

My name is Jennifer Hardiment. I have been a resident and worked in the Southern Highlands for the past 15 years. I intend to remain in this area for possibly the rest of my life. I am concerned about Posco and the proposed development and mining in this area. It will greatly affect the residents, the community and our whole economic and agricultural way of life. The mine and its effects, whilst it may continue for a period of up to 19 years—the impact and long term damage will be permanent, and for very little economic gain for the greater community and the following generations. It will only fill the coffers of a few greedy people, damaging our long term economic and environmental future. My concerns are as follows:

**Traffic:**

There will be additional traffic delays at level crossings. (ES3.3)

The rail route of the 4 daily coal trains from the Hume Coal mine and 4 back to the mine will involve 17 level crossings in the Southern Highlands and down the escarpment on the route to Port Kembla.

1. The addition of the Hume Coal trains propose an extra 24 minutes of closures at rail level crossings each and every day
2. Resulting in daily closures at rail crossings rising from 69 minutes every day to 93 minutes or more than one and a half hours daily.
3. Major rail crossings to be impacted include those at Robertson and on Sheepwash Road. This results in nearly a 30% increase in total time that rail crossings are closed every day. The Hume Coal proposal presents unacceptable impacts on emergency vehicles including Fire brigades, ambulances, police and other critical community services, that in turn, results in a reduction of our lifestyle and well being.

**Water**

The Hume Coal Proposes 93 Bores on 71 properties- which will be affected by water draw-down. The impact on bores will remain for between 36 to 65 years, after mining ceases, if indeed they ever do recover. There is evidence at the Thirlmere Lakes, that the adverse impact on underground mining has wrecked the lakes (Historical evidence is available) and the impact on the flora and fauna has been adverse.

The Hume Coal Mining proposal is located within the Sydney Water Catchment, which services the Sydney metropolitan basin.

1. Treatment and release into Oldbury Creek of surplus on-site mining water in years when above average rain falls, as per this last year (ES4.1.1) so, if there is any discharge into the surface or ground water systems in the Sydney Water Catchment, then the applicant must demonstrate that the development has “either a neutral or beneficial impact on water quality”.
2. Water used to wash coal and residual “spoil”, which will be pumped back underground into mine voids, has the potential to impact groundwater systems. (ES41.1.1)

Therefore potential impacts of the Hume Coal proposal on water and the Sydney Water Catchment must be considered within the context of the widely accepted ‘Precautionary Principle” (a fundamental principle of ecologically sustainable development and a benchmark used in the assessment of planning in NSW.

It states:

“Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:

careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment; and an assessment of risk weighted consequences of various options.

It is well known and documented that the Southern Highlands has some of the most pure aquifers and artesian water. During the drought of a few years ago-the Southern Highlands

has been able to supply the residents of Goulburn with clean drinking water when Goulburn ran out. (see footnote references and hyperlinks <sup>1</sup>). Any thing that could put this most precious commodity at risk should not be allowed. We can live without profits for a few, live without electricity, coal mining, steel etc, BUT WE CANNOT SURVIVE without water and food which relies on irrigation with clean available water.

### **Noise Impact**

Little is mentioned the EIS of noise impacts on the township of Berrima. There was a noise reading taken in New Berrima of 75dB, however this is close to the existing Boral Cement works and does not reflect what potential noise impacts there will be for the villages of Medway and Berrima. ES4.5

### **Air Quality and Light Spill from the Mine Site**

Potential coal dust and diesel emissions, which are detrimental to air quality for the residents of Berrima, New Berrima and Medway Villages, as well as Bowral, Burradoo and Moss Vale. The Southern Highland has a reputation for Strong westerly winds. The coal dust will not only pollute the air, making it unbearable for the residents, but given that particle size could well be far below the Government level of 10 microns (potentially as small as 2.5 microns) which is able to be taken well down into the lungs and into the blood stream-not only in human beings but also into the livestock and food products (such as milk and meat-both famous farm produce of the Highlands) resulting in pollution in our food chain. This pollution will also damage the agricultural products of the region (wine, olives, fruit, vegetables etc). This region is a renown area for tourists and also for sustainable agriculture and tourism. They come for the food experience and clean air. Local produce is of the highest quality. Any pollution will not only affect the tourist industry but also the small local residents who produce food items for all the markets which thrive in this region (also a tourist attraction). The only way Berrima and even the other villages in this region survive and employ local people, is through tourism, local produce and craft. If this sustainable cottage industries, produce is threatened, peoples existence will also be threatened. The REALLY long term disadvantage will affect the employment and future of many generations of residents and their children for more than the 19 years of the mines' life and the 300 to 400 people that are proposed to work this mine. Given that most operations of the mines are now automated, I suspect that the number of the employees for the mine has been over estimated. We have the Tahmoor colliery just up the road and that is an example of what we do not want.

### **Environmental**

The Hume Proposal to remove 64 paddock trees and 17 dead trees, will reduce the habitat for threatened species. ES4.4 Our area is an area of fantastic wildlife. We are an area where Koalas are thriving and increasing, our bird-life is stunning, kangaroo and wallaby species abound. Whilst driving into work I am able to see the Koalas, wallabies and kangaroos in the paddocks and ovals in Mittagong. We cannot lose this rare and abundant wild life.

