Verbal Submission – Opposition to Proposed Gold Mining Activity

Brenda Jessup – Owner, Popina, Queensberry

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Brenda Jessup, and together with my partner, Tony Lynch, we own Popina, a newly established café and restaurant located directly opposite the proposed gold mining site in Queensberry.

I am here today because this proposal threatens not only our business and our substantial financial investment, but also the future we have spent more than a decade working towards.

We have lived in the Upper Clutha for 25 years. Over the past ten years, we have invested considerable time, money and energy into restoring our Queensberry property, planting trees, improving soil health, establishing productive gardens and creating an environment that contributes positively to the landscape.

Earlier this year, we opened Popina.

This was not a small undertaking. We have made a significant personal and financial commitment to building a hospitality business that we intend to be here for generations.

Our purpose-built restaurant, designed by award-winning architect Guy Tarrant, was carefully positioned to take advantage of the peaceful rural setting and surrounding landscape.

The environment is not simply a backdrop to our business. It is a fundamental part of what we are selling.

People visit Popina to enjoy good food, genuine hospitality and the tranquillity of the countryside. Our outdoor terrace, gardens and views are central to that experience.

We have invested in a business model that relies on those qualities remaining intact.

The prospect of a gold mining operation directly opposite our restaurant puts that investment at serious risk.

Heavy machinery, truck movements, dust, noise and the visual impact of industrial activity are completely incompatible with the experience we have worked so hard to create.

These effects would directly influence whether customers choose to visit us, how long they stay, whether they return and whether they recommend us to others.

We cannot simply relocate our restaurant or redesign our business to accommodate a mine.

Our investment is fixed to this land, this building and this environment.

If the mine proceeds, we carry the commercial consequences of a decision over which we have had very little influence.

There is also the question of fairness.

We have worked diligently to meet council requirements, obtain the necessary approvals and develop a business that complements the rural character of Queensberry.

We have accepted the costs and responsibilities associated with doing things properly.

Yet we now face the possibility that an industrial activity could be approved directly opposite us, fundamentally changing the environment on which our investment was based.

I also want to raise the issue of consultation.

We were previously approached by the landowner and asked to provide written approval for a subdivision on this same property. We gave that approval in good faith, with no indication that gold mining was being contemplated.

Had we known, our response would have been very different.

It is extraordinary that we were approached directly over a subdivision, yet only became aware of a proposed mining operation through Facebook.

That is deeply concerning, particularly given the potential consequences for neighbouring properties and businesses.

I would also ask the decision-makers to consider the wider economic implications.

The Upper Clutha has built a strong reputation around its landscape, tourism, hospitality, horticulture and quality of life.

Businesses like Popina invest in those qualities. We create employment, support local suppliers, attract visitors and contribute to the local economy.

A mining operation may generate economic activity, but **its benefits must be weighed against the financial harm and long-term costs imposed on existing businesses and the surrounding community.**

Our investment is intended to be productive for generations. Mining is an extractive activity with a finite operating life, while its impacts on neighbouring properties and the landscape may endure well beyond that.

I ask you to consider who bears the risk.

If our customers stop coming because of dust, noise, heavy traffic or the loss of rural tranquillity, it is our business that suffers. It is our investment, our livelihood and the employment we provide that are put at risk.

We have spent years building something positive for this area, and we should not have to absorb the financial consequences of an incompatible industrial development on the neighbouring property.

We are not opposed to development. We are opposed to development that comes at an unreasonable cost to others who have already invested in this community.

I respectfully ask that you decline this application.

Please recognise the value of existing businesses, the importance of protecting the rural environment, and the right of neighbouring landowners to have confidence in the future of their investments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.







