

To Whom It May Concern

Battle for Berrima

My son and partner bought a property in Berrima some years ago for a more peaceful life. This is how I became aware of Hume Coals mine proposal.

1. There is a worry that the local drinking water would be affected also contamination of watercourses by coal particulates. Hume Coal admit that groundwater bores will be affected and could run dry or be seriously compromised. They also admit to a 90m drawdown and could extend 5km beyond the mine an area of over 300 sq.km. The Uni NSW says the groundwater will be lowered by up to 150m over an area of 200 sq. km. So it looks like groundwater will be depleted enormously for people living within that area, for whatever usage they might want it. That is not acceptable.
2. Toxic rejects from the mining process will be pumped back underground and could mix with groundwater and that of the Sydney water catchment with which the mine is located. Their plan to re-inject the coal slurry from the washing process into underground voids beneath the aquifer system could create serious pollution for the millions who share the catchment. They can't say that it isn't possible or guarantee that it won't happen and if it does what a catastrophe for Sydney. If there is the slightest chance then we shouldn't take the risk.
3. It is frightening to think that a six storey high, 800m long stockpile of coal will be exposed to the winds for the 20 years of the mine operation. Coal train movements will add extra time to travel for locals, but worse than that the coal dust that blows off the wagons as they pass will affect peoples health and wellbeing, such as has happened along the coal train lines in Newcastle. The extra time involved for locals trying to go about their business, being held up at crossings for at least three minutes each time a train crosses is unacceptable.
4. When the coal dust blows over Berrima and is absorbed into the beautiful Sandstone buildings there, Tourism will be affected. Who wants to visit a town where the buildings are covered in black coal soot, also the flora and fauna will be affected, there are platypus in the river in Berrima. Jobs will be lost and businesses will close. I lived in a mining town in Wales, UK as a child and remember the subsidence that people were affected by, also the health of the miners and their families who lived near the mine itself. I'm aware that Hume Coal says they'll take just 35% of the coal so subsidence won't be an issue. There are two problems with this argument. Other miners say that, even with that plan, subsidence will be an issue because subsidence is always an issue and Hume Coal's mining technique is un-tested, experimental, and it has an inadequate understanding of local geology because they have been unable to access land in key parts of the mining lease to complete tests (mainly in Sutton Forrest where landowners have successfully fought the company off). Secondly, because the mine plan is financially unviable already, it is highly likely that if Hume Coal receives approval it will seek to expand the mine, change the technique from underground to open cut, or request approval to take more than 35% of the coal reserves. That would lead to subsidence which would damage local water courses. Mining in the Hunter Valley started underground. Now, we see the results of typical coal mining company strategies and the area has been laid waste through open-cut mining, damaged aquifers and water courses, and massively increased dust particulates and the associated health impacts. Why should normal everyday Australians be subjected to these threats when they live in a beautiful, healthy environment, which they chose for that reason, be subjected to this. It's un-Australian.