

My family have the privilege of living in Bowral in the beautiful Southern Highlands of NSW. We would like to purchase a property in Berrima or Exeter, so we can have our horses on our property, but are not willing to take the chance that the proposed Hume Coal Mine could be situated 2km from us, immediately in the direction from which the prevailing wind blows all year round is approved.

This mine poses both a direct and indirect threats to my family, our town and our region (Southern Highlands) that can't be ignored or denied irrespective of political leanings or predispositions with regards to Coal mining.

I would like to be clear from the start of this response. I am not against Coal mining (I believe we have not yet entered a phase in which reliance on coal can be circumvented technologically). I and my family are opposed to **THIS** coal mine in particular as proposed in the Environmental Impact Statement submitted by Hume Coal EIS 7171 and EIS 7172 for a Coal mine in the Southern Highlands and an associated extension to a railway line to service the proposed mine

The Southern Highlands has been a place of coal mining historically, this is a fact beyond dispute. It is now however, without equivocation, a locale built on tourism, viticulture (wine-making), Berry farming, animal husbandry, a very distinguished equine industry, food providers and high-end gastronomy and a place where literally thousands of weddings take place every year.

We will argue here that the only discernible benefit brought by having a new coal mine in the Southern Highlands (employment) is entirely offset by the risk to existing employment in the industries listed above and, furthermore that the direct and indirect risks to health as a consequence of this mine project proceeding in its proposed form makes any approval thereof both illogical and incomprehensible.

At the very heart of concerns from the industries listed above as being susceptible to the establishment of a new coal mine is the issue of water. The water drawdown in the submitted EIS will, by Hume Coal's own admission, affect 93 bores on 71 properties and the impact on these bores will remain for between 36 and 65 years (ES 4.1.2). Just this week Hume Coal has shifted the goal posts in their initial promises to land owners whose bores would be affected. Whereas previously Hume Coal had promised to drill the affected bores deeper, letters sent just this week past (mid June 2017) have revised that offer, instead now only financial compensation for the difference in power bills pre and post mining operations.

If nothing else this forewarns of a potential lack of honesty on the part of a company who we would need to inherently trust, being as it is that they will be operating in an area of extreme water sensitivity ie. the Sydney Water Catchment.

Considering both the location (Sydney Water Catchment) of this proposed mine and its scale there can be no doubt that Hume Coal's EIS should also be assessed at a federal level under the Water Trigger (The Water resources – 2013 EPBC Act amendment). This amendment establishes that "coal seam gas and large coal mining developments require federal assessment and approval if they are likely to have a significant impact on a water resource."

The guidelines to this amendment states that "an action is likely to have a significant impact on a water resource if there is a real or not remote chance or possibility that it will directly or indirectly result in a change to:

- the hydrology of a water resource; or
- the water quality of a water resource, that is of sufficient scale or intensity as to reduce the current or future utility of the water resource for third party users, including environmental and other public benefit outcomes, or to create a material risk of such reduction in utility occurring."

The Hume Coal EIS states that there will be Treatment and release into Oldbury Creek of surplus onsite mining water in years when above average rain falls (ES 4.1.1). Further, water used to wash coal and spoil is, per the submitted EIS intended to be pumped back underground into mind voids with the very real potential of impacting groundwater systems.

Added to this the fact that a significant portion of the area to be mined contains Hawkesbury Sandstone in the coal seam. How can this mine proceed safely in this scenario? Many land owners have yet to have exploratory bores drilled by Hume Coal, despite their being within the mine's exploration license, as such the facts presented in the EIS are incomplete.

The Precautionary Principle is widely held to be a benchmark in ecologically sustainable development. It states that where there is a lack of full scientific certainty that this fact CANNOT be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent potential environmental degradation. The Hume Coal EIS has not taken the Precautionary Principle into account in their assessment of effects to Sydney Water catchment.

Three Spoil Stockpiles are proposed by the EIS submitted by Hume Coal, one for metallurgical coal, one for thermal coal and one for toxic mine reject which will remain above ground for the first two years of the mine's operation. The EIS (E2.6) indicates the stockpile will have a capacity of 60,000 tonnes – this is estimated to be two coal stockpiles of 6 stories high at 600m in length adjacent (upwind) from the Hume motorway.

On almost any day of the year the prevailing Westerly wind blows across the site of these proposed stockpiles directly over the historic town of Berrima. With approximately 400 residents, a significant quantity of whom are retirees as well as the presence of a primary school (140 students) the effects of air borne particulate from both the coal as well as the toxic dump on the health of residents is a cause for significant concern.

Berrima and its immediate surrounds have, since the new Hume Motorway circumnavigated the town in 1989, become a high-end Wedding destination for both Sydney and Canberra residents. Two heritage churches (Anglican and Catholic) and the immediately located wineries (Bendooley Estate and Centennial Winery) cater to literally thousands of weddings annually. As at the time of writing (June 2017) Bendooley Estate already has confirmed bookings for over 160 weddings in 2018. Over 300 accommodation properties, from B&B's to motels and hotels exist in the Southern Highlands. This is an industry that thrives on the 'clean and green' drawcard that is the Southern Highlands and is an illustration of the very real potential for negative consequences on both direct and indirect employment in this industry. A prevailing wind replete with Coal Dust particulate and/or toxic dust a pretty wedding party does not make!

Alongside concerns for wind borne pollutants the inevitable noise of heavy industry adds further concerns.

