

371 Golden Vale Road,
Sutton Forest NSW 2577
28/7/17

Executive Director, Resource Assessments and Business Systems
Planning Services
NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Major project Assessment – Hume Coal Project
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001
Attention: Mr Clay Preshaw

Dear Mr Preshaw,

HUME COAL PROJECT

I am the co-owner of a farming property at 371 Golden Vale Road Sutton Forest. My husband Peter and I formed the Southern Highlands Coal Action Group in 2010 when we discovered that Anglo Coal had sold the exploration licence AUTH 349 to a consortium of Cockatoo Coal and POSCO who renamed the holding company Hume Coal Pty. Ltd.

Since then I've been heavily involved in the community campaign against Hume Coal and POSCO. It has been brutal, unrelenting, morale and energy sapping warfare for 7 years.

I've seen the social and community costs of this first hand and it is not pretty. Marriages under pressure, depression, excessive drinking, loss of confidence, fear, anxiety and medical problems. I've gone through periods of absolute despair myself wondering when it will all end.

To make matters worse, the company we are up against has no regard for the community, for ethics and morality, or the environment. I've attached a letter we sent to the Minister about POSCO's track record overseas under the 'Fit and Proper' clauses in the Mining Act. It says it all. Hume Coal's behaviour on the ground shows the same rotten culture that's endemic through its parent POSCO.

They actually denigrate and label landowners and local community members who oppose their plans as 'anti-coal activists' or 'anti-job activists', 'minority groups' and such like. They label our genuine protests as 'scare campaigns by local anti-coal activist groups' whilst claiming some are an 'uninformed and deliberately misleading group' (talking about Battle for Berrima). The list goes on.

Hume pumps out propaganda in the media at an unrelenting pace. The company propagates misleading information about the impacts of the project particularly relating to the groundwater and ridiculous claims about its benefits, particularly local jobs. Many locals don't know the difference.

Hume is sponsoring business awards, 'donating' money to local schools, community groups and charities in an apparent effort to divide the community. This has been successful in some instances but they have been publicly rejected in others. This behaviour has led to community division and conflict.

Over the seven years the local community has banded together to fight what we perceive as a destructive monster. We have had multiple arbitrations involving local landowners including ourselves where Hume has denied landowners legal representation, changed the goal posts seemingly at will and, in general, the arbitrators went along with it. Hume ignored significant improvements on our properties and demanded access without consideration for the law. Multiple court cases have ensued before we finally stopped them dead in their tracks with a win on appeal in the Land and Environment Court.

Through all of this the government has stood by and let it all happen in the name of 'process'. The Department of Resources and Energy has rejected documented evidence of Hume drilling where they are not entitled to right across the district. It ignored letters advising about approaches to landowners with historical bores that Hume wanted to access without any form of access arrangements in place. Complaints about a particular arbitrator's outrageous and bullying behaviour were rejected. There are more examples.

The scars that this has left on the community and the mistrust of politicians and bureaucrats can't be underestimated. No one believes a word they say. The system is completely slanted towards the miners and the miners know it. It's unfair, capricious and completely corrupted by the miners influence in the government at all levels.

The ridiculous penalties that the government recently legislated against protesters just makes the situation worse. These laws put people like my husband and our neighbours right in the firing line for a seven year jail term. Save for our court win, we would have prevented Hume having access to our property if it had tried to force its way on as it threatened to do to one of our neighbours. Which judge will enforce such draconian and authoritarian measures against retirees and generally law-abiding citizens?

We have pointed this out so many times, written submissions advising how it may be avoided through much more common-sense and robust evaluation, but generally to no avail. However, to be fair, the land access process was reviewed on our instigation and substantial improvements made. That's a credit to Minister Roberts. However, many of the inequities remain.

This process we are going through now beggar's belief. Locals and the government have known the issues with the pristine aquifer system for years and the destruction a coal mine would bring. It's a 'no-brainer'. My husband has had plenty of discussions with NSW Water, Ministers and bureaucrats about this over the years.

There's been no support for the community from any level of government through this whole debacle. It's led to a feeling of total isolation and rejection. People are just left to their own devices. The attitude of the government has been that community impacts only happen (if at all) when the project is approved. How wrong that is.

Communities also are expected to be able to understand highly technical subjects and respond to them quickly without the necessary expertise. We're just lucky in this area that we have resources and experienced business people who know how to tackle these things but it's taken a huge chunk out of many lives.

Most communities don't have these capabilities and the 'system' seems to rely on that fact. They get steamrolled. To get ready to respond to this EIS has taken research and preparation over a number of years.

We have seen the same impact in many other communities across NSW. We've seen the victimisation and bullying first hand. We've observed the despair, frustration and desperation. We've seen the alienation and bitterness towards the government and authorities. We've visited many of these communities more than once including Bylong, Gloucester, Wyong, Pillage, Gunnadah and the list goes on.

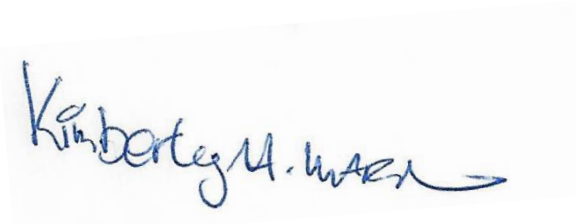
Everyone is in the same place and the government wonders why its lost so much support from rural communities. In the rush for mining royalties and 'jobs' the government and the bureaucrats seem to have forgotten about the sustainability of the communities and the environment. These myopic, short-term, decisions will come back to haunt NSW and Australia in the future.

In conclusion, why do we have to go through massive aggravation and expense refuting a highly risky mining proposal of no economic merit. A preliminary assessment could have been done years ago (as we suggested in submissions as far back as 2011) and the whole idea shelved. In the future, the

whole area needs to be ring-fenced from these sort of destructive activities. It makes no sense and has got to change.

I've run out of words and energy to express my frustration. Hopefully common sense will prevail and this project will be rejected out of hand. I also trust that the beautiful Southern Highlands will be protected from any more destructive mining proposals like this one in the future.

Now I can hopefully go back to being a wife and mother and enjoy all the things that have been put aside over the last seven years.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kimberley M. Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Kim Martin

Attachments