

Hume Coal Project

Thus is a submission on the Hume Coal Project.

I object to this project and recommend that it be rejected.

The Southern Highlands, essentially Wingecarribee Shire, is a pristine environment. This pristine environment promotes agriculture, viticulture, food, creative arts, gardens, tourism, events, cycling and other recreation activities. The Southern Highlands is known for its beauty, a key component of the Southern Highlands tourism image.

1.7 million people visit the Southern Highlands each year, with 1.2 million overnight stays, a little over 3,000 overnight stays every day. Destination Southern Highlands estimates that \$261 million in visitor expenditure each year supports 2,500 jobs across the Highlands, jobs that would otherwise not exist. Tourism also plays a fundamental role in shaping the image of the Highlands.

Weddings make up a niche component of tourism. Of \$261 million in visitor expenditure each year, Destination Southern Highlands estimates that \$33 million is from weddings, even before marriage equality. The Highlands hosted 1,100 weddings across 50 venues in 2015, with an average \$30,000 spend per wedding. Wedding guests need overnight accommodation and services such as taxis or hire cars. The wedding planners need florists and photographers, catering often is outsourced and party hire is flourishing.

Weddings as a niche capture the devastation that a coal mine would bring to the pristine environment of the Southern Highlands. Weddings and a coal mine do not mix. Nor does a coal mine mix with agriculture, viticulture, food, creative arts, gardens or cycling.

My submission is focused on the destruction of the pristine environment of the Southern Highlands that a coal mine would bring. Of course there are other impacts, notably impacts on the natural, heritage and cultural landscape, visual impacts, impacts on water resources, biodiversity impacts, noise impacts and traffic and transport impacts.

Plus already the social impact. Wingecarribee Shire Council has noted the existing physical and mental toll on residents, including anxiety, fear, angst, depression, traumatisation, helplessness, uncertainty and stress.

The Southern Highlands needs certainty, that there will be no coal mine.

My final point is about consent conditioning. As Wingecarribee Shire Council has suggested, no amount of tree screenings, barriers, making good, offsets, buybacks or any other conditions of consent can turn the Hume Coal Project into a no impact or low impact mine.

The Hume Coal Project must be rejected outright.

Alan Olsen
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