

NSW Government Planning & Infrastructure
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12th April 2013.



PCU043834

Attention: Director Mining and Industry Projects

Re: Watermark Coal Mine

App No: SSD – 4975, Watermark Coal Project



Disclose reportable donations: I have NOT made a reportable political donation.

Privacy Statement: I have read the Department's Privacy Statement and agree to the Department using my submission in the ways it describes. I understand this includes full publication on the Department's website of my submission, any attachments, and any of my personal information in those documents, and possible supply to third parties such as state agencies, local government and the proponent. I agree to the above statement – Yes, however I request that the information included on "attachment A" is not published on the department's website or forwarded to any other third party for publication. The information on "Attachment A" is of a personal nature and would be a security risk to my operation.

I am a member of the Caroon Coal Action Group/SOS Liverpool Plains and a long term Liverpool Plains landholder. I strongly object to the proposed Shenhua Watermark Coal Mine at Breeza NSW.

This project has had and will continue to have a significant detrimental impact, not only on myself and family, but on the local farming community and the wider region as a whole.

I have many concerns regarding the impact the "Watermark Coal Mine Project" will have! On one of the most productive food growing bowls in Australia, if not the world.

I am the proud caretaker/owner of the property called "Nullabeen", which joins the northern "Project Boundary" of the proposed "Watermark Coal Project". My adjoining farm "Durante" is situated below "Nullabeen" and according to the "C Mine Plan Justification Report" both farms are completely within the 10km Locality Buffer Line, and form part of the Gunnedah Formation zone. I have farmed this land continually for the past 40 years and have raised my 4 children on this land. During this time my family and I have been actively involved in the local community.

Some of my concerns are:

1. Water: a) Contaminated run off. b) Changes to the Water Catchment Flow.

For the past 40 years I have lived on, cared for and farmed this beautiful productive black soil plain. I have seen many floods come down through "Watermark" and sweep across the plain. The flood

water flows into the water systems that replenish the local wetlands, rivers and underground water aquifers. The underground water is widely used for irrigation to grow the food that feed the people. The water that runs through Watermark and across the middle of my farm is a natural part of the delicate balances of the eco system of the Breeza Plain.

a) **The runoff of contaminated water**, from the sediment dams and mining sites in general.

It is **NOT** a matter of “If” but a case of “How Often” the **contaminated water** will flow across the Breeza Plain and into our water ways. The residue from the sediment dams will deposit on our fertile cropping soil and polluting our waterways for generations to come.

b) **Changes to the natural Water Catchment Flow:**

Any changes to the catchment area will impact on the natural flow of water. Farmers on the plain depend on the regular run off, of the rain to replenish their dams and aquifers.

It is stated in the “Surface Water Impact Assessment” there is a potential for reduction of catchment flow to surrounding waterways including the Mooki River, which also runs through my “Durante” property, and a 25% loss in run off from Watermark. This is a significant loss in the water flow from our catchment area.

2. **Air Pollution:**

With the wind direction being predominantly from the south and south west in this area, the coal dust and other dust pollutions associated with open cut mining, will be carried onto the farming land of the Breeza Plain.

Some of the foods that we produce on our very productive land, which will be directly affected by these air bourn pollutants and polluted waters are:

Bread Wheat:

- Bread is the staple food of virtually everybody’s diet.

Durum Wheat:

- This is milled to produce some of Australia’s best quality pasta.

Canola:

- This is consumed in a number of ways. The seed is used in multi grain breads as a whole seed.
- The seed is also crushed to extract the oil to produce margarine and cooking oils.
- Over the past few years we have grown a new variety of Canola which produces oil that is seen as a healthier option than the old varieties. This variety of Canola is sold to Cargill Australia Ltd who crushes the seed to supply all the cooking oil used by Kentucky Fried Chickens.

Sunflower seed:

- Is also consumed in a number of ways.
- The seed is also crushed to extract the oil to produce margarines and cooking oils.
- The sunflower seed kernel is used in multi grain breads, breakfast muesli, muesli bars.
- The sunflower seed kernel is also sold in health food stores as an alternative to peanuts.

Linseed: (Flax seed)

- The linseed is a source of Omega 3, and often purchased in health food stores by individuals, to supplement their breakfast cereals.
- The whole seeds is also used in most multi grain breads, mueslis, and snack food bars.
- The seed is also crushed to produce Linseed oil.

Chick Peas:

- Are used in many Mediterranean recipes.
- Chick peas are the main ingredient in Hommos.
- Chick peas are fast becoming recognised as a healthy alternative in modern day cuisine.
- Chick peas are exported in large quantities to South East Asia.

Barley:

- Malting Barley is used in the production of Beer.
- Barley is used in many multi grain breads.
- Feed Barley is consumed in the feed lot industry to feed meat chickens and beef cattle.

Sorghum:

- Sorghum is used in some multi grain breads.
- Sorghum is mainly consumed in the feed lot industry to feed meat chickens and beef cattle.

Is it the State Government's priority to provide access to low grade coal for China, or the continued production and supply of clean high quality food for Australian citizens?

Over the 40 years we have grown hundreds and thousands of tonnes of food to feed the people of this great nation. We have worked with the Department of Agriculture, and seed companies, developing new varieties of higher yielding and pest resistant crops. We have always worked towards developing "best farming practices" and further expansion of the farm.

