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Maxwell underground mining project will build on Hunter's strengths

- Stephen Galilee

Local News



We all know that mining provides the economic bedrock for communities across the Hunter and will continue to do so for many years to come.

At the same time, it's prudent to not only build on our strengths but to look for new opportunities.

COVID-19 has instilled a new urgency in the need to diversify and strengthen the Hunter economy. We need new and innovative projects that attract private investment and create hundreds of jobs.

That's precisely what Malabar's Maxwell underground mining project will deliver.

The Maxwell underground mining project will build on the Hunter's strengths by producing high quality Hunter coal. Most of the coal from the project will be suitable for making steel, an essential component for every modern economy and needed for many things, including the construction of renewable infrastructure.

The project will also complement the recently approved Maxwell solar farm on rehabilitated land near the site, with the capacity to generate renewable energy for about 10,000 NSW homes.

Importantly, the project will also deliver about 250 construction jobs and 350 ongoing local jobs during its operating life, injecting \$55 million in annual wages and driving further economic activity for the region.

This is the type project that the Hunter needs right now - an innovative approach that blends traditional strengths with new opportunities, supports emissions reductions, and delivers jobs and investment. Unfortunately, some are trying to block it.

In 2014, about 300 local mining jobs were lost due to a small, but vocal, campaign against Anglo American's Drayton South open cut mine that was proposed for the same area. While the science didn't fully support their objections, the fact it was to be an open cut mine was at the heart of their opposition to the project.

Opposition to the Maxwell project from some of the same voices is disappointing, given the new project is vastly different. It's an underground mine with its entrance four kilometres from any horse stud.

The project's solar farm will be more noticeable than the nearby underground mine, which will be largely invisible to anyone who didn't know it was there.

Our region, state and nation have taken an economic body-blow from COVID-19. Now is the time to support projects that have the potential to drive the Hunter's economic recovery.

Stephen Galilee is the CEO of NSW Minerals Council