkins BVSc FANZCVS

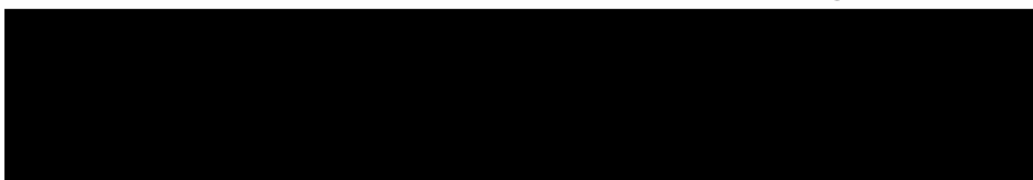


Good afternoon Commissioners

Thank you for the opportunity to present my submission on behalf of the Scone Equine Hospital.

My name is Angus Adkins. I am a director of the Scone Equine Hospital, a Specialist in Equine Surgery and I have worked in the Upper Hunter for the last 20 years.

I presented at the three previous Drayton South PAC's and unfortunately the need to present again heightens my concern for the future of the Thoroughbred Industry in the Hunter Valley and our business. It maintains the uncertainty in the industry and prevents further investments in our business, which I will outline today. The Scone Equine Hospital is part of an extensive network of support industries that are service providers to the thoroughbred industry. We recognise the importance of Coolmore and Darley Stud's in the Critical Industry Cluster and fear the devastating impact their departure would have. It is inconceivable that one mine in the wrong location could be allowed to proceed at the potential



demise of our world-renowned thoroughbred breeding industry. The previous Drayton South PAC's clearly identified this risk. The horse raising land of the Hunter Valley is unique in that it has attracted investment from around the world and this sustainable land use should not be lost.

Let me explain the details of our business to you and our relevance to the thoroughbred industry and this PAC hearing.

The Scone Equine Hospital is the largest equine veterinary practice in Australia and indeed the Southern Hemisphere. We employ 106 people, including 27 equine veterinarians with 8 specialists in Equine Surgery, Medicine or Reproduction. Significantly, we are a major employer of professional and skilled staff in rural NSW. Veterinary specialists, support staff and their families relocate to this region to work for the Scone Equine Hospital. Our practice sponsors over fifty community groups and organizations, and is a sponsor of all major horse related events in the Upper Hunter, including the Scone Equine Hospital Horse Festival Parade, the highlight of Scone's community calendar.

Our Surgical facility and Intensive Care Hospital are major referral centres for local, state and interstate veterinarians. Our size and position in the veterinary market ensures we can offer referral services and expertise not feasible to most veterinary practices. This ensures our clients, and their insurers have confidence in the care that we can provide for their significant investments.

Our practice is committed to on-going research and training. This is important for an industry that has few funding sources for equine research. We are recognised as a world class centre of equine health. Our research outcomes are delivering world-first advancements in equine care with major benefits, both in Australia, and internationally. Scone Equine Hospital veterinarians are active across an international network, with recent scientific presentations at conferences in the USA, Dubai, England, Germany, South Africa, Hong-Kong, Italy, Belgium, and of course, Australia. Our veterinarians have published, and continue to publish annually, scientific articles in all of the major veterinary journals. We actively contribute to our professional representative body, the EVA, with members of our practice being current members of the executive, current members of the education subcommittee, the current editor of the associated journal and past Presidents. None of these professional positions, or academic pursuits commands remuneration.

We provide training for up to 40 veterinary students annually, a role that is becoming more important as the number of students increase and the resources of the Universities struggle to keep up. We provide placements for veterinarians training to be specialists from all over the world. In addition, our senior nurses have a very active role in the training of veterinary nurses at the Scone TAFE.

Commissioners, our practice is only able to provide this level of commitment to research, training and community support due to its size, its caseload and its viability. It is a unique situation for a

veterinary practice and totally dependent on a healthy thoroughbred industry in the region. No other veterinary practice in Australia delivers the same contribution. Unfortunately, if our practice were to become less viable due to fragmentation of the industry, one of the first things to suffer would be community and professional support due to an economic reality that all of our time would need to be spent on fee producing endeavors, let alone and more importantly, the staff redundancies that would also result.

Our practice provides primary veterinary care for 60% of the stud farms in the area and referral work for the majority. We are essentially in the Upper Hunter as a service provider to the thoroughbred industry with 90% of our turnover derived directly from the industry. Darley and Coolmore Studs' provide 10 % of our gross turnover. However, their importance to us as a service provider is far greater than this. The majority of broodmare farms in the Upper Hunter rely on these farms for stallions.

