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26 June 2017

NSW Government
Department of Planning and Environment

Dear Sir:

RE: Hume Coal Project EIS

This submission is made by myself in support of the proposed Hume Coal Development at Berrima.

I have considered the project described in the EIS documents, including the threats identified and the commitments made to control risks associated with the identified threats. I have also attended information sessions held by Hume Coal at their Mereworth property, and discussed concerns with staff and their consultants.

I did not support the first development proposal (longwall mining, together with a coal seam gas development proposal). Fortunately longwall mining is unsuited to the coal measures, and the coal deposits are essentially free from associated gas.

I am concerned that most opposition to the project is from people who fall into one of the following categories:

- Those opposed in principal to an extractive industry, and in particular, coal.
- Those individuals (often high net worth) who are opposed through self interest (NIMBY).
- Those who have not considered and competently assessed the detailed EIS documents including the threats and controls described in the documents, and who have been influenced by scare tactics and misinformation.

Submissions made by such people should be assessed against the reason behind their submission.

Hume Coal appear to have carefully considered the Southern Highlands environment, and have taken steps to plan the project to minimise its visual, noise, water and dust impacts. I support the proposed extraction method, which if properly implemented should control subsidence to levels where it does not create surface harm, and reduces the likelihood of damaging seals between aquifers.

Hume Coal's proposal to return waste solids to mined areas using an hydraulic backfill method is sound, and practiced in many underground mines. In fact the relatively shallow coal seam, and the fact that the backfill pipeline will be installed at a modest slope in the access decline should improve the operability of the pipeline – compared with deep mines where vertical backfill pipelines are installed (I have experience with design of such hydraulic backfill systems).

Venton & Associates

I note that Hume coal proposed to manage dust from coal wagons by introducing the first covered coal wagons to be operated in Australia. My current property boundary is adjacent to the main southern rail line that hauls limestone between Marulan, Moss Vale and coastal users – each train is followed by a cloud of fine limestone that blows onto my property – it would be good to see Hume Coal's initiative applied by other bulk rail freight transporters. I understand that Hume Coal will be purchasing modern diesel electric locomotives with improved fuel combustion and particulate controls compared with the old technology engines used elsewhere on the rail system.

The Southern Highlands community has been vocal with concerns about dust and other environmental issues. I note that such concerns were raised about the Berrima Cement works by residents of New Berrima several years ago. A community consultation process implemented by Boral, together with regular presentations on the quality of their emission controls was successful in demonstrating to residents that the compliance regime is effective and where specific issues exist it is usually possible for the Company and the Community to resolve those issues without having to resort to an increased compliance regime. I would note that the Berrima Cement Works is considered a good corporate citizen of the Southern Highlands, and I can see no reason that Hume Coal will be otherwise.

Finally it is important that the Southern Highlands economy is supported by other than tourism and wealthy retirees. Employment provided by the Hume Coal project will provide much needed employment in the region which will help stabilise its economy.

Having said that, community concerns regarding underground water supply and waste water disposal are valid, and should the development be permitted, appropriate controls and reporting obligations should be included as part of development consent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Venton', with a stylized, cursive script.

Philip Venton