

INQUIRY INTO BENEFICIAL AND PRODUCTIVE POST- MINING LAND USE

Name: Ms Angela Michaelis

Date Received: 24 June 2024

24 June, 2024

STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE DEVELOPMENT

Inquiry into beneficial and productive post-mining land use

Dear Committee

I am a city resident but have been a bushcarer for over 25 years. As someone who cares for our land, both literally and physically, I am glad to have this opportunity to submit to the committee on Post Mining Land Use.

I have recently visited the Hunter Valley and observed the devastation caused there by coal mining to landforms, agriculture and biodiversity. I have also informed myself of the reliance of many in the community on mining. I understand that most members of these communities while not necessarily wanting mining to come to an end, recognise that a sensible transition plan is needed now, as the world's energy mix changes in response to the awful effects of climate change we are already experiencing.

I note that sometimes this pace of change in this area is underestimated, for example, in the NSW Government's Future Jobs and Investment Authority's *Issues Paper*, which is currently on public exhibition. It cites an outdated International Energy Agency forecast that global coal demand will reduce by 30% by 2050. But more recent estimates are that the transition will occur much faster than that – the IEA's March 2024 forecast is that coal demand will fall by at least 40% and up to 90% between now and 2050.

So decisions on the future of post-mining land is very timely - in fact it is urgent.

I particularly wish to support the development of expertise in land restoration as a priority, noting that successful projects to restore biodiversity are complex. In the Hunter, I observed several areas where poor "revegetation" practice in mined areas had led to erosion and weed growth, not restoration of biodiversity. Getting it right has potential. The organisation Hunter Renewal notes:

The Hunter Valley is ideally placed to become a national and global leader in post-mining landscape restoration. This will require reform of existing training institutions like TAFE, and the establishment of new collaborative research institutions such as an independent Centre of Excellence.

These would be very worthwhile objectives for your committee to wholeheartedly support.

Finally, I note that the Terms of Reference for this committee include considering how the benefits from PMLU can be shared between the community and 'mine operators'. I am aware that the benefits of mining over the last decades have been vastly in favour of the operators, many of them overseas companies.

- Some mining companies – for example, Glencore – pay no company tax at all in Australia due to their tax structures.
- Coal mining royalties in NSW are set at a low level, considerably less than Queensland.

- Operators have been allowed to create vast voids which they are not required in most cases to fill in.
- They have also been allowed often to exceed pollution levels, causing ill health for residents, and requiring the NSW taxpayer to bear the cost of treatment.

It is now time to ensure that future expenditure is for local communities and the NSW taxpayer.

I believe that we should be seeking the best possible outcomes for the environment and the communities, and that PMLU reforms should be designed so that any financial benefits for the operators are invested in projects that support the natural environment and the communities who live around it.

Kind regards

Angela Michaelis