

Good morning/afternoon panel chair and panel members,

First of all, I would like to thank the Independent Planning Commission for holding this hearing to democratically assess the local community's and stakeholder's views on the Vickery Extension Project.

My name is Jack Campbell and my family has been local to the Narrabri Shire for generations. I work together with my father to run our family business 'Namoi WasteCorp' which he started in Narrabri 17 years ago. My father, Ron Campbell, has been in business in the region for 28 years, so we have a very good understanding of the challenges business faces in country communities.

Thanks to the strong Agricultural industry and in particular the mining industry in the area we have seen growth and found opportunities that would be unthinkable for small businesses in most small, country communities.

And there is a reality here, it is a well know fact that it is very difficult for country communities to retain their youth. Mining has enabled that to happen in our region and it is a unique thing. As a young professional, I would not be here today working in my family business, living in the country town where I grew up if it wasn't for the opportunities that the mining industry brings.

Namoi WasteCorp has provided waste collection and recycling services to all industries in the Narrabri shire since it's inception, but now thanks to recent contracts awarded to us from mining companies, we provide services across the Narrabri, Gunnedah and Liverpool plains shires.

Namoi WasteCorp had serviced a few mines prior to the request for tender for a recent contract, and when a tender came up for waste services across multiple mines we were given the opportunity to go for it. We were up against a number of multinational companies all vying for the work, but through hard work and strategic planning we were able to secure the contract and keep those jobs local.

We currently provide 17 full time positions within our organisation, and supply a substantial amount of work to sub-contractors local to the region.

Our situation is not unique. We work with a broad spectrum of industries in the region and there are numerous local businesses that get a considerable portion of their income, directly and indirectly, from the mining industry that surrounds us.

Mining and agriculture have worked side by side in the region for as long as living memory. I think that this alone is the reason why Narrabri and Gunnedah remain thriving communities.

Over the years, farming has provided less and less direct employment, as a result, the community benefits from farming now reside in local suppliers that facilitate goods and services required by agriculture.

More often than not, these suppliers can diversify to offer goods and services to the mining industry as well. Considering the drought that is currently hitting the region hard, farmers are not the only ones feeling the pinch. A lot of these suppliers I've spoken about would not be able to keep their doors open if they were solely relying on farming production to provide them with work.

Major agricultural distribution and research facilities are downsizing or shutting down resulting in significant unemployment locally.

Vickery is an existing mine and the extension project is a proposition to re-establish production as other mines are reaching the end of their viable lifespan. It is surrounded by other coal mines such as Boggabri Coal, Maules Creek Coal and Rocglen to name a few.

This seems like the ideal scenario for further coal production, minimising invasiveness to the community, and the environment. Vickery would effectively be a replacement for the loss of production in those mines which will be undergoing rehabilitation.

Agriculture will always be the back-bone of our community. But let's not forget, the key to survival of country communities is employment.

As farming practices become more streamline, young people are met with less opportunity regionally and need the professional job prospects that the mining industry can provide.

From the perspective of a local business person, the Vickery extension project is an opportunity that we cannot knock back. In an era where small, country communities are dying off, locals want to attract business to town and encourage growth.

Business does not just come to town without a catalyst.

Growth does not just happen without opportunity.

Small towns do not just survive by saying no when opportunities like this come knocking.

Thank you.

Jack Campbell