

## **Presentation to the Planning and Assessment Commission on the Invincible Colliery Southern Extension.**

To the Commissioners:

My name are Keith Howell and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Bre Transport who runs a small transport company.

We would like to show our support for the Invincible Colliery southern extension project to proceed as set down by the department of planning and further recommendations that may be placed on the project as decided by the Planning Assessment Commission.

The reinvigoration of mining locally will have a positive impact on the local community, following a number of years with negative news regarding the mining industry.

Lithgow has been in the news lately and all for the wrong reasons

I have worked and lived in the area for a period spanning over 12 years, I have seen the impact that unemployment is having in the district.

Bre transport is a locally owned company that has been proud to employ locals since its beginning back in 1996.

We now employ 3 people;

we used to employ 30 people in 2012-2014.

Lithgow has a long and proud history of coal mining in the district going back over 130 years.

Unemployment in this area is currently one of the highest in the western region of NSW a reflection of industries closing and businesses struggling

A high rate of unemployment can indicate a declining economy with closures of key industries or a residential area with a significantly disadvantaged population.

The Lithgow Council document “Economic Development Strategy” 2015-2020, provides direction for the development of the Lithgow City and Surrounding areas, and they identified then that unemployment and families leaving the district are of concern.

Some of the key implications arising from that analysis are outlined below:

- There has been a decline in the number of families, young adults and children in the Lithgow Local Government Area.
- This is because without families with working parents there is less disposable income in the area.

Less disposable income has an immediate impact upon local businesses which are supported by the local community

Limited employment opportunities for resident workforce, exacerbating the issue more residents working outside the Lithgow area.

- Currently approx 15% of residents work outside the LGA

This also means however, that if the LGA experiences job losses particularly in specialized industries or industry fluctuations they will then lose those skills **forever**.

In addition to this, if the workforce has been accustomed to working within close proximity to their residence, they may be less inclined to seek employment outside the area and commuting.

They may in fact feel pressured into leaving the region entirely to seek employment within the industry/sectors in which they specialise in.

Again, this impacts negatively both socially and economically on the entire LGA.

Invincible Colliery Southern Extension will be employing approx 35 people locally and indirectly the flow on effect will be tremendous for the local area.

Castlereagh Coal is also looking at developing a training schedule that encourages the employment of “green skins” to help people that may not have had the opportunity previously.

They have also been involved within the local community;

- Volunteering in local improvements initiatives (tidy town)etc
- Participating in local events
- Use of local facilities community hall, Cullen bullen primary, Cullen Bullen hotel.
- Where possible use of local and regional suppliers.
- The mine will have a positive impact on the sense of community

As a family we have the ability to make decisions on where we would like to bring up our family with the prospect of thinking that our children will be given the same opportunities in life.

If I would ask all the families in this room to consider packing up and relocating to another town or state, what would your answer be?

For those of you in this room, that are unemployed I ask, does it feel good **(NO)** and that is all we want the opportunity to provide for our families and to give them the chance in life that so many have to do without.

Make sure local views are heard, and that it is not outsiders speaking on our behalf.

If I came to your town and made comments that affected your employment would you be happy, I would say not, let us the people of Lithgow and surrounding districts make the decisions that affect the outcome.

I understand the concerns that people have with the environment, as I indicated we have had 130 years of mining in this district and some bad decisions were made in the past.

"Invincible Colliery is a much better project than what was proposed previously.

The southern extension is further away from town so the proximity to the town has been addressed, so as a local we need this for the district.

We are a proud community that prides itself knowing that we have contributed to the economy and have worked hard to ensure that our children will have the best opportunity.

We would like to add that its not like it used to be the town is dying, and cheap housing is bringing different types of people.

I would ask again to the commissioners members of the PAC to please consider these facts when making your decision in approving the Invincible Colliery southern extension, because it is the families that are hurting in this town.

I would like to add that we support the approval of the project.

Keith Howell