

(24) Margaret Reid

Until last year I was a fifth generation resident of the Wollar area.

I am possibly the only speaker here today that attended Wollar Public School, was christened & was married at St Lukes Wollar & have generations of ancestors buried in Wollar.

We lease land we owned from Wilpinjong until it is required for mining as well as other buffer zone land. This arrangement has been very much a win for both ourselves and Wilpinjong. We have been able to increase our cattle numbers and with the mines help have been able to add to the quality of the soil and pasture plus the carrying capacity per hectare therefore benefiting local produce stores and stock agents. All our own and Wilpinjong's substantial pastoral needs are sourced locally.

My father was a founding member of the Wollar Bushfire Brigade and was presented with his 60 year long service medal by the NSW Governor. I have always been a member of local Bushfire Brigades as well

In the recent Kains flat fire Peabody supplied a manned grader, dozer, water cart and fire truck at no cost to the RFS. Supported fire control, released a total of 37 personnel and supplied most of the food for the Wollar fire shed. They monitored the fire from the start, were able to give accurate information of local ground conditions as communications broke down and social media went ballistic with mis-information. Senior executives including the general manager even helped move our cattle to safety saving 400 head from being burnt

To quote a thank you e-mail from an outside RFS Group captain "Without your help and assistance it would have been a much different outcome to what was achieved", While the Cooks Cap brigade gave the mine a certificate of appreciation

I have held many community positions in Wollar and surrounding area over my life time and until recently a position on the Wollar ground trust (for many years) and was a member of the Wollar progress association until I no longer felt welcome^{at} the meetings. The progress association had become a group that continually criticised and tried to disrupt the Wilpinjong mine rather than working for the betterment of the area.

The so called Wollar progress association has been hi-jacked by the anti-mine group and is used as a propaganda vehicle to attack the mine – the truth, ethics and honesty play no part in what is said or done under the name of Wollar progress association

While the last thing my family wanted was a coal mine to be established at Wilpinjong we have, as have a lot of other families, been able to make it work for us all as a family.

Wilpinjong coal mine has been food for family reunification as many of the present employees had to move away to find work but now grandparents, parents and children are living in Mudgee, Gulgong or surrounding districts helping to make the area very family orientated. Many students leaving school do not have to move away as they can now access work locally because of direct and indirect jobs created by Wilpinjong.

It is interesting to look at the rise in the districts primary school enrolments over the last five years, Gulgong up 77 from 220 while Mudgee's have risen by 106 (according to last Fridays local media)

reflecting the growing confidence in the future of the district by the younger members of the workforce

Wilpinjong's community donations also play a crucial role in keeping a lot of charities viable and functioning, especially after the GFC, they have a active team that puts a lot of personal effort into local charitable activities.

Wilpinjong plays a pivotal role in helping to create the population mass that allows government to increase essential services such a roads, education, health and community, giving the flow on effect that attracts others such as regional offices, retirees and professionals to the area.

It is sad to see Wollar decline but this is not something new as it has been steadily happening over my lifetime and before. The decline of Wollar is similar to what is happening to many rural towns and villages though out rural Australia

The reality is that any restriction to Wilpinjong's mining operations will not stop Wollar's decline, only cause the greater district unnecessary hardship.

Mudgee' s population is not yet at a critical mass that can sustain growth without all the mines

Margret Reid

