

Tom Higgins
6/3 Bishopsgate Street
Wickham NSW 2293

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 Tom Higgins and I am a mineworker in the NSW underground coal industry. I am concerned about the future of the Australian coal industry in the face of ill-founded opposition, 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
- Generation of jobs
- Income for government
- Long term viability
- Diversified opportunities

1. Environmental Impact & Impact on Neighbours & Community

- a) Infrastructure – The Maxwell Project is proposing 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 – Coal recovery by underground mining systems instead of open cut offers minimal disturbance to the surface topography and greatly reduces the amount of rehabilitation required over the affected mine site. Malabar has also designed the layout of the planned underground coal extraction to protect 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 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. 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.
- 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.

3. Diversity

- a) Land use - Other land uses in the district include pastoral, viticulture, 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.

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



Tom Higgins