

Mine moratorium call

BY DARREN SNYDER

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NSW Farmers' Association Mudgee branch president John Webb has backed the group's call for a moratorium on new mining or coal seam gas developments across the state.

Mr Webb said the association was not opposed to mining but was looking for greater transparency in the approval process.

He said from a farmer's view, he was concerned about the potential loss of good agricultural land but understood mining was good for the economy.

"What we need is a balance," he said.

"The agricultural industry will feed the world forever, whereas coal won't.

"If you travel the length and breadth of this land you will see our best farming land is also in areas with higher rainfall and we do not want this lost to mining."

Mr Webb also questioned the mines' land use after mining.

"They say they will return the land in a better shape than previous but who will they return it to?"

"This is something I have brought up at all CCC (community consultation committee) meetings."

NSW Farmers' Association Mining Taskforce Chair, Fiona Simson said mineral and petroleum titles and applications now covered around 70 per cent of the state and a long-term plan must be implemented.

Mr Webb said as a Mid-Western Regional Councillor and local farmer, he believed the cumulative impacts of the mines should be taken into consideration.

"It's not just one mine or the other," he said.

"There are a whole heap together.

"People think they are a world away from Mudgee but they are not."

Cr Webb said the view of Mudgee not becoming another Hunter Valley was disrespectful to people living in the shire.

"There are residents who must be looked after who are living on our shire but are a part of the Hunter Valley too," he said.

The Mid-Western regional council has also backed a moratorium on mining within the region, earlier this year calling for a halt to State Government approvals until a strategic plan was put in place.

However, NSW Minerals Council said the NSW Farmers' Association call for a moratorium was irresponsible.

NSW Minerals Council Deputy CEO, Sue-Ern Tan said putting a stop to new mines or extensions would hurt future job prospects in regional areas and make NSW the 'ugly duckling' of Australian states for doing business.

"They're [NSW Farmers] advocating the use of a sledge hammer to crack a walnut," she said.

"We are behind the NSW Government's new sub-committee of cabinet that will specifically with coal mining issues and develop a strategic plan.

"It seems that the NSW Farmers' Association now shares a policy with The Greens, the party that has been working against the interests of the agricultural sector for years."

Ms Tan also rejected completely the suggestion that the minerals industry was allowed to go unchecked.

"We are the most heavily regulated industry in the state with 572 pieces of legislation, regulation and Codes of Practice that we must work within."

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Living in an area, Gloucester which is being taken over by mining we feel like we are being hit over the head by a sledge hammer, the Mining Industry. And what an obvious tactic they are using by linking the Farmers Assoc. with the Greens. Is that the only defence they have for refusing to look at what is now a huge problem in rural Aust. We will band together and we will make the Govt and the miners accountable.

Posted by **Gloucester RIP**, 29/10/2010 10:26:34 AM, on Mudgee Guardian

Ms Tan, the NSW farmers assn branch president John Webb has backed the call for a moratorium on NEW coal or gas developments across the state. My understanding of 'moratorium' is a temporary pause for a specific purpose such as to strike a balance, again as Mr Webb has asked. However Ms Tan says this is 'irresponsible' and 'using a sledgehammer to crack a walnut'! I suggest, Ms Tan, that it is the NSW Minerals Council's approach, which you espouse, that is irresponsible. Without productive farming lands there will be no walnuts to crack, spuds to dig or peas to pod. A balance MUST be struck so that food security is assured even if that means your precious coal has to be railed a hundred or so Kms further to port. The argument that reining in coal production will hurt job prospects doesn't stand up. The shutdown of BHP in Newcastle simply meant other jobs took their place. One door closes, another opens. Minerals Council, you've had it too good for too long and reality is now kicking in.

Posted by **normandy**, 29/10/2010 10:55:36 AM, on Mudgee Guardian

There is no insult to the Hunter Valley when an area like the Mudgee region voices strong concerns about becoming a wasteland like the Hunter. It is well excepted in the Hunter that the only people that like the Hunter the way it is, are the NSW Government & the Mining Industry, the original general community is fed up with the way they have been displaced and overrun by excessive mining. The forecast for a further 129% expansion of the Coal rush in the Hunter will no doubt flow on into the Mudgee & Midwestern areas with all the fun & games that come with having your properties & water sold of to King Coal by the NSW State Gov. So don't fret Mudgee will get it's chance to become the description of Mining destruction some other poor region uses in the future whe they say "we don't want to be another Hunter Valley or Mudgee" It's not disrespectful it's just a fact. But I think the mistakes of the Hunter will surely be duplicated in Mudgee as they were not mistakes, they are an intentional process that allows the digging up of as much Coal as possible while minimising interference by the locals. GOOD LUCK MUDGEE!!

Posted by **SPARKS**, 31/10/2010 1:54:15 AM, on Mudgee Guardian

P.S. If the Miners win and there is no moratorium on mining approvals and the mines continue to expand their footprint over the region we are sure to find later that some of the locations & conditions of these approvals shouldn't have been granted as they don't meet new guidelines that arose from the review on mining. Will the Miners agree to close or change these new mines to meet any new standards, I expect NOT LIKELY!! The resistance to a moratorium is so they can rush through as many new mine approvals as possible before they are constrained. To avoid more inappropriate mines that will be impossible to remove there must be a moratorium.

Posted by **SPARKS**, 31/10/2010 2:09:59 AM, on Mudgee Guardian

[COMMENTS AS AT 02/11/10, 20:06]