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Attn.: Executive Director, Resource Assessments
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Submission to the Hume Coal Project SSD 7172

I object to the Hume Coal Project and hope that it will be rejected by the NSW Government.

I am a former resident of Sutton Forest and now live in one of the local towns in the area. I am opposed to the mine for many reasons but in this submission, I will concentrate on four areas of particular concern to me.

1. Water and our changing climate

Principally, I object to a new coal mine on the grounds that Australia is experiencing rapid climate change which is affecting our agricultural lands, our seas and our water resources. Australia is also one of the world's highest emitters per head of population. Each additional new coal mine seriously hinders our ability to meet the commitments we made to the Paris Climate Agreement.

The Southern Highlands is blessed with good agricultural land and a good water supply. But this may not always be so. It is becoming increasingly important to nurture our natural resources as we face a hotter climate and the need to feed a growing population.

At the local level, the question of water, its quality and availability, is the most pressing concern for residents.

The area has had good rainfall over the last 4 or 5 years but prior to that Goulburn was dry and required water from our local aquifers. Warragamba Dam was at an all time low just a few years ago. Drought will return and new water licenses are not available. Coal mining uses extraordinary amounts of water both to wash the coal and to dampen coal dust.

Hume Coal admits that landowners will be impacted by its need for their bore water. This impact will last for decades. The draw down of water bores in good years will affect local farmers but when the drought returns the impact on agricultural properties and land values will be immense.

Sydney Water can impose hefty fines on people entering their lands, on the pollution of creeks from sewerage, waste water run-off and inappropriate development. Hume Coal admits that it will need to occasionally pump mine water into Oldbury Creek (part of the catchment) risking toxic mine waste entering the catchment. It would seem that Hume Coal is seeking exemption from regulations which protect Sydney's water supply and to which we, the community, adhere.

Agriculture is an important component of this regions economy with 635 people employed in the sector.¹ According to Hume Coal, 300 jobs will be created in the mine's building phase, less will be required on an ongoing basis. Mining is heavily mechanised and uses robotics for many jobs. Many more people are being employed offsite rather than onsite in the most recent operations. The potential for local jobs with Hume Coal is insignificant when compared to agricultural work and agriculture depends upon water quality and availability.

2. Cultural heritage and tourism

The EIS seriously understates the true values of this region. There are at least 30 historic properties, including most of the buildings in Berrima, on the State Heritage Register within 5 km of the mine head.² Berrima, the town closest to the mine head, is a busy little village most days of the week, with tourists shopping, dining and visiting the local museums. The Southern Highlands is the perfect place to

¹ Wingecarribee shire: community profile. compiled from ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011 by .id. the population experts (<http://profile.id.com.au/wingecarribee/industries>)

² NSW State Heritage Register (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Heritage/.../stateheritageregister.htm)

hold weddings, conferences, and training weekends or just escape city life. The broad, green landscapes are enjoyed by all. Coal trucks, noise, dust and the risk of a future with parched landscapes will harm these local industries.

Tourism contributes to many of the 3812 people employed in retail and in the accommodation/food sector.³

Along with agriculture, tourism is an important component of the local economy which will be affected by the proposed mine. People employed in tourism related industries outnumber those employed in mining.

3. Our Community

Our community has been deeply affected by this proposal. I know landowners who have suffered financially and emotionally while trying to protect their properties. Hume Coal has not been transparent when purchasing property and has been aggressive when trying to enter some properties.

Sutton Forest is a high wind area. No matter how much water Hume Coal uses to dampen the coal piles around the mine head our communities will be affected by coal dust.

A number of petitions have been raised over the last 4 or 5 years and sent to the NSW Government with tens of thousands of people willing to put their names on a public document opposing the mine.

4. The Risk

I have read about two of POSCO's projects in India and West Papua.^{4, 5} They do not come here with a good environmental reputation. They have provided misleading information in their environmental impact statements and have colluded with officials to fast track clearances for a project. The Norwegian Central Bank pulled out of investing in the project in West Papua after POSCO lied about the proposed clearing of primary rain forests. In Orissa, India, the project was abandoned after collusion with officials was exposed and after disregarding the rights of local people and discounting protected species legislation.

This project puts at risk our clean environment and water resources; our existing local industries; it risks our health. Why should a foreign company, with a poor international reputation and little appreciation of our local area and its viable economy, be allowed to come here, admit that it may pollute our local water supply and that it will draw down the bores of many landholders, receive the support of the New South Wales Government?

Leave the coal at Sutton Forest in the ground and give future generations the option of using it if they ever need to do so and the climate permits.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Thompson

³ Wingecarribee shire: community profile. compiled from ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011 by .id. the population experts (<http://profile.id.com.au/wingecarribee/industries>)

⁴ Janaki Lenin. POSCO verdict: finally environmental justice in India. 8 april 2012 (www.firstpost.com/.../posco-verdict-finally-environmental-justice-in-india-269201.html)

⁵ Norway's Oil fund divests from Korea's POSCO ...(<https://www.environmental-finance.com/.../norways-oil-fund-divests-from-koreas-posco-and-daewoo.html>)