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Letter to the Editor

For those who believe they have an interest in my family's private business, could I introduce some facts in relation to some of the nonsense pedalled by the Nationals and Labor Parties regarding the sale of land "Cintra" to our neighbour, Werris Creek Coal, a subsidiary of Whitehaven Coal.

1. Coal mining by Preston Coal Co commenced near Werris Creek, 400 metres from where I live, over 80 years ago and ceased when diesel trains were introduced.
2. The current mining operation is a small mine (7 to 8 million tonnes), recommenced about 12 years ago on neighbouring land.
3. My family's home is currently 800 metres from the coal face.
4. The Coal Company has purchased a number of properties within what is called the "zone of affectation" of mining activities.
5. Most of these properties will not be mined.
6. There is currently no mining approval to mine any land on "Cintra".
7. It is believed there will be an application to extend the Coal Company's mining area at some time in the future – that application may impact on "Cintra" land if approval were to be given. The Coal Company has a legitimate right to make such an application.
8. This land is **not** on the Liverpool Plains and does not have any water resources of significance under it.
9. The portion of coal bearing land on Windsor Family land is 25 to 30 acres of gravel ridge which is adjacent to Quirindi Council's gravel quarry of some 50 years.
10. A gravel ridge is the type of land that should be mined, not the fertile land of the Liverpool Plains.
11. If mining were to be approved (which in my view is highly likely, given the nature of the land in question), mining activity would come within 250 metres of our family home.
12. If an extension to the existing mine is granted, it is estimated that it would reach "Cintra" boundary in 12 to 15 years, but would enter the "zone of affectation" much sooner and hence has to be dealt with from both the mining company and the landholder interests.

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13. Contrary to the hypocrisy charges being thrown about by the Nationals and Labor Party, I have never been opposed to mining. This is clearly borne out by my assistance to Whitehaven to originally set up in the Gunnedah area when I was the State Member for Tamworth and my support for the current Werris Creek mine over a decade ago.

Anyone with any knowledge of the geography of the area would know that I have always said that the groundwater and floodplain issues need scientific understanding before any mining on the plains proceeds. I have been successful in getting Federal Government funding for a Water Study for that purpose.

To suggest that a gravel ridge at Werris Creek, next door to a long time road base quarry has any impact on the Liverpool Plains is nonsense and nothing more than a political beat up.

If I had attempted to use my political position to stop mining next door because it was in my “backyard”, claims of hypocrisy may have been valid, but I have never attempted to do so.

Mining is not an illegal activity and is normally dealt with at a State level. The issue of the Liverpool Plains is the potential offsite impacts that could occur to the water resources if inappropriate areas are mined, and as a consequence, detrimentally affects the Murray Darling System.

My family will remain on “Cintra” and our son will be farming that land, along with other land, and I intend living out my life on that land. When and if mining does take place on our southern boundary, when complete, my family will be repurchasing the balance to continue agricultural pursuits.

The land has other family members involved and, to that extent, is a private family matter.