

I'd like to thank the Commissioners for allowing me to speak here today and voice my views on the United Wambo Joint Venture.

My name is James Sherbon. I'm an Open Cut Production Operator at existing Wambo Coal Mine. I've been in Open Cut mining for almost 10 years and I've been employed at Wambo for just under a year. I'd like to open by saying that I fully support the United Wambo Joint Venture Project. I've got 3 areas that I'd like to touch on during my presentation today. The first is Environment.

Environment

As you drive through the ^{Wambo} mine, you can see just how successful the rehabilitation has been. Animals are plentiful within rehabilitated areas. There are kangaroos grazing on the hills, birds flying around the trees, the occasional sighting of a wombat at night and the other week I even saw a huge wedgetail eagle perched up on timber that has been placed across some of the rehab. If these animals are happy to live in areas that have been rehabilitated, is that not a good indicator that Wambo is on the path to success with its environmental obligations?

As Glencore is set to take over the Wambo Open Cut operations, and given Glencores exceptional record of great environmental management, its safe to say that existing high environmental standards that Peabody have developed and executed at Wambo will be continued throughout the life of the United Wambo project aswell.

In addition, the United Wambo Joint Venture is a brownfields mine meaning that it is a previously developed operation. Most infrastructure and development has already been setup. Only 17.5% of additional disturbance of vegetation is required in order to gain an extraordinary economic benefit.

Economic benefit to the hunter valley, the state and to tourism

I'd now like to talk about the economic benefit to the hunter valley, the state and tourism.

If that 17.5% of additional disturbance is approved by the commission, there will be an enourmous economical benefit that will flow on.

In 2018 Wambo paid,

- \$68.5 million dollars to 194 local businesses
- \$141.9 million dollars to 243 other NSW businesses
- \$39.9 million dollars in royalties to the State of NSW – this money is used to upgrade roads, hospitals and transport infrastructure
- \$52.7 million dollars in wages and salaries – this money is spent at local cafes, hotels, wineries, retail shops amongst many others.

That's a total of \$303 million dollars that wouldn't exist if Wambo was to cease operations.

James Sherburn

Employees also contribute to local businesses and the tourism industry. And I can give you a few first hand examples. Last year, my crew had a Christmas in July Party at the Albion Hotel in Singleton and in March, my crew will be going on a wine tour in the Hunter Valley. So as you can see, the wages earned by employees are spent in regional businesses and on tourism.

Employment and Careers

I'd now like to touch on Employment and Careers.

As I mentioned earlier, I've been employed at Wambo for just under a year. I have made many friendships with the people I work with and I actually enjoy going to work. I enjoyed it so much in fact, that I convinced my brother to get a job at Wambo. He's been working along side me now for around 3 months and he agrees that it's one of the best places he's worked at as well. I live in Newcastle and some of my family lives in the Hunter Valley and that's another point for this project. This isn't a fly in fly out mine like many of the mines in Western Australia. We all live here. This region is our home. The money generated at United Wambo, will stay here unlike the towns surrounding mines in WA.

This job is also responsible for keeping a roof over my head and food on the table. If this project doesn't go ahead, the future for jobs like mine is uncertain.

If the project is approved however, it will provide on going employment for my family, my friends and me for another 23 years. However, this project approval goes far beyond me. Currently Wambo employs 390 people, of which 115 are locals that live in Singleton and 275 in surrounding areas such as Muswelbrook, Maitland, Cessnock and Newcastle. That's 390 people along with their families that rely on their employment at Wambo to take care of themselves and people they love. If this project doesn't get approved, 390 people will be facing unemployment and economic uncertainty. Some may even have to sell their family home and move away from the area. This is not what anyone wants. We want Singleton and the Hunter Valley to thrive and grow and provide opportunities for those that live here. Also for those that want to move here call this great part of the country, home.

The United Wambo project will provide the economic certainty that existing employees so desperately want. The project will also offer an additional 250 mining jobs and 120 construction jobs at peak production which is fantastic for Singleton and the Hunter Valley.

Another point I'd like to touch on is Women in mining.

Historically, mining has been a heavily male dominated industry. However, within the last 20 years, more and more women have been gaining employment in the sector. This is great for big businesses that are seeking to achieve workplace diversity. At Wambo, women make up 22% of the workforce and that number is continuing to grow. Last year alone, 40 % of all new hires at Wambo were women. Not only is this amazing for workplace diversity but it's also fantastic for closing the gender pay gap with mining being one of the higher paid industries.

James Sherban.

Conclusion

I'd now like to conclude my presentation and highlight some of the key elements. With the approval of only an additional 17.5% of disturbance to vegetation the commission has the power to:

- Provide Stable and reliable employment for existing employees
- Provide Jobs for an additional 250 people during peak production
- Provide 120 construction jobs during peak construction
- Provide 23 years of economical benefits to the local and state economy which includes \$817 million dollars that will be paid in royalties to the state of NSW
- Help companies like Glencore and Peabody create a more diverse workforce with the increased employment of women in the mining industry
- Help close the gender pay gap
- Help local businesses and the local tourism industry thrive
- And to provide companies like Glencore and Peabody the opportunity to continue to prove that you can mine coal and be environmentally friendly at the same time.

The approval of this project is sensible, its responsible and its vital. I call on this panel to approve this project.

Thank you for listening