

Dr David Elliott
Mr Michael Ellis
254 Oldbury Road
SUTTON FOREST NSW 2577

18 June 2017

Clay Preshaw
Director of Recourse Assessments
Department of Planning & Environment

Dear Mr Preshaw

OBJECTION – THE HUME COAL PROJECTS: HUME COAL PROJECT (SSD 7172) & BERRIMA RAIL PROJECT (SSD 7171)

At the invitation of the Department of Planning & Environment (DPE) we attended the Hume Coal Projects' public information session at Exeter Hall on 27 April 2017.

We were encouraged to hear at the public information session that the DPE is seeking independent expert advice on key aspects of the proposal, including for the groundwater and the social and economic impacts; and that these expert reports will be made available to the Planning Assessment Commission and the public for consideration. However, we wish to express our objection to this major coal mine proposal for the reasons below.

This major coal mine proposal is not supported by our local council, the Wingecarribee Shire Council, our affected neighbours in Berrima and Sutton Forest or us; because it would have unacceptable negative heritage, groundwater, economic and social impact in the locality.

Land zoning – E3 Environmental Management

The majority of the project area is zoned under the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010 (WLEP 2010) as E3 Environmental Management. The objectives of this zone include:

- To protect, management and restore areas with special ecological, scientific, cultural or aesthetic values.
- To provide for a limited range of development that does not have an adverse effect on those values.
- To encourage the retention of the remaining evidence of significant historic and social values expressed in existing landscape and land use patterns.
- To minimise the proliferation of buildings and other structures in these sensitive landscape areas.
- To provide for a restricted range of development and land use activities that provide for rural settlement, sustainable agriculture, other types of economic and employment development, recreation and community amenity in identified drinking water catchment areas.

- To protect significant agricultural resources (soil, water and vegetation) in recognition of their value to Wingecarribee's longer term economic sustainability.

This major coal mine project is incompatible with the particular nature of the existing land use of the locality and the objectives of the E3 Environmental Management zoning. The underling management principles for the E3 Environmental Management zoning is to preserve the rural landscape character of the area and its significant cultural and aesthetic values.

We made Sutton Forest our home because of its unique environmental heritage and the protection provided by the local planning controls. However, a major coal mine in this locality would severely negatively impact this cultural landscape and not be consistent with the objects of the E3 Environmental Management zoning.

Environmental Heritage

The locality of the project area is primarily a pastoral landscape containing a unique concentration of local and state items of environmental heritage, which is also listed by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) as the Exeter/Sutton Forest Cultural Landscape.

The heritage values of the locality have been identified on the State Heritage Register (SHR) through the listing of Hillview c1872-1899 (SHR no. 442), Oldbury Farm c1827 (SHR no. 488), Golden Vale (SHR no. 489) and Whitley (SHR no.504). In addition, it is likely that the locality is of state historical significance as a place of early exploration beyond the limits of the Cumberland Plan in 1798, and of early settlement and pastoralism from 1819 onwards, the evidence of which remains legible in the pattern of land use today.

The use of Hillview, Sutton Forest, as the governors' summer residence 1879-1957 and the influence of that use render the locality unique. The physical evidence in the unique concentration of so many 19th century buildings, humble cottages, modest farmhouses through to grander houses and gardens; including Golden Vale and Whitley imbue the locality with a high degree of historical importance.

Important 20th century houses with gardens designed by Paul Sorensen and Claude Crowe are within the wider pastoral landscape; include Mereworth, Rosedale and Invergowie. The proposed aboveground coal mine operations would physically negatively impact the aesthetic heritage values ascribed to the historic pastoral property Mereworth.

This major coal mine project is incompatible with the heritage values ascribed to this locality, because of the adverse effects to the groundwater. The groundwater underpins the land use activities of the area, which in turn contribute to the cultural and aesthetic values of the items of environmental heritage and there wider cultural landscape.

One of the most alarming aspects of the proposal is the extent of groundwater drawdown, the uncertainty surrounding the full impact on the aquifer, and ultimately the impact on the character of this likely state significant cultural landscape.

Adverse impacts to groundwater

We hold bore licences at 254 and 270 Oldbury Road, Sutton Forest for domestic use. These bores are at depth 139 metres and 114 meters, respectively. As there is no town water supply available in this area, both bores are used to supply good quality drinking water at each property.

This major coal mine proposal would cause long term and irreversible harm to a world-class aquifer that sits in Hawkesbury sandstone above the coal seam.

As previously mentioned, one of the most concerning aspects of the proposal is the extent of groundwater drawdown and uncertainty surrounding the full impact on the aquifer. Without access to good quality groundwater for drinking, our enjoyment and use of the land would be severely adversely affected.

Economic and Social Impacts – reduction of land values.

At the Hume Coal Projects public information session by the DPE on 27 April 2017 local landowners spoke about their hardship, as a direct result of their land values negatively affected by the proposed Hume Coal Projects.

Like many residences in the locality, we bought in this area because of its attractive gardens and wider beautiful cultural landscape. This cultural landscape is arguably the Southern Highlands' most valuable asset and its visual identity, which makes the Southern Highlands and the locality a desirable place for tourism, weekend destinations, social events and celebrations, such as weddings.

If this major coal mine proposal is approved there would be unacceptable economic and social impact in the locality. The juxtaposition of the locality as a tourism destination and a major coal mine are incompatible – its visual identity as a scenic cultural landscape harmed.

The applications for the Hume Coal Projects should be refused because; the coal mine proposal does not comply with the objectives of the local planning controls; would have unacceptable negative heritage, groundwater, economic and social impact in the locality; would harm the aquifer and in turn harm the social fabric that underpins this community; and would harm this unique cultural landscape in the Southern Highlands of NSW.

Yours sincerely,

Dr David Elliott, david.elliott2@me.com
Mr Michael Ellis, michael.w.ellis@me.com

Cc: The Hon. Pru Goward, MP goulburn@parliament.nsw.gov.au
The General Manager, Wingecarribee Shire Council mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au
The Heritage Council of NSW heritage@heritage.nsw.gov.au