

**MACH ENERGY – MT PLEASANT MINE EXTENSION OF MINE LIFE**

**(DA 92/97 Mod 3)**

**PUBLIC HEARING WEDNESDAY 4 JULY 2018 – MUSWELLBROOK NSW 2333**

**MUSWELLBROOK MEN'S SHED INCORPORATED (219125)**

**SUBMISSION OF SUPPORT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning and before I commence I would like to thank the Independent Planning Commission for allowing me the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the members of the Muswellbrook Men's Shed and the benefits to the Men's Shed in supporting MACH Energy – Mount Pleasant Operation MOD 3 Application for Extension of Mine Life.

My name is David Sorensen, I am an active member of the Muswellbrook Men's Shed and hold the position of Management Consultant on the Executive Committee. I am a retired long serving NSW Police Officer and Legal Advisor in private enterprise on Criminal, Civil and Corporate Law. I have been a long standing member of the Muswellbrook Community stemming for over 35 years. During my career I have served in a number of mining communities in New South Wales from the Hunter Valley, Far South Coast and the far west of Broken Hill.

During this time, I have had a close relationship with literally thousands of community members and hundreds of businesses and industries. I have always committed myself to community affairs and supported hundreds of community organisations. There is clear documented evidence that during my service as a police officer in Muswellbrook I was and still am, now as a civilian, devoted to the local community, its affairs and welfare.

This evidence along with my background is more than sufficient qualification to speak on behalf of a very important and vital community organisation such as the Muswellbrook Men's Shed.

**I would like to quote Muswellbrook Men's Sheds ON LINE SUPPORT SUBMISSION No: 219125**

*The Muswellbrook Men's Shed is a community-based, non-commercial organisation under which is open to all men. We are a registered Not for Profit and Charity Organisation, with our main charter being that of men's health issues and the rehabilitation of retired Industry men into retirement or after injury as well as other issues such as Cancer, Depression, Heart Disease and general community health issues relating to men.*

*MACH Energy has taken a great interest in our community organisation and have afforded us financial assistance to aid and improve our important organisation.*

*Our organisation is a great supporter of the mining industry in our community as mining is the backbone of our communities survival in an uncertain economic climate, and to lose the operation of Mount Pleasant/Mach Energy would be extremely detrimental to the economic survival of the Muswellbrook area but also the sustainability of organisations such as ours, therefore our members and our organisation fully support Mount Pleasant/Mach Energy submission for extension of its mining activity in our community.*

**I would now like to expand a little further on our supportive submission and the Men's Sheds movement and the importance of our Organisation in the Muswellbrook Community...**

Most Men's Sheds in Australia are located in rural & regional areas such as our shed here in Muswellbrook. The Muswellbrook Men's Shed started out in 2012 and was Incorporated with the NSW Department of Fair Trading and Registered as a Charity & Not for Profit organisation with the Australian Charities Commission in 2013. Our governing body is the Australian Federal Government Department of Health through the Australian Men's Shed Association, and our Patron is His Excellency Sir Peter Cosgrove Governor General of Australia.

There are now over 1,000 Men's Sheds in Australia and over 1,000 Men's Sheds around the world, including Ireland, the UK, Scandinavia, Canada, New Zealand and the newly formed European Union Men's Shed Association. This uniquely Australian concept of Men's Sheds has now been adopted in these countries and is growing continually.

Out of interest, it is a documented fact that there are now more Men's Sheds in Australia than McDonalds Restaurants.

Our primary activity is the provision of a safe, friendly and inclusive environment where we are able to gather together and work on meaningful projects at their own pace, in our own time and in the company of other men.

The primary objective of the Muswellbrook Men's Shed is to advance the health and well-being of our male members and of other men within our community.

The Muswellbrook Men's Shed is a vital community investment delivering programmes initiative and activities that foster community spirit, connect communities and contribute to building a more inclusive local area. Our members see themselves as having a strong sense of belonging and ownership of their Shed, share fellowship, camaraderie and devote most of their time to worthwhile community projects.

The Muswellbrook Men's Shed not only plays an important role in the overall improvement of health and wellbeing of our members but also positively engages within our local community for the benefit of the Muswellbrook community.

***Our VISION STATEMENT is to;***

To promote and support men's health activities through the provision of a safe environment that encourages the social inclusion of men and facilitates meaningful discussion within the local community.

***Our MISSION STATEMENT is;***

To advance the health and well-being of our members by providing a safe and happy environment where we can pursue hobbies, pastimes and interests. We can also learn new skills as well as practice and pass on old skills, and at the same time promote our own and other men's health and well-being. By our efforts, we will benefit our families, our friends, our Shed and the community.