### **POTENTIAL FOR THE MINE TO BE EXPANDED IN THE FUTURE**

The Hume Coal EIS provides no assurance that once approved, the company or another coal miner will not seek to expand the mine beyond the current proposed scope articulated in the proposal. If this mine is approved then the potential for the mine to be expanded in the future cannot be discounted and indeed Stage 2 mine expansions are common where a coal mine has been approved, particularly in a green field site.

Once this infrastructure is in place additional future applications could seek new forms of coal mining processes to remove remainder coal, such as long wall or even open cut coal mining. Hume EIS is proposing 2 separate stock piles for both coking coal and thermal coal with a third stock pile of toxic rejects stored above ground for the first 18 months/2 years of the

mines' operation, again subject to the prevailing winds and distribution throughout the shire and beyond. There is no EIS mention of mitigation measures to prevent particulates and toxic materials from this stockpile causing air contamination or pollution. (see *Air Quality and Light Spill from Mine Site* previously).

### **Economic Concerns**

This amount would provide less than three days of the total revenue required to operate Sydney trains (\$6.13 million per day average Sydney Trains Annual report 2014)

Hume has revealed that they will mine both coking (55%) and thermal coal (45%) and despite saying for more than two years that the purpose of the proposed mine is to obtain high quality coking coal for overseas export and offshore production of steel, the Hume Coal EIS confirms that the company is now seeking to extract thermal coal for sale. The EIS also confirms that Hume Coal seeks to sell the thermal coal on undisclosed local and other markets. The fact that the coal will be exported overseas for steel production means that there will be little or no benefit to our local and domestic market. Our struggling steel industry will be put under further pressure and once our coal is sold off or owned and mined by a foreign company will we have to purchase our resource back at greatly reduced prices? Further destroying our industries and way of life?

### **Other Concerns**

What will be done to assure people, whose land is directly affected by the Hume Coal mine proposal that they will be adequately compensated for the stress, loss of lifestyle, income, and/or failure of water bores? Who is the arbitrator in such cases and are there any rights of appeal?

There is also potential health impacts not addressed in the Hume Coal Project such as potential risk of death and injuries to miners, road and rail accidents increased by potential increases in traffic/rail movements.

Mental health, anxiety and depression associated with changes in the social fabric/amenity and overall environment for close by townships and residents directly affected by the mine proposal i.e. Berrima, New Berrima, Medway and the residents of Sutton Forest – under which the mine will be constructed.

The proposal as developed by Hume Coal represents a poor economic return The proposal as developed by Hume Coal represents a poor economic return with incremental (economic) benefit for NSW in 2016 dollars for the 19 years of operation of only approx. \$15 million per annum. (EIS Appendix Q page 40)

During the life of the mine, what parameters dictate the location of ventilation shafts in respect to safe distances from residential and built-up communities?

During the life of the mine, can it be guaranteed that coal will not be transported by road?

Given the unique geological structure of the Hawkesbury Sandstone in the coal seam, how can the mine proceed safely, without impacts on land owners in areas that have not had exploratory bores drilled? Even though these areas are within the mine's exploration licence.

There is also the final question of what will happen in the future when the mining is finished, and the inevitable subsidence of the ground occurs? Who will be responsible for the repair of the area? The mining areas around Port Macquarie subsided, leaving the residents subject to flooding. It was not until the main road began to buckle due to this subsidence that relevant authorities finally admitted that there was a problem and were forced to act and repair the damage. Will Hume be responsible for fixing the problem? Will the company be sold off with the new owners shirking any responsibility for the damage? Or will the company/companies go into convenient receivership and we find that there will be no available funds to remedy the problem leaving the residents and Southern Highlands damaged beyond repair, as has

happened in so many places?

### **Recommendations**

I strongly recommend that the Hume Proposal be rejected due to these concerns. The overall benefit(?) of the Hume Proposal is negligible in comparison to that which will be lost. The benefit of Hume's Proposal is to benefit only a very few greedy people, and only a very few workers. It will not be of any real benefit to the wider community and will jeopardize many more people and their livelihoods. In the long term it will endanger the environment, people and their childrens' livelihoods, our own industries, our lifestyles, and particularly the most important necessities for our existence- agriculture and water.

Since most of the coal products are to be sold overseas – why would anyone want to let any one cause such long lasting devastation, threatening our existence and future well being for a very few measly dollars and benefiting so very few people?

The potential for more passive production of energy sources for ourselves and for the benefit of our communities are available. These will not threaten any of our unique inheritance of Land Care and environment. The coal will still be there for future generations should they need it and they also might find much safer and less damaging means to extract it.

Thanking you.

Jennifer Jane Hardiment

1. <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/water/sdwc05chapter3.pdf>

<https://www.commercialrealestate.com.au/news/pristine-mountain-sanctuary-has-a-business-ready-to-be-tapped/>

<http://www.highlandsbeverages.com.au/>

<http://www.southernhighlandnews.com.au/story/1761349/>