

Thank you for taking the time to hear my submission in support of the Bylong Coal Project. I am Vinesa Walker, I have been part of this community my entire life, I am the 6th generation of my family born and bred in the Mudgee region. Furthermore, I am the Director and part owner of A1 Earthworx Mining and Civil.

A1 Earthworx have been operating in the Mudgee region for over 35 years and have been contracted to complete work all over NSW. In 1980 the business was founded by my parents, Pat and Vicki Pilley and was known as Pat Pilley Earthmoving.

For many years, Pat operated his dozer constructing farm dams and building farm tracks, whilst also working at the local coal mine to provide for the family and make the bank repayments on his dozer. Slowly the business grew. In 2008, when I started working for A1, we had about 8 people working for us and about 15 items of plant.

A couple of years after that, our family business was fortunate enough to experience significant growth during the construction and development stages of other local coal mines. During and following this time there were many benefits that A1 experienced, which in turn, benefited the local and regional community.

Some interesting points include

- employing up to 85 people during peak times and generally averaging 50 men and women outside of this.
- The highest wages that we paid one week was over \$100 000 NET and they were all local employees!
- Finally, our business could afford to invest in high quality compliance systems and further training for our team, which to this day is still heavily relied upon and was a catalyst in the ongoing success of A1.
- A1 confidently invested in newer plant, equipment and technology.
- Once the construction periods came to an end we had an excess of operators, many who were fortunate enough to secure work directly for the mine when the operations commenced. It was a win win situation.

Without the learnings and business development achieved through the mentoring and opportunities that the current local mines have given A1 Earthworx, I can honestly say that we would not be the company we are today.

We still often hear about how so many businesses were affected by the global financial crisis. We were somewhat in a bubble, with the majority of our business working locally for mines, who had long term commitments to their operations and were in a position to continue developments.

Eventually, the construction projects came to an end. We expected this and had made arrangements in other areas for continuation of work, however, there was still a major industry downturn, which directly affected A1. We experienced significant revenue losses, and there were employee redundancies.

Competitors who were traditionally based in Queensland or the Hunter for example were coming into the local region and driving prices to an unsustainable low. We all had to look further afield for work and take risks. Quiet often there

were delays in getting paid by clients which had a flow on effect to other local businesses.

Regardless of the efforts and investments we made within our business, our bubble burst, and we didn't have the confidence to invest in our employees, new equipment or other opportunities.

I have seen firsthand the struggles with businesses and families alike, when there is no confidence in the local coal industry, which I strongly believe provides the economic stability for our community.

I have also seen the benefits that mining brings through sourcing local contractors and suppliers, which is one of the reasons why I support the Bylong Coal Project. They are committed to the development of our region. They will create more jobs and bring more people to the region. There will be more work for local contractors and local suppliers which means more dollars flowing into the local economy.

For the first time in a handful of years, there is confidence in the industry again!

Opportunities to benefit the local region to this scale do not come along often and we need to take advantage of them to help ensure the future of Mudgee, and that is why I strongly support the approval of the Bylong Coal Project.