30 years ago we purchased "Tullawong" which joined the eastern boundary of "Durante". 15 years ago we expanded the farming operation again, and purchased the property called "Nullabeen", which joins "Durante's" western boundary. The western portion of Nullabeen rises up off the flood plain and gives direct all weather access to the highway. The height advantage of "Nullabeen" gives spectacular view across the Breeza Plain and beyond. There are Koala bears in the well-established gum trees located on "Nullabeen's" western boundary reserve area. "Nullabeen" was the logical place to develop our farming headquarters as it is the only part of the farm not subject to flooding.

The development of the western portion of "Nullebean" has been a long and expensive process with a total infrastructure investment of around \$1.1 million dollars so far. This included a 4,200 tonne silo complex with grain drying and grain transfer systems, fully imported from the United States. It also includes a 24 meter x 24 meter machinery shed, plus individual silos, sheds and large farm fuel storage.

With the main headquarters of the farming operation now located on the western boundary on Nullabeen, there was one final step to go to complete the 15 year plan. That final step was to build a home, up off the flood plain, taking advantage of spectacular views that Nullabeen offers, crisp clean air, and local wild life at my back door, not to mention direct highway access.

The original family home is located on Durante in the middle of the flood plain, some 10 klms away from the sheds and silos on Nullabeen. This old family home has reached the end of its useful life.

I had the plans of my home drawn-up with GJ Gardner Homes in Tamworth, and the building pad developed.

The final step of building my new home on Nullabeen, where I would spend my remaining years overlooking the farm I had spent my life developing, have all been thrown into turmoil. The final step cannot go ahead with the proposed "Watermark Coal mine" to be situated in full view of the new home. No family member wants to live directly across the road, from a major open cut coal mine.

With the wind direction being predominantly from the south and south west, my new home and farm headquarters would be clouded in coal dust and other pollutions associated with open cut mine. Our drinking water would be polluted, as it runs off our roof. No windows could be open due to the dust. The picture perfect, Breeza Plain Valley would be filled with pollution the same as many parts of the Hunter Valley is today.

With the question marks around the air quality, how safe is it going to be living and working in it every day???

3. Land Values:

I, like most farmers on the Breeza Plain have built their lives on the farms they call home.

We have developed our farms, to be passed onto the next farming generation, so they will continue to feed the people of this great nation for many years to come. Farming is not a profession that looks only for the short term gains, but builds for the long term sustainable future of generations to come. I am the fourth generation of Riordan farmer's in the Gunnedah district. My two sons are the fifth generation and will take over the reins in the foreseeable future.

With the proposed "Watermark Coal Project" as my neighbour, and the uncertainty of the environmental impact the mine will have on the Breeza Plain, it is obvious the mine will have a negative impact on land values.

4. Noise Pollution:

We would be subjected to continuous noise pollution with the mine operational, 24 hours and day, 7 days a week.

The traffic on the single lane highway with its 110km speed limit goes directly past my farm. With the increased traffic along the highway all hours of the day and night it will bring about increased risks to all motorists entering on and turning off the highway at the intersection of Long Mountain Road and the highway, located on the intersection of my west & northern boundaries of Nullabeen.

Conclusion:

I strongly object to the proposed Shenhua Watermark Coal Mine at Breeza NSW.

The uncertainty of the environmental impact this mine will have, on one of the most productive food growing area in Australia is unacceptable.

Is the Government looking at the short term gain instead of long term sustainability of this unique area with its black soil plains supported by a reserve of under-ground water?

Is it the Government's vision to turn the Liverpool Plains district into a dust bowl? We have witnessed firsthand the impact the coal mining industry has had on the air quality, and landscape of the once beautiful Hunter Valley. There are documented reports relating to increased health issues of people living in the mining areas of the Hunter Valley.

I believe it is totally unjust, that the farmers of the Breeza Plains, are expected to accept all the risks, disruptions to our way of life, loss of land values and most of all an uncertain future, when the exploration lease was granted, during a term of government, when decisions were made by corrupt individuals for their financial gain and the financial gain of other corrupt individuals.

Even though the government may see the "Watermark Coal Project" application for final approval, as meeting the government requirements "on paper", it does not take away the following facts:

- The whole process of approval for mining leases and developments, at the time when the "Watermark" exploration lease was approved, has a cloud of corruption over it.
- During heavy rain events that cause flooding, there will be over flow from the mining sediment ponds onto the Breeza plains and into our water ways.
- Due to major changes to our catchment area there will be decreased general runoff of water onto the Breeza Plains which replenish the waterways and aquifers.
- There will be coal dust and air pollution caused by the mine that will deposit on the crops that we grow; it will be in the water that we drink and in the air that we breathe.
- The Breeza Plain will be clouded in mining dust.
- There is an uncertainty regarding the farming future on the Breeza Plain.

I urge the government to think long term. With Australia's increasing population to feed, we cannot afford to put at risk such highly productive farm land for the short term gains in mining.

There are alternatives to the "Watermark Coal Project" to obtain the coal to supply China.

There are no future alternative to this unique fertile soil of the Breeza Plain, with its underground water aquifers, that produces high quality food to feed the people of Australia.

I, like most of the community have many concerns and there are so many questions that cannot be answered with certainty.

Allan Riordan.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Allan Riordan'.

Farmer's on the Breeza plains.

Andrew Riordan.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Andrew Riordan'.

Ross Riordan.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ross Riordan'.