The EIS submitted by Hume Coal is conspicuous in its absence of existing noise level data for the historic town of Berrima. While it does cite New Berrima in noise level readings this data must be viewed in light of existing noise levels drawn from the Boral Cement works just 150m from the settlement of New Berrima. The Historic town of Berrima, on the other hand, is not mentioned in data readings since there is currently no industry noise whatsoever. As mentioned above, the prevailing wind will almost certainly bring the sounds of heavy industry from any proposed mine, located barely over a kilometre away.

The town of Berrima is the only intact Georgian village in Australia. Established in the early 1830's it is now a place that hosts thousands of travellers from Sydney (1.5 hr drive), Canberra (1hr45 min drive) and surrounds every day of every weekend. A two-hatted restaurant, Echelot alongside at least ten other eateries in the tiny town of Berrima lends charm, elegance and function....all essential characteristics for maintaining and expanding a thriving tourism industry. The fact that there are more than 2,500 people employed in the tourism sector in the Southern Highlands means that the addition of heavy industry with its associated noise and diesel pollution carried on prevailing winds cannot be a part of any business plan that develops the Southern Highlands as a tourism destination without significant negative ramifications.

It is interesting to note that Hume Coal have completely refrained from identifying where its exhaust stacks for its underground mechanised operations will be located. This is an essential piece of information with both social and health related consequences that has completely overlooked in what is meant to be an Environmental Impact Assessment.

At one point in the submitted EIS Hume Coal outlines a 'do nothing' alternative (E6.8) in which it argues the case for the lost economic inflow to the state from the Hume Coal mine proposal not being accepted. It is interesting, and enlightening to consider this from the opposite point of view – what if the project DID in fact go ahead? In the

submitted EIS, BAEconomics were engaged by Hume Coal to do an economic assessment of the project. The Net Present Value to the NSW government is \$114 million in royalties over the 20 year economic return life span of the mine. Taken annually this results in \$5.7million per annum inflow to NSW. As a comparative, Sydney trains in its 2014/5 financial year had government contributions of \$1,256.5 million – ie. it cost the NSW government \$3.44 million **PER DAY** to run Sydney Trains.

By that measure the contributions by Hume Coal towards the running of Sydney's trains would equate to around one and a half days! On the other hand the associated negative costs to the Southern Highlands of the 'do something' option ie. Green-light the Hume Coal mine would immeasurably outweigh any petty contribution this project will make to state coffers.

Boral Cement, one of only two 'heavy' industries in the immediate surrounds of Berrima may, within the next five years, have to restructure its current operations in a very significant way if it is to avoid bankruptcy. Currently it is only just managing to break even financially. This is due predominantly to it employing an outdated method of Cement manufacture which has been superseded by a more efficient process in use in China. The cement thus manufactured arrives in Australia in block form which, once crushed, results in an identical product to that produced by Boral at only a fraction of the cost. Should Boral have to foreclose, as seems likely, the only 'heavy' industry to remain within a couple of kilometre radius of Berrima would be Inghams Enterprises which produces Chicken feed. In the light of these realities the addition of a NEW Coal mine which would be present for over 20 years (and which make no indication in its EIS that it might not extend its mining operations at some point) would be a step in the decidedly wrong direction for a district viewing tourism expansion as its ticket to future prosperity.

The EIS submitted by Hume Coal for extension of the Railway line has the following concerns.

While Hume Coal has allowed for graded separated crossings at the Old Hume Highway no provision has been made at Robertson and at Sheepwash Road. The number of movements on this line will increase (ES2) from 120 to 170 train movements per week. There will as a consequence by an extra 24 minutes (ES3.3) wait for all traffic at these level crossings every day. When set in context of the age demographics of the Southern Highlands, this potentially presents a very serious setback.

The Southern Highlands is a highly sought after place for both retirees and child-rearing families. Inevitable health problems within these social group mean that patient transfers to the only emergency departments located in the Highlands ie. at the public and the private hospitals in Bowral is an ever present reality. With no provision made for graded separated crossings at Robertson and at Sheepwash Road, life threatening emergencies will almost certainly result in avoidably disastrous consequences.

Furthermore the school of Robertson (120 students) has playing fields (a sports oval) just 30 meters from the Railway line chosen by Hume Coal to move coal. The consequences to health and wellbeing of students inevitably exposed to coal particulates and additional noise and diesel pollution from 8 additional daily trains, each 44 cars in length is difficult to exaggerate.

There is a more insidious, although less 'spectacular' consequence to the Hume Coal mine being approved and that is its psychological impact to the community and families where it proposes to operate.

As mentioned previously the Southern Highlands is a place chosen readily by retirees and child rearing families. A cursory drive through the historic town of Berrima will illustrate the extent of community cohesion in calls to reject the Hume Coal mine. Signs shouting "Water, NOT Hume Coal" and "No Coal Mining in the Southern Highlands" are, almost without exception, strung to the gates, hung on fences and tacked to trees right throughout the village.

Should this mine be given approval a resilient community will have been knifed, promises made by their local representative, Pru Goward in State parliament to reject this mine entirely would be shattered...and then it would be important to ask, for what? For 300 jobs (at the expense of 2,500 in the tourism industry alone)? For just over \$5million annually, barely enough to pay for Sydney trains for a day and a half? How do I face my children, having shown them that something can be done, if we only try....do they grow up with hope that, "yes that is true"...or blighted by the scourge of Multinationals with little interest in the communities where they decide to set up shop?

My family and I urge you to reject this project as proposed in all its forms.

Regards,  
Tracey Jones