

25<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

I write in response to the EIS submitted by Hume Coal for the Hume Coal Project and the associated Berrima Rail Project.

I strongly object to the development of the Hume Coal project and ask that Project approval be refused in all respects. My objections run at various levels and I categorise and summarise as follows

### **Global Perspective**

Australians hold themselves as presenting as a Tier 1 country and supportive of values that endeavour to lead the world. As a middle level power we must stand as a leader and not as a follower. Allowing development of new coal mines today in the clear knowledge of the visible long term structural decline in coal demand driven by the rise in energy efficiency and competitive renewable resources is a travesty of those values and an insult to the global community and to the health of the planet.

Climate change is widely reported as the biggest threat to wealth, health and wellbeing in the 21st century and burning coal is one of the major contributors. The effects stretch across issues such as population disruptions due to sea level rise, infrastructure upgrade burdens, death and sickness as disease ranges modify, and societal stress in accommodating relatively rapid environmental changes. We have a duty to ensure even the small amount of coal based carbon in Hume Coal's proposal remains safely locked in the ground.

I believe the Greenhouse Gas Emission figures in the EIS dramatically understate the contribution from the Project since the data does not account for the fact that the coal will be burned. The coal will be burned as part of the steel making or energy making processes and consequent emissions will be substantially (order of magnitude) above the quoted numbers. The quoted data is unrealistic and gives a false picture of the Greenhouse effect of the proposed mine.

### **National/Regional Perspective**

Mining is not a large employer and overseas ownership removes many service and support costs in debt funding, engineering and procurement to other countries. The closure of Berrima mine, imminent closure of Tahmoor mine and publicized financial strains at other Illawarra mines illustrate that even these established (sunk cost) mines are low profit operations at best so direct contributions by Hume Coal to the Australian economy are fragile and I argue that are in fact negative when considered with the affected value of water, reduced agricultural production over the lease and water drawdown affected area, wealth destruction from reduced land values, and community wellbeing flow-on costs.

There is a rapid increase in goods and services demand to support Sydney and to sacrifice water resources from agriculture and residential areas in favour of support for Korean steel plants is ludicrous.

There is a major risk of Approval "Creep" with this project. This is a well-documented problem with low profit and difficult mines. For example, seeking and gaining approval by variations to original conditions has happened at other Illawarra mines in lease zone

extensions under the previously excluded Sydney water catchment area. Simple operational comparison of this project with the many efficient, profitable underground mines in Australia lead to an inevitability of Hume Coal begging politicians for amendments and them being granted.

## **Water**

Water is a far more valuable commodity to local residents and businesses and to metropolitan Sydney than royalty payments and a few mining jobs. Water necessarily pumped from the mine will remain contaminated and flow onto the Warragamba Dam. The loss of underground aquifer storage reduces the resilience of the already stressed Sydney water supply catchment

Aquifer drawdown in the Hume Coal lease is evidenced by the history of the old Berrima Mine as well as the extensive independent modelling that has been undertaken. Similar drawdowns in the more urbanised and intensively farmed areas within and around the lease area will affect employment, productivity and tax receipts. This needs to be explored in more detail prior to any approval.

While the proposed mining technique does not lead to collapse of the mined cavity the evolved practice at Berrima became one of removing pillars to release locked coal and I am concerned this practice, which leads to surface subsidence will become a standard operating procedure in the chase for profitability. Mining techniques that allow collapse of the mined cavity have a long history in the Illawarra. Evidence from Cataract River and Waratah Rivulet shows a high risk of cracking extending to the surface thence leaching surface water down to mine levels and probable/certain contamination before pump out to rivers and on to Warragamba. Dilution is not a tier 1 remedy when elimination of the risk is available.

## **Wellbeing of local residents**

Unlike the earlier generation of mines in the Hunter Valley, Bowen Basin, La Trobe Valley this mine is being built in an rural-urban area with established populations, infrastructure and businesses in place.

The financial stress of fighting Hume Coal's proposal is well known from community fundraising efforts and is understated in its effect. People are protecting their carefully planned financial futures in dealing with Hume Coal. Apart from direct cash costs and time spent there has been substantial reduction in land values, the principal asset allowing residents to secure full or partial independence from reliance on the public purse. The mental and physical stress in comprehending, analyzing and dealing with the many facets and ramifications of proposals such as this is evidenced to me in the many anecdotes and stories of angst and worry that circulate around meetings, private gatherings, pubs, restaurants and coffee shops in the community. There are consequent State and Federal government costs in healthcare, pensions and facilities. This will continue for many years if the project proceeds. I urge reviewers to model the cost impost on governments.

## **Summary**

A wider and more sophisticated interpretation of "the public good" is required in evaluating and "scoring" this Hume Coal proposal. A current royalty program and a few local jobs are no longer sufficient. Long term and legacy effects on people, economics and the

environment across the region, nationally and globally, are well understood by the modern public and need to be considered and publically reflected in any decision.

The mine footprint is both a developed area and part of the Sydney water catchment – in this area of NSW, water is vastly more important than coal and the project must be stopped.

I urge the Government to reject this project to ensure Sydney, Goulburn and Southern Highland water security is the highest priority and to ensure that the interests of those who have diligently and patiently developed the extensive infrastructure in the region can continue their lives and livelihoods without this nonsensical and low value project.

David Williamson  
Exeter, NSW 2579