***Our GOALS & OBJECTIVES are;***

To maintain our incorporation and registration as a Charity & Not-for-Profit Organisation; this will allow us to apply for future funding grants and sponsorships to help fund much needed equipment, programs, initiatives and additional organisation assets;

This will also enable Muswellbrook Men's Shed to maintain our operation as a safe, purpose-built environment for community projects, and help our community while helping each other.

We continue to foster partnerships with organisations and individuals that share our direction and offer our members and the community a gateway to support and information and to generate projects and services that are community focused.

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It is common knowledge that most men have learned from our culture that they don't talk about feelings and emotions and many do not take an interest in their own health and well-being. Unlike women, most men are reluctant to talk about their emotions and that means that they usually don't ask for help. Probably because of this, many men are less healthy than women, drink more, take more risks and suffer more from isolation, loneliness and depression.

Good health is based on many factors including feeling good about yourself, being productive, contributing to our community, connecting with friends and maintaining an active body and mind.

Becoming a member of a Men's Shed provides us with a safe and busy environment where we can find many of these things in an atmosphere of old-fashioned mateship. And, importantly, there is no pressure. We can just come together and have a yarn and a cuppa if that is all we are looking for.

The Members of our Men's Shed come from all walks of life – the bond that unites us is that we are men with time on our hands and would like something meaningful to do with that time.

The Men's Shed movement has now become one of the most powerful tools in addressing health and wellbeing and helping men to once again become valued and productive members of our community.

The Muswellbrook Men's Shed recognises and values the diversity of reasons why we come together as men to share activities and common interests in the context of a Men's Shed.

The Muswellbrook Men's Shed recognises that it should be open to all men. The Muswellbrook Men's Shed does not discriminate against its members on the basis of race, creed, sexual preference, disability or age. Muswellbrook Men's Shed is committed to the health, safety and duty of care of its members and the community.

There is also the opportunity to promote the mentoring of younger men and men suffering disabilities, rural and personal isolation particularly in these hard times of drought, loneliness and depression, relationship breakdowns, retrenchment or early retirement from a job, physical or mental illness or ***chronic disease from Heart conditions right up to terminally ill cancer sufferers like myself...*** and these are just some of the problems that we find as men, difficult to deal with on our own.

On behalf of the Muswellbrook Men's Shed I have had the opportunity to read through and brief myself on all the documentation relating to Mach Energy's MOD 3 Application including that of the submissions made in support of, or in objection to the application.

It is of interest to our organisation that the NSW Department of Planning and Environment received 85 submissions from the general public and SIGs in support of the MOD 3 proposal. Approximately 65% of these submissions identified the employment opportunities that Mount Pleasant would provide, and that the extension of the mine's operating life would prolong these employment opportunities. Other submissions expressed general support for the benefits to the local economy, and the support that the mine provides to the local community.

In regards to the Socio-Economic Impacts and Benefits of the Mod 3 we understand the primary component of this modification is to extend the life of the Mount Pleasant consent for a period of six years, to facilitate mining of coal resources which were first approved for extraction in 1999. Without an extension of the current date of expiry of approval to extract coal being December 2020, the Mount Pleasant Coal Mine is unlikely to be commercially viable. The additional six years would allow sufficient time for MACH to make a return on its investment and to consider and apply for a new State Significant Development application. MACH estimates that the extended six-year period would account for coal royalties over this extended 6-year period exceeding \$350 million. The additional six years would also provide continued employment of approximately 380 operational workers and temporary employment for up to 350 construction workers, of which, in turn will greatly assist and increase the economic viability and business opportunities for the Muswellbrook Community.

It is evident that the NSW Department of Planning is satisfied that the proposed modification would provide significant socio-economic benefits to Muswellbrook and the local region and the wider community of the State through the continued

employment of staff and generation of coal royalties over the extended six-year period. The NSW Department of Planning also considers that the proposed modification is unlikely to significantly impact on surrounding industries, above and beyond what is already approved.

Muswellbrook Men's Shed strongly believes that Muswellbrook has experienced a major & significant socio demographic and economic downturn in recent times, resulting in the district to become somewhat isolated and without certain key business stakeholders & infrastructure to maintain a healthy economic balance due to the decline and uncertainty in the Mining and Agricultural Industries. The Men's Shed in Muswellbrook is the only male specific organisation that local & district men can attend and be a part of, for comradeship, learning & sharing & companionship. As well as personal development, referrals & skills based training.

