

Attn: Executive Director, Resource Assessments department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

This is a sub mission to the Hume Coal Project EIS SSD7172

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

I am a resident/owner of a house in Berrima township, inside the designated historic area. If this project goes ahead, the social and economic impact on this area will be out of all proportion to any imagined gains to NSW, despite any assurances to the contrary by smooth talking company representatives.

My major concerns are:

Water:

The proposal admits that the water table will be lowered significantly. When the coal 'plug' is removed below the sandstone, water will be drained not only from the 42 sq km of the mine but to an admitted area of over 110 sq km, and to a depth well below the longest tap root of the biggest trees in the area. The consequence will be a dry area, useless for productive farming, right in the centre of the highlands district, ruining livelihoods and detracting from what makes this a tourist drawcard. Tourism is major contributor to the local economy and no one will continue to visit an area dominated by the impact of the proposed mine. Even if the mine is remediated at some unknown date in the future, the damage will be done to the point it is unrecoverable.

A little discussed fact is that the highlands area water also is a backup to an ever-increasing Sydney population. It's not something that will be in the public mind until it's too late – for the Sydney water supply and the politicians and public servants who let it occur.

Economy:

The two previous holders of the mining lease sold them on for one reason: it is not an economic proposition! The Korean Government appear prepared to pay a large premium to extract the coal, knowing that they will be the long-term beneficiaries in the form of keeping their steel industry in a position where it can then export product back to us because we no longer make it. There is zero benefit to Australia. The projected revenue to NSW pales into insignificance against the probable loss not only of tourism income, on which the area depends, but the probable fall in property values when Berrima and surrounding areas become viewed as a 'coal area' and not the quiet haven from the Sydney bustle that it now is and which we wish to preserve. It is why we moved here in the first place. Berrima is the only example of an early European Georgian era village preserved in Australia. This preservation of this Australian heritage depends on maintenance of its attractiveness to tourists and the economic benefit which flows to keep the area viable.

Pollution

Visual. The proposed coal stockpile and loader are hard to visualise for most people and they don't worry about it until it's too late. The fact is it will be very ugly and very visible to anyone passing on the Hume Highway as it's right next to the highway and the rail is proposed to run under it. It will be a very large eyesore sitting in what is now farming grazing land like the rest of the surrounding area, further degrading public perceptions of the Highlands area.

Note that the original single stockpile has been amended to two, plus a stockpile of toxic waste in ponds (which has not had much publicity but which is a concern due to potential leakage and eventual disposal). Once in operation will the stockpiles be expanded further? No one is saying they won't be, in particular the company which has continued to obfuscate at every turn, and you must ask why?

Aural. Coal loaders and trains are not quiet, despite Hume smooth assurances. The proposed measures cited by Posco/Hume that they say will make them quiet are risible. A 2km conveyor belt that you won't hear? A bucket loader that makes no noise? The world's quietest rolling stock? Don't make me laugh. The proposed mining volume

will require 8 long trains or so per day, which in turn will require significant night operations with the loading and trains running all hours near the Southern Highlands towns. This operation necessarily will be skewed to night time due to the difficulties threading east-west trains across the overworked north-south coastal rail lines. The noise impact will be significant, shattering the peace the area is known for. [Did I mention the tourists staying away, the economy tanking and the property values falling?]

Dust. I don't know who did the wind charts and concluded that the average wind would only be 13kmn/hr and no dust hazard would exist. The average may be that, but an average is exactly that. It takes no account of the high winds experienced in the area. Perhaps you would like to come and have a look at the trees in our street that lean uphill by about three degrees due to the 80+k winds we regularly experience from the southwest at certain times of the year. Again, the proposed 'trust me I'll cover the pile' has no credibility, particularly when the loader will be almost a 24hr operation to move the proposed quantities of coal. You only have to look at the areas surrounding other mines to see the permanent layer of coal dust and its impact on morale and the local economies.

Warren Buffet did a study of losses in train transit of coal in operations in which he has an interest. The figure was 6%. 6% of the proposed tonnages is a lot of coal dust across the highlands. Even if the journey is not as long as Warren's, the effect is the same: his wagons were covered in the same way Posco/Hume proposed or theirs. Coal dust will be spread from the mine to the sea.

Jobs

Coal mining is a specialist art and there are trained miners in Australia without jobs. Any argument that more locals will be employed is fatuous. Any company doing any producing will hire someone trained, not untrained locals. Zero local economic benefit.

Untried Mining technique.

The proposed 'feathering' technique for backfilling the underground 'hole' is a totally untried process. To date in the world, no mine has found a method that gives zero subsidence – this mine likely will not be the one to break that mould. People point at the old Medway mine as an excuse. That mine was not the size or type of the one proposed and, ps, it's closed! Even England doesn't have coal mines anymore.

Overall Environment

This proposal goes against all the 'clean and green' environmental guidelines and objectives of successive state governments

Everything that threatens Berrima comes from the southwest: usually severe storms, winds and bushfires. I do not wish to add coal dust and noise.

I ask the Government to reject this project

