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NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
GPO Box 39, Sydney NSW 2001  
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To Whom It May Concern

Re: Maxwell Underground Coal Mine Project. SSD-9526

My name is Bill Johnson and I have been a mineworker and mechanical engineer in underground coal mines and still work in the NSW coal industry. I am seriously concerned about Australia's regional economic development, and having seen the proposal above by Malabar Coal, must confirm my strongest support for this project.

This project demands the full support of the community for the following reasons:

- Environmental – very low impact
- Low impact on Neighbours & Community
- Resource Recovery
- Generation of jobs
- Income for government
- Long term viability
- Diversified opportunities
- Rehabilitation options

1. Environmental Impact & Impact on Neighbours & Community

- a) Infrastructure - Malabar Coal is proposing a mining project to utilise decommissioned infrastructure from a previously approved open cut mine and to recommission the Coal Handling and Preparation Plant as well as the product transport system of the previous mining venture. Utilising infrastructure already available negates the need for clearing property to build this infrastructure and also provides access to the mine on established transport corridors.
- b) Surface topography - The designed recovery of this coal resource by underground mining systems instead of open cut thus offering minimal disturbance to the surface topography and greatly reducing the rehabilitation requirement over the affected mine site. Malabar has also designed the layout of the planned underground extraction to protect identified surface features that should not be exposed to the effects of subsidence. Elsewhere on the site, because only the coal will be removed, and from seams in the order of 2-3m thick, the effect of subsidence at the surface would be almost unrecognisable unless observed through a survey.
- c) Visually - The visual impact of this project is virtually insignificant. The existing infrastructure will be no more visually apparent than it has ever been, the surface entry to the underground workings of the mine will be located in a natural valley and transport

corridors between the two will only be slightly visible to those making a concerted effort to see them.

- d) Dust - By using underground mining systems instead of open cut and utilising a covered conveyor system overland, there will be negligible dust generation from the site compared to open cut mining. The corridor road is to be sealed and there will be no open cut haul fleet generating dust from the haul roads.
- e) Light & Noise - Underground recovery of the resource will also mean that the impacts of light and noise from open cut mining equipment, particularly at night, will not be apparent. There will be no haul truck fleet or dump dozer operation as would be normal for an open cut mine operation.

## 2. Resource Recovery

- a) Quality – The coal deposit planned for this mining project is expected to be 75% metallurgical coal and 25% thermal coal. There is no economic, safe alternative to coal for producing steel and other metallurgical products and this is reflected in the relative premium for metallurgical coals over thermal coals. The thermal coal component of the products from this venture are planned to be used as feed stock to the modern high-efficiency, low emission power stations which are far more environmentally efficient than the “first generation” power generators. These units are able to receive lower ash coals without burning out therefore generate less waste to be placed back into the environment or to be reprocessed into products such as inert ash building blocks.
- b) Justification – The premise of leaving a highly valuable energy source “in the ground” is not justifiable if we have no equivalent alternative and while the emerging technologies of alternative clean energies are still being developed into cost effective industrial products we cannot ignore the opportunity that this project presents.

## 3. Economic opportunity – Jobs, Income & Long term viability

- a) Employment - The design of this project provides direct employment opportunities to about 350 people across various skills groups for up to 26 years but the flow-on effect to supporting industry may support a further 100+ people. This is a huge benefit to the local and wider community. Not only will there be need for supporting industry personnel on site but there will be rail industry personnel, Port of Newcastle coal loading personnel, marine escort and transport personnel and personnel in the transport industry delivering equipment and consumable mining supplies as examples. Then there are product research and design personnel, regulatory personnel and personnel supplying products to the companies supporting the mining project.
- b) Value - The benefit of recovering coal within this project design is that recovery is maximised which provides corporate income and thereby provides the Australian economy with a consistent income stream over the life of the project. This project is expected to contribute between \$110 million and \$140 million per annum to Commonwealth, NSW and local governments in taxes, royalties and rates which will provide a huge benefit to community infrastructure projects and support the prosperity of the economy for years.

#### 4. Diversity

- a) Land use - Other land uses in the district include pastoral, viniculture, grazing and stud breeding and where these operations may be affected when in close proximity to open cut mining that is not the case with underground mining. An underground mining venture does not compete with these land uses and they may even be undertaken on the surface land above an underground mine. The project welcomes this diversity as balancing the growth of the economy in this community.
- b) Solar - Malabar has also embarked on a solar farm project on their rehabilitated land and the provision of a 25 Megawatt solar farm is a highly commendable use of rehabilitated land.
- c) Stock - Malabar is also farming a herd of Angus-Charolais cross steers on rehabilitated land at the Maxwell infrastructure site already proving the compatible diversity of the project.

#### 5. Rehabilitation

- a) Current – The Maxwell Infrastructure site currently contains land that is not completely rehabilitated though Malabar is reshaping and rehabilitating these disturbed areas for future use.
- b) Future - Some of the area to be rehabilitated contains voids that will need to be filled to approximate surface before final contouring. These will be ideal emplacement areas for CHPP reject disposal but also for the drift material cut to provide access to each of the seams for recovery. This will negate the need to disturb surface land to create out-of-pit dumps for the drift material which would then also need to be profiled into rehabilitation.

These benefits will make a substantial long-term difference to the communities in the Upper Hunter and to NSW.

Our community needs a diverse economy and the Maxwell Underground Project can help ensure our economy prospers for decades to come.

Regards



Bill Johnson