***I would like to Quote an extract of an article published by FAIRFAX MEDIA on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018:***

*The Newcastle University Lead Economist Dr Anthea Bill recently reported that the mining reliant rural town of Muswellbrook faces the most disadvantaged in the Hunter Region & sits at the bottom 30% of all Local Government Areas in Australia. Dr Bill reported that data received from the Index of Relative Socio Economic Disadvantage shows Muswellbrook on a steady decline in Local Government Area ranking. Census data released by the Hunter Research Foundation Centre (HRFC) clearly shows a notable increase in relative disadvantage over the past 5 years in Muswellbrook. Dr Bill continued to report that the waning of the mining industry boom in 2013 & job losses, redundancies & forced retirements in manufacturing were amongst the factors that have contributed to the decline in ranking in disadvantage groups (particularly men) with the Muswellbrook area. The HRFC research clearly shows that disadvantage impacts on someone's sense of wellbeing, with personal wellbeing viewed as a psychological "steady state".*

Our organisation is fully aware that a significant minority of the objections, that is greater than 30%, have addressed the broader impacts of the Mt Pleasant Mine and its proposed life extension. Both Mach Energy and Bengalla Coal are majors sponsors and supporters of the Muswellbrook Men's Shed and it is reassuring to note that both these parties and their joint venture partners have settled the opposing objections and the original objection to the modification have been withdrawn and settled.

We are also aware that the remaining objections against the proposed MOD 3 Extension on Mine Life for Mach Energy Mount Pleasant Mine exceeds the statutory threshold of 25 and that in accordance with the relevant clauses and sections of the EP & A Act and the SEPP Policy that the IPC must consider the objections as well as the supportive submissions in accordance with the Act and its changes from March 2018 when Bengalla Coal and their employees withdrew and settled the opposing objections and that the Independent Planning Commission of NSW is the consent authority.

The objects for approval of MACHs Mod 3 application in Section 1.3 of the Act that interests the members of Muswellbrook Men's Shed are;

**Object 1.3(a) – to promote the social and economic welfare of the Muswellbrook Community and a better environment by the proper management development and consultation of the State's natural and other resources.**

*The Muswellbrook Men's Shed as a local charity truly believe that our organisation falls within the scope of "other resource" due to the fact that we **ARE** a resource in the Muswellbrook Community by being a unique charity that services a specific genuine need in the community.*

**Object 1.3(j) – to provide increased opportunity for community participation in environmental planning and assessment.**

*Muswellbrook Men's Shed maintains a highly active and working Sustainable Futures Program and Policy. As an example, we work closely with a number of other Mines in the District in providing assistance with Mining Land Rehabilitation works by constructing breeding and nesting boxes to encourage native wildlife back to the rehabilitated lands for reestablishment and re population of both native and endangered wildlife species. Additionally, we work closely with Landcare and the Mines Environmental Units.*

Muswellbrook Men's Shed agrees with and supports the NSW Department of Planning's satisfaction that the proposed MACH MOD 3 application would provide ongoing socio economic benefits to the Muswellbrook Community and the NSW Community at large.

We also strongly agree with the matters raised in support of MACHs Mod 3 application being;

1. Employment Opportunities
2. Local Economy
3. Local and Regional Community Support
4. Economic Benefits
5. General Support
6. Positive Rehabilitation Outcomes.

We also support the fact that the proposed MOD 3 extension of Mine Life would generate socio economic benefits and growth for Muswellbrook through continued employment and through the payment of coal royalties and that these benefits far outweigh if any potential adverse social and environmental impacts of the proposal to an already existing mine life.

Muswellbrook Men's Shed receives very little if any financial support from Local, State or Federal Government funding, therefore, we heavily rely not only on community and small business support but most importantly the major financial support afforded to our organisation from the mining sector in Muswellbrook, of which MACH Energy has proven to be previously and has provided us with positive indications of continued support into the future and we truly thank and value MACH Energy as a major supporter of our organisation.

Muswellbrook Men's Shed, even though a relatively new community based organisation have experienced that our members are limited by the lack of specific items and capacity. This lack of capacity means that in the future our members may be limited in the way we can access supply opportunities across the Muswellbrook Community, which would be an economic loss for our organisation and for local business as we source a vast majority of our goods and services from local providers and businesses as a matter of principal and ethics toward supporting the local community and businesses.

As I have previously stated the Men's Shed relies on the support and sponsorship from the mining community to further improve our organisation into a position to best assist the members of the Muswellbrook Community.

We firmly believe that should MACH Energy's MOD 3 not progress this will in deed adversely affect and impact our organisation in its progression, as MACH Energy would not be in a position to make contributions and support to the Men's Shed commercially viable.

Should the MOD 3 application progress and be totally accepted we at Muswellbrook Men's Shed look forward to a long and progressively healthy relationship with MACH Energy.

Muswellbrook Men's Shed, now trusts that the NSW Independent Planning Commission give favourable and genuine consideration to our Supportive submission in its capacity as the final authority, in allowing this MOD 3 application to proceed.