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Executive Director  
Resource Assessments,  
Department of Planning and Environment  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

### **Submission to the Hume Coal project EIS SSD7172**

I object to the project for a number of important reasons.

I have been a resident of the Southern Highlands for over ten years and in that time have gained an appreciation for the natural beauty, the economy and the life style of the area. Our beautiful quality agricultural surroundings have attracted increased tourists from Sydney and other areas. Tourism and all associated activities form the backbone of our economy and lifestyle.

These will be devastated if the proposed mine proceeds for the following reasons:

#### **Water**

We know that the aquifer is world class and provides essential water for many farms, vineyards, olive farms and outstanding large gardens (often open to the public and attracting visitors from outside the area). The EIS states that more than 90 bores will be drawn down and we greatly fear that this number could increase. In fact, we have watched as our neighbours are approached by Hume desperate to purchase water rights and offering vague and dubious solutions to 'make good' water loss.

The mine operation will use precious water, contaminate it and release it into Oldbury Creek, Medway Rivulet and the Wingecarribee River. These water systems for part of the Sydney Water Catchment area. How can this be allowed to happen?

The mining method proposed has not been widely tested, and certainly not by POSCO. The proposal to place the washery rejects into the voids created in extraction presents a major and unacceptable risk to the aquifer.

#### **Dust and Noise**

The railway transportation of coal through the Highlands via Robertson to Port Kembla will add noise and dust to residential and agricultural land.

The location of the processing infrastructure near Medway Road means that prevailing winds will blow dust over Berrima township and towards Bowral and

Burradoo. Berrima is an important town with some significant Georgian buildings as well as a thriving residential population. The EIS totally ignores any impacts on the village. The proposed railway link will also add to the noise and congestion and impact on the ambience of Berrima.

### **Social and Health Issues**

Over more than five years we have watched as friends and local residents have been hounded by Hume Coal as they attempted to force entry to properties to carry out exploration drilling. We have also observed how they have attempted to bribe and divide charities and sporting organisations with offers of financial support. Anxiety and uncertainty have led to illness and depression and stressed relationships. We have absolutely no faith in Hume Coal's future concern for the residents of the Southern Highlands.

We have recently heard of cases of black lung disease in miners in other parts of Australia. We have also heard of Posco's appalling human rights record and in other parts of the world where they operate. How could we trust this Company to protect their workers and the residents of the Highlands?

The loss of our aquifer will present heartbreaking decisions for many who depend upon water for their income. Relationships and health will be severely impacted.

Housing in affordability and congestion in Sydney have led to an increased awareness of the attractiveness of life in the Southern Highlands. Our population is increasing and new housing estates are opening up. Many new residents have young families. Clean air and beautiful surroundings must be preserved for all.

### **Property Values**

At a personal level, we fear for the impact the mine could have on our property values. The threat of the mine has already caused uncertainty and loss in value and this will continue if the mine goes ahead. The draw down of groundwater will have a significant effect on many larger properties. Many owners report that the existence of the reliable, outstanding aquifer was a prime consideration in their decision to purchase their property. For many, this feature will be lost on attempts to re-sell.

In conclusion, I urge your Department to advise Government on the terrible devastation this proposed mine would impose on a particularly splendid area of New South Wales which is so close to Sydney and which has a important heritage and tourism value. The Hume Coal Project must not proceed.

I have not made a reportable political donation in the past two years.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Elspeth Parker', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Elspeth Parker