

Good morning ladies and gentlemen and esteemed members of the planning panel. My name is Geoff Stevenson, I have lived in Singleton and worked at Hunter Valley Operations since two-thousand and eleven in a maintenance-engineering role. I am here today to speak in support of the development applications for HVO North and HVO South open cut operations to continue with the extraction of 430 million tonnes of Run-of-Mine coal through to the year 2045. When I say that out loud, it feels like such a big number and quite a long period of time. That number represents a lot of economic activity and a lot of benefit to our local community. That period of time should see me employed full time all of the way to retirement, when I'll be aged in my early sixties. It might also mean employment for my young children should they decide to enter the mining industry when they finish school in Singleton. My son is twelve years old and my daughter is nine so they still have several years of school ahead of them. Mining is such a great employer in my opinion as the work cannot be outsourced or offshored overseas; the resources are located here and here is where we have to train and employ the workforce needed to extract those resources.

We live in the age of AI and automation and many jobs that existed when I finished school won't be available to my children when **they** finish school.

This proposed project will benefit the community with improvement to local infrastructure. The relocation of sections of Lemington Road and the new bridge construction will remove the bottleneck that currently exists where the road crosses the Hunter River – known as “*Moses Crossing*”. Moses Crossing is a low-level concrete bridge structure that is often closed to vehicles during flood events as noted in the HVO Continuation Project – Environmental Impact Statement Main Report on page three-hundred and fifty-seven.

Modelling in this report indicates that this crossing has been submerged under water a cumulative total of almost eight months since the crossing was upgraded in the year 2010. I would like to add to this that many weeks after a flood event has ended, I have observed Moses Crossing to still be closed while it waits for the gravel road to be repaired and for the debris to be cleared off the bridge. Data that I have obtained from Singleton Council suggests that from the start of the year 2021 until April of 2023, Moses Crossing was closed for a total 826 days; or roughly 44% of the time. The removal of Moses Crossing will also allow pick & carry cranes and B double vehicles to access Lemington Road without having to use the New England Highway, giving benefit to the local community.

Thanks for your time today. All opinions expressed today are my own and are not a reflection of the company or any of its employees.