

OLIVIA KNIGHT,

Dear Commissioners, Counsel, and members of our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Rix's Creek Continuation of Mining Project.

I am a Senior High School Student at St. Mary's Campus All Saints College Maitland. I currently study Environmental Science, engineering studies and extension mathematics and I am sitting my HSC this year.

I would like to talk to you today about the benefits of Coal Mining for my family which has been involved in coal mining for five generations in the Hunter Region.

The wealth created by mining has allowed the Hunter to develop into a prosperous area. Population is increasing and people are moving to the Hunter to gain employment, the Hunter is a growing area with sustainable employment- but only with the continuation of mining in the region.

My Great Grandfather was Coogan Frame, a third generation coal miner, who started mining at the age of 15. My Great GrandPop was a tireless fundraiser for his community, Retired Mineworkers Association president, recipient of the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2005 and granted Freeman of the City of Cessnock. From the benefits of coal mining my great grandfather raised and supported his family which allows me to be here today.

My Dad is a coal miner, who started work at a local coal company when he was 19. He started with three months work experience which then continued and allowed him to help pay his way through Uni where he completed a Bachelor of Science Majoring in Geology. His job with this company ended up lasting 19 years. He now also holds a Masters in Environmental Management as well as other mining and technical qualifications. He now works for the Bloomfield Group.

Next year I too will be going to uni hoping to do either Civil, environmental or mining Engineering and I hope that my Dad has continued employment so he can pay for my Uni fees too!

Coal mining has provided for my family- It has provided for my family to have a nice home, a high standard of living and be able to go on overseas holidays. Coal Mining has also provided for my two sisters and I to go to local private schools, study excursions to Japan and receive a higher standard of education. Coal Mining has allowed our larger extended family to stay together in the Hunter Valley. Without coal mining in this area my parents would have had to move away from their family to find work in their specialised fields.

My Uncle Eric, works at a local coal mine, and supports my Aunty and my two cousins. My Dad has six cousins which 5 of them or their partners are directly employed by local mining companies. Each of them raising a family with children. We are so lucky to have all of our family based locally, we are now 6 Generations in the Hunter Valley who have benefited directly from coal mining, and hopefully I can be the 6th generations involved in coal mining in the Hunter Valley.

My Dad is always telling stories how they showed a bus load of school kids the rehab areas and the "frog ponds" at Rix's Creek Mine and how they show the students drill core from exploration and told them all about exploration and the benefits of mining and the careers that are available in coal mining.

My year 12 Earth and Environmental Science Class will shortly be visiting Rix's Creek Mine as part of our HSC studies where we will learn about the rehabilitation of the land after mining and the cattle grazing which is occurring at Rix's Creek Mine.

Rix's Creek are actively involved in supporting local school visits either through the Upper Hunter mining dialogue or through direct association and contacts with local schools.

In my view as a student who has seen the benefits from coal mining we need to continue to mine coal for the economic benefit of our community. Without Coal the Hunter Valley stops- Renewables will not create enough jobs for the long term.

Activists talk about intergenerational equity, as a 6<sup>th</sup> generation Hunter Valley resident where is my intergenerational opportunity to follow in my family's footsteps of coal mining. Where is my opportunity to benefit from the wealth of mining, go to uni, raise a family, own a home and have the ability to put my kids through school and university?

My Family have been involved in Coal Mining in the Hunter Valley for 5 Generations, I hope that I can be the 6<sup>th</sup>. Please approve the Rix's Creek Continuation of Mining Project.