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Attn: Executive Director, Resource Assessments Department of  
Planning and Environment  
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Sydney NSW 2001

## **This is a submission to the Berrima Rail Project EIS. SSD 7171 and the Hume Coal Project EIS 7172**

I object to this project for the following reasons.

Six years ago, my wife and I moved from Sydney to the beautiful heritage village of Berrima. Every weekend we observe Berrima playing host to well over a thousand visitors.

People come from Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong to experience the clean air and colour of the seasons. We are fortunate to live here but the visitors are also fortunate to have the beautiful highlands within a ninety minute drive.

Almost three years ago, Hume Coal, a subsidiary of the Korean steel maker Posco, released its Preliminary Environmental Assessment to build a coal mine under the green hills and pastures of Sutton Forest. Unbelievably, Hume Coal chose Berrima for its above ground heavy industrial site, crushing, washing, stockpiling and loading of coal at the rail loop only two kms from the idyllic village of Berrima.

Three months ago, in its EIS, Hume Coal all but chose to ignore that Berrima and its neighboring villages of Medway and New Berrima existed. The three villages, all within a few kms of this monstrous industrial project, have a combined population of 1369.

**1369** invisible people to breath and live with one of Hume Coal's filthiest of by-products, 2.5 micron dust, deemed by the World Health Organisation as having no safe level of ingestion.

Hume Coal has failed to acknowledge the importance of this unique, historic village as a magnet to tourism in the Southern Highlands; an attraction that would certainly be lost in the event of Berrima becoming another mining town.

So why does Hume Coal choose to ignore the three villages? As with many things Hume chooses to ignore, it was certainly intentional because it has no answers; Hume understands the extreme S – S/W winds that batter the villages sometimes for weeks on end and that it can do nothing to prevent the spread of fine coal dust to properties and people's lungs.

Hume knows that its ugly infrastructure 2 to 4 km from the villages will mean the loss of the rural identity that surrounds the villages; its pathetic attempt to hide its mess with a perimeter of trees might work for traffic on Medway Rd but certainly will not work for views at a distance. In the event of the mine proceeding these trees will serve to change the landscape forever.

As sometimes with residential developments, Hume Coal should be required to create illuminated opaque profiles of every piece of infrastructure proposed for the public to truly understand the impact it will impose on the landscape prior to any further consideration. Hume would appeal against the cost – look at the cost Hume proposes on our community.

The government cannot just accept Hume's hollow claims of "minimal" and "no effect". The Government must consider the future and the interests of the entire Southern Highlands community, not just the balance sheet of a foreign company and a few relatively short term jobs.

The Department must ask, why, when the financial viability of this mine is so borderline, is Hume Coal proceeding? We know China and India are both reducing their dependence on coal owing to pollution and the increase in health problems with their people. The decrease in demand by the world's two largest consumers will only reduce coal prices making this mine even less competitive. This is 2017 and we know the trends.

### ***Imagine this scenario of the future:***

Back in 2018, the NSW Government consented to grant a mining license to Posco.

But now Posco is able to buy better quality coal on the world market far cheaper than it can produce it. Hume Coal has never made money and Posco decides to close its white elephant the Hume Coal Project. Owing to its huge investment and the cost of remediation, it decides to put the mine into "care and maintenance" indefinitely. The initial project life of 23 years now goes out the window. Posco looks in vain for a buyer; of course, there are no buyers for a white elephant. Perhaps it could be sold to a company created intentionally to strip assets and go into receivership. After Posco has transferred its capital loss to another Australian venture it will be the people of NSW and particularly the Southern Highlands that will have to live with the mess.

...Because of costs, Posco has never made a profit, therefore Posco has never paid tax, in fact Posco now has a huge tax loss. Therefore the Australian tax payer has to pay for Posco's misadventure. Family businesses, some new, some established for decades have been driven from the area and no longer add to the welfare of the community. Unlike as with Hume's great job promise, jobs have actually disappeared partly because of the two-speed economy experienced in most mining areas, unemployment is on the rise..... Depleted water tables, long ago, led to a moratorium on new bores, agricultural businesses which may have started up and never did.

Yes, this is a scenario, but with a very real chance of happening because this is a changing world and we know the trend. Power stations are on the threshold of new technology. Investors in coal fired power stations are becoming harder to find.

## **Back to 2017**

So how could Hume prevent this financial disaster? Easily, it is obvious it doesn't build a mine as per the EIS. Once the mining lease is approved and the Southern Highlands is accepted as a coal mining region, it lobbies the Government into moving the goal posts. The method of mining, extending the mine lease area, e.g. Bulga, legislation to change the access laws. Only a mining company could complete this list of improvements to its bottom line.

Why would the NSW Government risk destroying the sustainable future of this unique area for a project that makes no sense?

To approve this mine is a huge risk and one which only the most desperate of gamblers would bet on.

The NSW Government should be responsible and not gamble on our future.

**The Hume project is extremely risky and should be rejected.**

Sincerely.

Rod Blay

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rod Blay', written over the printed name.

*I have not made a reportable political donation.*