

Residents show support for mine

By Caitlin Andrews

SURVIVAL of the Murrurundi community is at the heart of a group of residents who have made a stand to support the proposed Bickham Coal Mine.

With various businesses closing down in past months and the loss of the only doctor this month, concern is growing for the future of the community.

In response to opposition of the mine, the group held a rally on Thursday to allow members of the community the opportunity to see how the town is suffering.

About 80 people attended, with Murrurundi resident and business owner Simon Ford speaking on the situation of not only Murrurundi, but the surrounding towns of Blandford, Wingen, Parkville and Scone.

Mr Ford told the *Hunter Valley News* it was time to show the point that there were people out there who wanted the project.

"The town is in desperate need of people, so we are trying to get young families back to the area which will have a ripple effect helping schools, which then will help attract a doctor, which will then help the retirees," Mr Ford said.

"One thing the town heavily lacks is major industry like Bickham Coal Mine which I think this town needs to pick it up," he said.

"It will also be a good back up if the horse industry ever gets in trouble again with a crisis like equine influenza, the mining industry will be able to provide in economic times.

"I want to see all the businesses co-exist,

so they all complement each other.

"We should all work together and give each other the opportunities," he said.

Long term resident and business owner Peter Millgate compared Murrurundi to towns like Muswellbrook, Singleton and Aberdeen, who he said were thriving.

Mr Millgate said the whole area would benefit from the mine.

"We're going to lose people out of the town," he said.

"If people move out of the town to get work they won't come back.

"We've got to look at the big picture."



CAPTION: Murrurundi residents Simon Ford and Peter Millgate are supportive of the Bickham Coal mine.