The SEH has substantial plans to invest and grow. We have been planning for a new state-of-the art equine hospital for many years and have spent over \$500 000 with architects and consultants. This development is a major milestone for our practice and it would reinforce the Upper Hunter's global position as the major equine centre for the Southern Hemisphere. The new facility would allow us to offer new services, including CT Scanning and Scintigraphy, which are being requested by our clients and expected in a veterinary practice that services a major equine industry. The

developments in medical and veterinary technologies in the modern era have been amazing and as a practice to some of the most expensive horses in the world we need to be able to offer this technologies. This can only be achieved with a high case load, a viable practice and the potential for growth. The proposed facility has had, and would continue to have, major economic benefits to the region during planning, development and operation. It would allow us to grow, thereby employing more people and delivering an increased level of service and research outcomes, to which we are committed.

With the lack of certainty for the Thoroughbred Industry in the Upper Hunter we have lost confidence in proceeding with this major development. Decades of bad planning decisions and the issuance of exploration licenses for individual mining projects that have the potential to devastate an entire industry have forced us to put on hold our investment in the region. This has major flow-on implications for our staff, the equine training and research commitments we undertake, and the community we actively support. The cumulative effects of mining and resource extraction have pushed the area to a tipping point, which if allowed to further expand, may destroy the Thoroughbred industry, its Hunter Valley brand and 150 years of clean and green sustainable land use.

In 2014 the Scone Equine Hospital bought into an equine veterinary practice in the heart of the thoroughbred breeding industry in Victoria and in 2015 we bought into an equine veterinary practice in Tamworth. These acquisitions were largely undertaken

to diversify our risk and position ourselves in areas of growth. These acquisitions further demonstrate our current reluctance to invest in the Hunter Valley.

I presented at the Bickham PAC hearing in 2010 which acknowledged that a viable international scale thoroughbred breeding enterprise and open-cut coal mining are incompatible land uses and that the thoroughbred industry is vulnerable to treats based on image. I also presented at the Drayton South PAC in 2013, 2014 and 2015 and was encouraged they recognised that one mine has the potential to severely impact the studs, putting the equine industry at risk. The SEH recognizes that the science regarding the environmental, human and equine health effects of coal mining and coal seam gas extraction is currently inadequate. Recent research conducted by the University of Sydney has raised serious concerns on the human health effects and social impacts of coal mining on communities, and this concerns us for our staff. The Drayton South Coal project is located in close proximity to the hundreds of people employed, including our staff, on Darley and Coolmore Stud's and we believe a cumulative health study should be undertaken to assess the potential impact on human health from this project.

In my opinion the equine health impact report by Dr Kannegieter, an Equine Surgeon like myself, contains a number of unsubstantiated or inaccurate claims as well as a large amount of irrelevant detail. I know Dr Tennent-Brown has already addressed

you today and hopefully he has addressed the inaccuracies in this report.

The Drayton South Coal Project is a test of the Government's new policies and processes to see if it will protect Australia's iconic Thoroughbred Breeding industry in the Hunter Valley. The decision on this project will signal to our industry whether we have a future in the Hunter Valley or if years of Thoroughbred Breeding will be eroded until a tipping point is reached when it will be slowly abandoned. The Bickham and previous Drayton South PAC's clearly indicated that open cut coal mines and international scale thoroughbred breeding operations are incompatible land use and it is inconceivable that The Drayton South Coal project could be developed across the road from two of Australia's leading horse studs.

I am a scientist and highly trained surgeon. My job is to research, consider and make rational decisions every day. I honestly believe the decisions made surrounding this coal mine have the potential to devastate an entire sustainable industry in the Hunter Valley and I fear for the viability of our business. The uncertainty around land use in the Hunter ensures a lack of confidence in investing in our business and as this continues year after year and PAC after PAC it erodes the confidence we have in the future of the thoroughbred industry in the Hunter Valley.

Commissioners, Business is built around confidence and growth. I urge you to help restore confidence to our industry, ensuring our business survives and continues to provide the services and technologies our clients demand. It would allow us to continue with the industry, professional and community philanthropic endeavors that defines our practice and contributes to the advances in equine health care.

Thank you Commissioners for your time and I would be very pleased to answer any questions you may have.