

Nathan Tinker Hair Cot
ARBN

Blame industry on ~~start~~
Should coming ~~to~~

① Craig Benjamin

Planning Assessment Commission Meeting 17/11/2016 Muswellbrook

In 1982 I moved the Denman Area to start a managers job on a property in the area, I did that for 4 years and we then purchased our own farm. We started a cattle feeding business and by 1988 were taking cattle to Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne Royal Shows. The recession we had to have under the the Keating Government changed everything for us our cattle investors dropped by 50% and we were paying 21% on our farm payment.

To supplement my income, being a farrier, Agricultural lecturer and fencing contractor where I did quite a bit of fencing at Arrowfield (coolmore) and got to realise how important these facilities are going to be in the area.

During this period with my then business partner Helen Sinclair we started Upper Hunter Tours on the back of the vibrant agricultural pursuits in the region 16 wineries, deer farms, thoroughbred studs, dairies the area was booming at that period of time. It was slow going marketing our product to the rest of Australia Helen wanted to do other things and I continued on ever so slowly but getting there.

Now 23 years down the track what a SAD SIGHT we have out there, 3 wineries, a hand full of dairies and agriculture in the area at an all time low.

Deregulation of the dairy industry, an over supply of grapes, high dollar then, drought, equine influenza, political intervention and the impact of the coal mines in the area. Its enough to say hell with it and through in the towel.

With our few wineries, olive grove, cheese factory and the great food outlets I wanted to keep going as it gave a lot of visitors to our region great pleasure.

From day one in my business and today the common denominator has been our world class thoroughbred studs. Over the years I have watched them grow in the area and I have taken thousands of people from around Australia and from all over the world through these amazing properties.

The feed back that I get from those visitors that I take through is mainly WOW what great facilities and its credit to the management and staff that work hard to keep them looking like this. We didn't realise how big they are what great assets to the area they are the comments I get.

My business is growing with horse lovers from all Australia and the big increase and has been for some time is syndications of horses a big business in Australia with 100 of thousands of people involved ever so small some share holders wanting to see the sire of the horse they have bought a share in.

This brings people to the Upper Hunter they stay in motels, eat at cafes and restaurants by wines from our wineries, they fill there cars up with fuel, without these people our towns would not survive, its hard enough in small business in the country at the best of times.

And of course on top of that is the people that come to studs visit there horses in the area all year round these people are visitors as well.

A lot of people use my tours as an entry into the thouroughbred industry asking questions like syndications, mares etc and hundreds have become part of the industry because they have done a tour with me.

Can I say to the Planning and Assessment Commission Committee my business is part of the 250,000 people in Australia that rely directly or indirectly on the Thoroughbred Industry to survive. I am not asking you stop coal mining in New South Wales as its part of our economic frame work but I am asking you to not approve a mine like Drayton South that is so close to a very important agricultural clusters Coolmore and Godolphin when will legislation change with the state government to reflect that.

Craig Benjamin

Upper Hunter Tours

