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The Director General  
The Department of Planning & Infrastructure  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir / Madam,

### **Objection to the Anglo American Drayton South Open Cut Mine Proposal**

I am writing as a concerned landholder in the Denman District, to object to the Drayton South open coal mine project. My reasons for objecting to this proposal are as follows:

#### ***Health Impacts***

It is well known that poor air quality can affect human health. This mine will contribute significantly to dust pollution in the region. The cumulative impacts of dust generated from mines have resulted in Muswellbrook Shire having the highest number of emergency hospital admissions for asthma and respiratory illness in the Hunter New England Health Region.

**The following quotes can be found in the NSW Department of Health (2010) Respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and cancer among residents in the Hunter New England Area Health Service report, retrieved from:**

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2010/pdf/hne\\_respi\\_cardio\\_disease.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2010/pdf/hne_respi_cardio_disease.pdf)

“In the period 2007 to 2009, 0-35-year-old people resident in the Muswellbrook postcode had higher rates of emergency department presentations for both asthma and overall respiratory illness than the remainder of HNEAHS [Hunter New England Area Health Service] and Sydney.” (p.11)

“For rates of asthma presentations, residents in the Muswellbrook postcode ranked highest among people aged less than 35 years of age.” (p.12)

“Singleton and Muswellbrook local government areas have higher rates of cardiovascular disease hospital separations than all of Hunter New England Area Health Service (HNEAHS) or NSW.” (p.19)

“Data on hospital separations are often used as indicators of morbidity. However, they are imperfect measures as high rates may reflect not only serious morbidity but inadequate access to primary care...” (p.19)

The nearest large town, Denman, does not have a Air Monitoring Station that is part of the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network. An Air Monitoring Station needs to be placed at Denman so that air quality can be monitored **before** this mine proposal is considered. Residents of Denman

want to know how they are impacted by coal dust and to be alerted when dust levels reach hazardous levels.

There is a lack of research into the cumulative and long term impacts of the effects of coal mining on human, animal and plant health. Until such research is completed, and changes to coal mining practice made to minimise health effects, coal mining expansion should be suspended.

### ***Economic Impacts.***

The economic impact on non-mining related business in the region will be a negative one. This mine will be adjacent to seven thoroughbred horse studs including Coolmore and Woodlands, dairies, vineyards, and an olive grove. Additional coal mines deters further and new investment in farming enterprises as the public perception is that these industries should not be placed next to coal mines. Some of these industries are considering relocation as a mine operating close by will change the environment so that it is no longer fits their business model. Additional coal mines and mine expansions are squeezing agricultural investment out of the region.

Effectively, a coal mine sterilises an area around it for investment. The area around coal mines is not seen as an area worth investing in as it may in the future be subject to mine expansion. Rural industries are looking for land in areas where there are no coal mines.

Being located next to a coal mine (and hence subjected to the air, noise and light pollution) has a negative impact on the public perception and reputation of rural industries. As one winemaker recalled to me, when he told a member of the public at wine tasting in Sydney that he was located in the Upper Hunter Valley the response was “isn’t that where all the coal mines are?”.

Accommodation for tourists is negatively affected by mines contractors booking out accommodation. These accommodation bookings do not contribute to the tourism economy as these contractors do not visit tourist attractions. Money spent by business on tourism advertising is wasted when there is no accommodation for tourists.

Muswellbrook Shire needs to maintain a mix of industries to buffer it when the mining industry declines. Part of the Shire needs to be kept mine free so that other rural industries can thrive, and be a source of employment and wealth when the coal prices fall and mines employment numbers fall.

Many skilled workers trained by non-mining industries are poached by the mining industry who offers more attractive salaries. The effect of this on non-mining industries is destabilising.

Water is a limited resource. Water is being drawn away from Agriculture to support the expanding coal mining industry. This is to the detriment of Agricultural industries.

### ***Social Impacts***

Housing impact: The Housing and rent markets are stressed by the growth of the mine industry as they have not kept up with the expansion of the mine industry. Any further mine development will further stress the housing sector in the region.

Impact on assets located in proximity to the mine: Properties located near the mine become stranded assets that owners cannot sell, or have reduced value, due to proximity to the mines. For many land owners this property is their superannuation that they will retire on. Not being able to sell to retire causes them to keep working in their industry rather than being able to retire. This results in frustration and depression.

Some farmers own several properties located within a region. When one of these properties is bought by a mining company it reduces the viability of the overall operation, and the mines do not compensate for the loss of that asset in the overall context of the overall operation.

Public infrastructure is currently stressed by the demands of the coal mining industry. Road infrastructure is degrading faster than it can be maintained. The community of Denman has not been able to recruit a doctor for its Hospital for the last two years. The increase in population is not being met with an increase in medical services available to residents.

### ***Environmental Impacts***

The proposed mine will impact on the Hunter River, Saddlers Creek and Salt Water creek. The Hunter already has many mines pumping salty mine water in the river an additional mine will further stress the river by requiring water and disposing of mine water.

Mine rehabilitation research is still in its infancy. As open cut mining has only been impacting on the region in the last thirty years, we still do not know the long term problems that rehabilitated open cut mines face and if they can be returned to long term agricultural use.

John Kaye