

The Old Rose Cottage



**P.O. Box 7061, Berrima, NSW 2577
3444 Old Hume Highway, Berrima
Tel/Fax: 02.4877 1508
savwest@bigpond.com**

Submission by Clive West (The Old Rose Cottage Berrima) Hume Coal EIS and Hume Coal Rail EIS June 2017

I wish to object to the Hume Coal proposal for a coal mine and associated rail works in the Southern Highlands.

Set out below are the grounds of my objection.

Destruction of the Rural Environment within close Proximity of Listed Heritage Items

I place a great deal of value on the heritage significance of our property and the heritage significance of the historic village of Berrima and the rural surrounds in which it is placed.

We purchased our property on the southern side of the river, in the protected rural surrounds of Berrima, in 2001. Since then we have spent more than \$1.5 million on the property, including an architect designed and heritage sensitive extension to the timber slab settler's cottage (Item I1382 in Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Wingecarribee Local Environment Plan 2010).

The proposed coal mine head and infrastructure area (117 hectares) is just 2 to 3 kilometres from the historic village of Berrima, and somewhat less from our property on the southern approach to the village.

The Berrima Conservation Area and the Berrima Landscape Conservation Area are both listed, respectively, as Items C148 and C1843 of Part 2 in Schedule 5 of the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010. As such they are listed under State legislation and form part of the State's Heritage Inventory. In addition, 17 items in Berrima are separately listed on the State Register, as Items of State Heritage Significance.

The village of Berrima and its rural surrounds is presently the subject of a resolution by Wingecarribee Shire Council to proceed with the process of having it listed as an Item of State Significance on the NSW Heritage List.

The earlier heritage studies of Berrima, and the current study undertaken by Colleen Morris, confirm the village as having very high heritage significance, both at the State and federal levels. Indeed, it is possible to envisage the day when the village is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, being the only surviving village based on a formal town plan from the period of "Convictism". Of the 53 planned towns in that early period, Berrima alone survives as a village that never developed beyond its rural nucleus.

The visual impact of the massive Hume Coal industrial complex that will be built on either side of the freeway along the Southern approaches to the village will severely detract from its rural environment and image. The Old Hume Highway to the South of the village is presently a two lane country road that passes through intact rural land.

The proposed rail bridge passing over the Old Hume Highway will be high at the point of intersection, and be flanked by very long embankments to attain the low gradient needed to haul the fully loaded carriages to that height. These embankments could extend for a kilometer or more on each side of the road, and will act as a huge visual barrier to the rural landscape on each side of the approach to the village.

The 117 hectare infrastructure site will operate 24 hours a day/7 days a week. At night it will be lit up and the night sky will all but disappear. This will be combined with the lit up site at Boral, with a cumulative impact that will destroy the sense of rural isolation that Berrima currently enjoys.

The Sutton Forest, Exeter and Berrima Cultural Landscape Study prepared by Colleen Morris highlights that Berrima cannot be considered in isolation, but as part of a cultural landscape that goes back to very early European settlement in the period of "Convictism". The impact on Sutton Forest of a major water drawdown and subsidence is, therefore, relevant to this larger heritage context. The long term loss of or damage to these heritage gems, with consequential loss of tourism, must be weighed up against the technical and financial risks associated with the projects. The loss of value to community assets if the mine proceeds will far outweigh any marginal financial benefits to the community and government which might questionably flow from the mine.

Personal Impact

We did not envisage a coal mine and associated works in close proximity to our property when we purchased and restored it. We had confidence in the long standing town planning regime which protected the village and its rural surrounds. This confidence has been seriously undermined by the scale and aggressiveness of the mining company's response to our community's resistance. The company has been proceeding as if the approvals are a foregone conclusion, and at the same time seriously disturbing our sense of security.

The projects, if they proceed, will detract from the amenity of our property, due to the noise, light and dust emanating from the construction and operational phases of the projects. We are particularly affected by winds from the South and West, where the infrastructure will be based. The company's measurements and projected volumes of noise, light and dust are not believable. This is because of the faulty manner in which they have been calculated, and the incorrect assumptions such as the ability to screen out an 800 meter 6 storey coal pile and a rail bridge with embankments that will dominate the skyline along the Southern approaches to the village.

I have been involved in the fight against the coal mine for almost 7 years, and it has proven to be taxing and traumatic as the sheer scale of the project and its proximity becomes apparent. There is also the concern that the company will "personalize" its attack on opponents, and that such an attack might draw me into it. This occurred with the two elderly farmers who were forced to pay several hundred thousand dollars in legal costs after they refused entry to the company's drilling team.

Water

Water is a key issue in the assessment of the project in several ways.

First, the volume of water to be extracted from the aquifer and pumped back into the "voids" as toxic slurry is huge. It is doubtful that the company will have sufficient licenses to meet its obligations under the 2012 NSW Aquifer Interference Policy.

Secondly, the company acknowledges that it will draw down water to such an extent that 93 bores on 71 properties above the mine will be seriously and negatively impacted. This is an unacceptable cost of the project. The risks involved are exemplified by the problems now encountered with the closed Medway mine. Because of the fractured geology of the aquifer, the closed Medway mine will continue to drain water from the aquifer in perpetuity, and this drainage cannot be remediated. As a consequence, the existing extraction rates by rural properties above the aquifer will no longer be sustainable. The closed Medway coal mine is also leaching toxic substances into the river, and this also cannot be remediated. If this is the case with a small mine, the likely impact on water and toxic seepage from a mine many times larger, using experimental mining techniques, will be far greater.

Thirdly, this particular aquifer constitutes an extremely important water reserve for Sydney. With climate change now recognised as a serious long term problem and Sydney projected to grow to between 7 and 8 million people within the life of the proposed mine (23 years), it would be foolhardy for the government to place this water security at risk.

Signed: Clive West, 29 June 2017