

SUBMISSION BY LYNETTE CHAMAS TO THE NSW PLANNING DEPT. REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COAL MINE BY POSCO/HUME COAL IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OF NSW (INCL. THE BERRIMA RAIL EXTENTION).

My husband and I bought a house in Bowral in early 2010 when we visited the town for the first time and fell in love with it. We moved here in 2013. One of the draws was the clean, crisp air that we felt would help my long-term respiratory problems. We were horrified to learn that Hume Coal proposed coal mine would see a pile of coal six-stories high and 800 metres long situated only ten kilometres west of our front door, and that coal fines from the stockpile would blow our way when the fierce westerly winds, which often reach gale force, blew our way.

This presents **serious health concerns**, not only for us but for other residents in Bowral and Burradoo.

There are many retirement villas in both these areas, occupied by elder folk whose health would seriously be impaired by air pollution from a coal mine, whose lungs would not cope well with the fine coal dust that would be visited upon them every time the summer westerlies deposited fine black powder on cars, house fronts, gardens, washing, people's clothes, their hair and their lungs.

A leaflet from Hume Coal put in my letterbox stated that there would be no dust impacts "as a direct result of the Hume Coal Project" and that "A range of controls will ensure that dust emission from mine processes are minimised." It then says No Dust Impacts in large letters. However, the wind is not a "direct result" of the mine and is something over which Hume Coal has no control, and "minimising" is not the same as No Dust Impacts. Hume Coal contradicts itself, while deliberately attempting to mislead.

The wind is not something Hume Coal can control. A large part of the stockpile would end up miles away, in Berrima and Bowral and Burradoo, where it could do serious damage to the health of residents.

This is a serious issue that cannot be ignored or wished away. People's lives could be put at risk.

We have other grave fears and concerns regarding the establishment of the proposed mine.

I fear a negative impact on the Southern Highlands tourist industry

The Southern Highlands is renowned throughout the state of NSW as a much-loved tourist destination. Whenever I mention to people in Sydney that I live in Bowral their faces invariably assume a look of envy – everyone knows about Bowral, everyone knows how beautiful it is, every second person has been here, eaten in one of the restaurants, lunched at one of the vineyards, bought pastries from the famous Gumnut Café that, every long weekend, sees people queuing out the door.

Berrima is equally well-known for its beauty, its little cafes, its markets, its lovely heritage buildings. With a coal mine a mere 4.41 kms away it, like Bowral, will be at the mercy of the westerlies and the coal dust that will coat people's cars and be deposited on the tables and chairs of the outdoor cafes. One wonders how long the tourists will keep coming under such circumstances.

Property values will drop, the demographic will change and the very things that prompt people to drive more than 100 kilometres each weekend to spend time (and money) in Bowral and Berrima will be lost. And we who love the area will watch its gradual environmental degradation and the loss of its social cohesion while our property prices head south.

I am concerned that the mine's impacts on local employment will change the nature of the towns of Bowral and Berrima in a negative way.

With such a large number of retirees living here, health care and social assistance provide by far the greatest number of jobs in the area, followed by the retail trade. These jobs rely on people wanting to come here, either to live or to visit. Clearly, a coal mine and the degradation of the environment would see tourist numbers drop and a reduction in the numbers of people wishing to move here, with a corresponding impact on both the retail trade and on the numbers of people requiring health care and assistance.

Accommodation and food services, which account for the sixth largest number of jobs, would be hard hit if Berrima became a mere coal town and Bowral and Burradoo lost their appeal to both tourists and incoming retirees. Unemployment would rise, creating social problems which currently do not exist.

There would be grave risks to water security, plus the risk of pollution

Hume Coal's mine would require 13 billion litres of water a year and could affect the Medway Reservoir that supplies residents in Berrima, Bowral, Burradoo and Mittagong. This figure does not take into account the effects of climate change and drought; at this time of writing we are experiencing one of our driest winters on record.

We have seen periods of prolonged drought when Sydney's Warragamba dam dropped to 32%, when the people of Orange were having to truck in water because their reservoir had run dry. How would the NSW government respond if such a scenario was played out here in the Southern Highlands? If farmers and residents were forced to endure water rationing while a South Korean coal mine continues to consume thousands of litres of water daily, water that people need for drinking and washing and growing food?

93 bores on 71 properties will be affected by the water table dropping between 150 to 200 metres, covering an area of 200 kms or more – Hume Coal itself admits the water impact will cover over 300 square kms. The impact will remain for up to 65 years after the mine closes and some bores may never recover, resulting in ruin for many of the farmers and agribusinesses in the area.

A foreign company cannot be considered more entitled to Australian water than Australian farmers and citizens.

The presence of a coal stockpile near Medway Reservoir increases the risk of coal fines polluting our drinking water. Coal fines are also a potential source of heavy metal and carcinogenic compounds and would be placed in direct contact with the groundwater resource.

