

Chairperson, panel members, fellow speakers, ladies and gentlemen here today, my name is Nathan Davis.

As a business owner with a significant investment in the township of Mudgee I felt today it was critical that I spoke at this hearing to offer my support to the Bylong Coal Project.

In the last six years, my business partners and I have thrown significant resources behind the economic development of Mudgee with the rezoning of the nearby farm land of over 300 hectares which represents the next 10 to 15 years of concentrated and significant residential growth that is needed for Mudgee.

The rezoning of this land, now known as Caerleon Estate, has the possibility to provide for over 2000 future homes within Mudgee over the coming years – almost another 50% of the homes that exist in Mudgee today.

With our combined experience developing throughout Australia, my partners and I have identified the huge potential for growth that Mudgee has in front of it right now. Growth that other regional towns in NSW can only ever dream of...

The expansion of coal mines in recent years around Mudgee should not be taken for granted... While other coal mines around the country have been contracting, or even closing down, in recent years the mines around Mudgee are proving the most profitable in the country.

These are fortunate times for this town and these plans for growth and expansion should be embraced by Mudgee, not rejected. Furthermore, they should be embraced by all of NSW, as we as a state, benefit from the ongoing royalties these mines generate.

It is our intention, with the confirmation of Bylong's approval, to throw further, even more significant resources into Mudgee over the next ten years - with the potential to spend even a further \$100M plus as we look to provide homes for Mudgee's growing population in a master planned estate that will provide community facilities and amenities, including a child care centre, retail shops and cafes; and significant open space and parklands.

The further commitment of such resources by us, and business owners in general, over the next decade or so is critical on the continued growth of this township. Without surety of commitment from mining companies such as Kepco and the employment that their projects bring, no business owner can invest in the expansion of the town without significant risks to the downside.

It is projects such as the development of the Bylong mine that are critical to Mudgee's future economic success.

We have seen in recent times that the drought can have devastating effects on the local farming population and this then has flow on effects to employment within the region.

The approval and construction of Bylong gives the local population employment options. Mining creates diversity of industry within the region. It brings in significant investment dollars and creates further sub-industries with even more employment options and continued growth.

The coal mines located around the region have proven over the years to work hand in glove with the town and its community. The mines have been successful in providing a large number of jobs to the local workforce, increasing the population by bringing outside workers and their families to the town and giving back to the community with grants and sponsorship. The opportunity to have another mine operating in the Mudgee area is something that should be embraced with both hands by the town. It will create further employment opportunities, increase the region's population, which in turn will create further employment opportunities, and increase the economic standing of Mudgee and the surrounding area, immeasurably.

As regional areas and country towns around NSW and in fact, all of Australia, face economic hardship as populations decline, young people move away and socio-economic problems start to rise, not decline, Mudgee has an incredible opportunity to buck the trend with the approval of the Bylong Coal Project.

This new mine presents the town with the chance to continue to grow and get stronger – creating more jobs for the current population plus the future residents that are attracted to the Mudgee area.

Based on research that says one mining job creates 2 or more new jobs in sub/supporting industries, the approval of this mine stands to benefit even those that don't work in the mining industry within the township. More people in town means you will see more people employed at places like restaurants and cafes, more retail shops, more cars sold and more people in general shopping and being employed by local businesses to keep up with the increase in demand a growing population creates. All these things are a huge boost for the local economy and an incredible opportunity for the town of Mudgee and its people.

Mudgee has a diverse history and first grew on the back of potential gold mines, and then wool and agriculture, tourism and viticulture. We all know this and we are all proud of what a thriving and diverse community we have here. However, the continued, long term growth of the town will come from the construction and expansion of the nearby coal mines. Denying further access to some of the most efficient coal seams in the state, in fact, the country, seems, to me, crazy – it seems to be against the basic principle of continued growth and prosperity which we, as a township and a region, should be proud of, and aspire to.

The reality is, the whole town needs to have certainty of these coal mines' long-term existence, and also, just as importantly, the town needs to provide its support for the construction of new mines in the region, and these mines' controlled expansion, to keep the local economy moving forward.

The approval of the Bylong Coal Project is a positive for Mudgee. It will create more jobs, more opportunities and greater growth.

As a business owner with a large investment in this town, and as a rate payer in this region, I for one fully support the approval of the Bylong Coal Project. If this mine project is approved more and more people will stand to benefit from the positive flow-on effects that this surety of growth and expansion will bring to this town.

I know there are many people that have travelled long distances to present their case and “maybe” take a negative view on this project, however, as a person that has had a business in Mudgee for the best part of 10 years and who will continue to be here for many, many more years to come, and as someone who has invested significant money into this town, I know this mine is a great thing for the region. It is a huge positive and something that should be embraced. It will create plenty of employment opportunities and generate significant growth for the region’s citizens and businesses alike.

Over time we have all seen opportunities pass us by and have regretted our inaction. We must support our future now and ensure the growth of this great town and this region.

Now is the time for the town to lend its support to the Bylong Coal Project. We can no longer let those opposing this mine halt the growth of this great town – we must take a stand, not just for the community of today but for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I trust the opportunities for the construction of the Bylong Coal Project that we are presented with today are not wasted – now or in the future.

It is time to continue the Mid-Western's record as one of the fastest growing regions in NSW. The Bylong Coal Project must be approved.