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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Save our communities, jobs, land and water**

COUNTRYMINDED candidate Pete Mailler hit out at recent comments that the Shenhua Watermark coal mine is not a New England issue. The mining project is now located in the seat of Parkes due to recent electorate boundary changes, but Pete said disaster knows no boundaries.

“The fallout from the pending confirmation of the Shenhua project to mine the Liverpool Plains will not be quarantined to the seat of Parkes,” he said.

“Every farming community, townsfolk and farmers alike, should be acutely concerned about the willingness of the Federal and State Governments to permanently destroy agricultural land and water resources for a short-term mining enterprise that will not pay a fair price the coal, let alone compensate future generations for the loss of our most valuable assets – land and water.

“CountryMinded is not anti-mining. We fully accept the legitimacy of the mining industry, but it must coexist with agriculture with “no harm” conditions in relation to our vital land and water resources.”

Pete said beyond the environmental concern, CountryMinded is critical of the economic justification for big coal projects in Australia.

“Some idiot once declared that without coal Australia would go broke, but the truth is that coal royalties are underpaid and represent about 1.5 per cent of Commonwealth revenues. A new mega mine will not make any significant difference to the national debt,” he said.

“Furthermore, the flagged employment opportunities and revenues will come at the expense of existing collieries and have dire impacts of the socio-economic situation for regions like the Hunter Valley and other mines throughout the New England and North West of NSW.

“The Watermark mine has been approved by both the state and federal governments with support from the Nationals. The only safeguard left is the Water Trigger under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act which has the power to overturn big coal or coal seam gas project if they are likely to harm water resources in the region.”

Pete said there was overwhelming evidence that the Watermark mine would very likely impact on hydrology and harm essential water resources.

“It is a test case that impacts New England directly and the entire agricultural sector across the nation. It remains, and should continue to remain an issue for this and any New England election,” he said.

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