Hume Coal proposes that for a period of 18 months the coal mining rejects, including toxic materials, will be stored above-ground and exposed to prevailing winds. Yet

another serious health concern that cannot be allowed to be imposed on the people of this area.

Certainly I, and many other older residents, need clean air that is not contaminated by coal fines and toxic particulates. With the inevitable rise in respiratory diseases and deaths that would follow on the heels of the mine, it is not only the company that would find itself facing class action, but also those who allowed the mine to go ahead since they could not claim they were unaware of the risks involved.

The beauty of the Southern Highlands and the safety of its wildlife will be severely impact on.

Increased traffic, heavy trucks and machinery clogging up the roads, the removal of trees, both dead and living, which provide habitat for wildlife, including threatened species; coal dust and diesel emissions, increased noise, eight one-kilometre-long coal trains roaring through the lovely little village of Robertson, shaking the homes of the people who live there as they break the peace and quiet of the night – all these things will degrade the lives of ordinary people who came here for peace and quiet and fresh air. No-one would have moved here had they known a coal mine was being planned. No-one will come here if it goes ahead.

Hume Coal's mine would shackle the Southern Highlands to a dying industry, one which is opposed by the vast majority of Australians.

It is widely accepted by industry pundits that the heyday of the coal industry is over. Banks are refusing to lend to coal companies because they know there is little chance of getting their money back.

According to an article in the Sydney Morning Herald dated 1st June 2017, "Investors are forward looking by nature and most of the world's listed thermal coal miners are in bankruptcy protection, after failing to anticipate that air pollution, climate change and technology would have demand for their products slump." (*Withdrawing from Paris agreement hurts the US more than anyone*, Kate Mackenzie). In November 2015 China announced it would not be opening any new coal mines for three years and was shutting down 1000 coal mines to help tackle their pollution problems. A 20th January 2017 article in the Sydney Morning Herald's Business Day was headed, "China cancels 103 coal plants".

The Southern Highlands would be ruined for a failing industry that, according to economists, would run at a loss and would give the NSW economy little return.

As a grandmother to a beautiful three-year-old girl, I grow increasingly despairing at the way governments are turning a blind eye to **climate change**, talking much but doing little while the world my grand daughter will inherit becomes hotter and hotter and water and food security become more precarious. I am not alone in this. There is widespread community and voter opposition to coal, acknowledged by all but the most hardened climate sceptics as the main culprit in global warming.

Some governments are doing better than others. The ACT is aiming for 100 per cent renewables by 2020, while South Australia is likely to have exceeded a 50 per cent share in the 2016-17 year, at least eight years earlier than scheduled, the report said. Victoria is aiming for a 25 per cent renewables share in 2020 and rising to 40 per cent five years later, up from 16 per cent last year.

NSW was running at a 12 per cent share in 2016, lagging all states but Queensland with its 5 per cent share. This is not a good look for our government. Permitting the establishment of yet another new coal mine, especially one that despoils a famous and

much-loved area like the Southern Highlands, will seriously cement its place as the State To Be If You're A Climate Change Denier or a coal company with a dubious reputation.

I say "dubious" because I feel there are questions hanging over the **trustworthiness – or otherwise – of Hume Coal**.

A quick check of Hume Coal – or POSCO, to give it its correct name – does not inspire one with confidence. It has been accused of:

- Human rights abuses in India (*The Price of Steel" Human Rights and Forced Evictions the POSCO-India Project*, <https://business-humanrights.org/>)
- Forced labour in Uzbekistan (*POSCO Unit Admits Using Cotton from Forced and Child Labour*, The Wall Street Journal August 13 2014)
- Systematic bid rigging in South Korea (*Daewoo, POSCO E&C fined for bid-rigging again*, The Korean Times)
- Corruption in Vietnam (*Former POSCO E7C exec sentenced to 30 months in jail for corruption*, english.yonhapnews.com.kr).

This is not a company I would wish to see operating in the Southern Highlands, or anywhere else in NSW for that matter.

Recommendation

An August 11, 2016 article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* by Peter Hannam ran as its heading: *POSCO to lose money on Hume Coal, should snap up cheap assets instead* and goes on to say that:

A new coal mine planned for the NSW Southern Highlands would lose money on every tonne produced and clock up a net cost to the owner of more than half a billion dollars, two new reports say.

(<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/posco-to-lose-money-on-hume-coal-should-snap-up-cheap-assets-instead-reports-20160810-gqp2on.html>)

I would recommend to the NSW government, in light of all the objections listed above, to listen to the voices of its citizens, to be aware of the community's strong objection to new coal mines and its fears and concerns regarding climate change, and to **deny the application** of POSCO/Hume Coal to establish a mine of any description in the NSW Southern Highlands.

Yours sincerely

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