

## **This is a submission to the Hume Coal Project EIS. SSD 7172**

I have lived and worked in the Southern Highlands for almost thirty years. I object strongly to this project. I am concerned about the many possible detrimental effects on the local community and I believe the Hume Coal EIS is misleading.

### **Environment**

I have taught primary school students in a variety of communities within the Southern Highlands for many years and I know how deeply the local residents value this clean, green environment as a place to live, work and raise their families. The Hume Coal Project would have an enormous impact on the beautiful Southern Highlands, with myriad environmental issues involving water and air pollution, aquifer contamination, rock strata damage and negative impacts on flora and fauna. The Highlands is a very small region. The Hume Coal Project would have a major, concentrated effect on the area.

Hume Coal Mining proposal is located within Sydney Water Catchment. It has the potential to impact this critical water resource. Ninety-three bores on seventy-one properties would be affected by water drawdown. (ES4.1.2) It is expected that some bores may never fully recover. Water used to wash coal and residual 'spoil' would be pumped back into mine voids and has the potential to impact groundwater systems. (ES4.1.1) The plan to emplace washery rejects in the mined voids is a difficult and error prone process. Pumping the material is a significant engineering challenge that has not been dealt with in the EIS.

The Hume Coal EIS now proposes two separate stockpiles for both coking and thermal coal. A third stockpile of toxic mine rejects will be stored above ground for the first two years of the mine's operations. There are no details in the EIS on measures to prevent toxic particles contaminating the air.

The EIS makes limited mention of noise impacts on the Berrima, New Berrima and Medway townships. There are also potential coal dust and diesel emissions, which have the capacity to be detrimental to the air quality of residents of Berrima, New Berrima, Medway, Bowral, Burradoo and Moss Vale.

Residual or unavoidable impacts include the removal of sixty-four paddock trees and seventeen dead trees, which provide habitat for threatened species. (ES4.4)

### **Local Community Health and Economy**

There are many residents whose land is directly affected by the Hume Coal mine proposal. The stress and trauma over loss of lifestyle, loss of income and decreased land values should not be underestimated.

The Southern Highlands is a very popular tourist destination, particularly with visitors from Sydney, Wollongong and Canberra. There are many small businesses in the area that are involved in tourism, including boutique

accommodation, local growers (olives, cheese, berries etc.) wedding venues, vineyards, cafes and restaurants. The beautifully preserved Georgian town of Berrima is a popular weekend destination in its own right for both tourists and locals. The Hume Coal project has the potential to detrimentally affect our thriving tourism industry and irreparably damage the Southern Highlands clean, green 'brand'.

The EIS has suggested that the Hume Coal Mine will provide local jobs. I do not believe residents will be advantaged in this way. According to local recruitment agencies, the skilled workers required for this project would not be drawn from the local area. As to possible income for local accommodation providers, this seems odd. The vast majority of accommodation in the Highlands is of the boutique four and five star variety. Is this where Hume Coal is going to house their workers, or is the company more likely to build accommodation (and food outlets) on site?

### **Other Concerns**

- There has been a recent revelation that Hume will mine not only coking but also thermal coal. It seeks to sell thermal coal on undisclosed markets.
- There is potential for the mine to be expanded in the future. The Hume Coal EIS has provided no assurance that this will not happen once the project is approved. Stage 2 mine expansions are common in cases like this one.
- Can it be guaranteed that the coal will never be transported by road?
- There appears to be very little declared revenue that will be returned to NSW if the project goes ahead.

### **In Conclusion**

There is so much potential for irreversible damage to the Southern Highlands if this project goes ahead. I have spoken to countless residents who love this unique and beautiful region and who are deeply distressed by the Hume Coal Mine proposal. This is our home. I urge the Government to keep coal mining out of it by rejecting this flawed project.