

Thoroughbred Breeders

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WHEN WILL ENOUGH MINING BE ENOUGH IN THE HUNTER VALLEY?

Let us not be misunderstood. The Thoroughbred Breeders of the Hunter Valley along with other farming organisations are not asking for a complete halt to mining in the Hunter Valley. We are asking for a pause on new mining decisions so that a sustainable future plan can be developed. A sustainable plan which miners, breeders and farmers all agree is needed and seriously overdue.

It is disingenuous to suggest that calling for a pause to new mining decisions is akin to asking farmers to stop farming. We are not asking for all mining to stop in the Hunter Valley.

Thirty years ago mining was not as pervasive as it is now. In the 1970's 6 mining titles covering some 9,000 ha were issued in our vicinity¹. The 1980's saw another 13 titles issued covering a similar land area. An area which is roughly equivalent to the size of just one international scale thoroughbred breeding operation. In the last two decades mining in our vicinity alone has exploded – over 150 mining titles covering nearly 160,000 ha were issued.

The NSW Minerals Council says that mining has been in the Hunter Valley for over 150 years and “has co-existed with thoroughbred breeders, farmers, wine makers and other industries over that time.” In the past this may have been true – not because mining and agriculture are compatible, but because the size of the mining industry was small and sufficiently distanced from sustainable agricultural industries and major breeding operations.

This is no longer the case. Through a lack of strategic planning and vision mining titles now surround, are on top of, or beneath and certainly uncomfortably too close to our international scale thoroughbred breeding operations.

The Hunter Valley's Thoroughbred Breeding Industry is unique. Not only because of its topography, its fertile lands and pristine water systems. But because it has a reputation, built over the last 150 years, of breeding some of the best thoroughbreds in the world. This reputation is priceless and has earned the Hunter Valley, NSW and Australia, a place on the global market as one of 3 International Centres of Thoroughbred Breeding Excellence in the world – along side the world's best at Kentucky in the US and Newmarket in the UK. Our reputation draws other industries, investment and tourism to the Hunter Valley and Australia more broadly.

The industry contributes over \$5 billion to the national GDP, \$2.4 billion annually to the NSW economy. Breeders in the Hunter Valley have invested over \$5 billion in the last decade to grow the industry into the world leader that it is today. We create long term sustainable jobs for thousands of people in the region and hundreds of thousands of people across Australia who are associated with our industry. If allowed to survive our industry will long outlive the mining industry in the Hunter Valley. If not, the Hunter Valley will be an unproductive and uneconomic agricultural region once mining is finished.

We all have facts and figures. What we don't have is a strategic plan or a vision. And what we don't want to lose, while Governments take their time developing one, is our International Thoroughbred Breeding Industry.

We are not calling for a ban on all mining. We are not calling for a halt to existing mining operations. What we are calling for is a pause in decision making on new mining applications before we unwittingly sacrifice another long term strategic agricultural industry, and our global reputation for being one of the best thoroughbred breeding areas in the world.

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¹From Singleton to Murrumbidgee (including Muswellbrook and Scone)

