

My family live in Medway. My husband and I are both active in the Southern Highlands community. My husband and I purchased our dream property in Medway and we have worked hard, saved, and loaned money from the bank to build our dream home. We live here happily, but our lives and future are in doubt with the threat from this Hume Coal proposal. I have lived in fear since the plans for this atrocity were revealed. Make no mistake, approval of this mine would ruin our (and many others) lives, as I will outline below.

This mine and coal stockpile would literally be our NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR. Hume Coal has not contacted us and their information sessions have been an insult. I have witnessed the way they treat the community with disrespect and contempt. It is worth noting that these information sessions have increased in number since the EIS was submitted. Surely, if they cared what the community thought they would have disclosed the details of the mine before the plans were finalized, and changes could be made.

Our drinking water:

The drinking water we consume comes from our water tank, which is filled from the water that lands on our roof. The Hume Coal coal stockpile is planned to be located within a few hundred meters from our home, and a few hundred meters from the roof that catches our drinking water. With the absurd and extreme proximity of our roof to the coal stockpile, we will be subject to coal dust landing on our roof, flowing into our tank and contaminating our water. How much coal dust will contaminate our drinking water over the span of 2-3 decades? How much contaminated water will my family consume over those decades? What evidence exists that this will not have a detrimental effect on the health of my family? Can it be guaranteed that the coal dust contamination of our drinking water will not affect our future health and quality of life? Will any compensation be offered? If so, is money fair compensation for damaging the health of my family?

Sydney catchment drinking water and environmental protection:

To build a mine and coal operation inside the Sydney water catchment and so close to the Medway reservoir is incredibly reckless. Whatever superficial and short term benefits Hume Coal says they will offer cannot outweigh this risk to Sydney's drinking water. I also object to a new coal mine that will use 45% of its coal for thermal burning, especially in my own back yard. While the world unites in an effort to transition to renewable energy, will NSW adopt such a backwards attitude and approve the construction of a new coal mine? Before their EIS was submitted, Hume Coal always assured us in their information sessions that the coal would not be used for thermal energy production. This is just one example of their lies and contempt for the Southern Highlands community.

Air quality:

As I described above, the Hume Coal mining operation is planned to be only a few hundred meters from my home. The amount of air pollution on my property has not been disclosed. Given that the coal stockpile will be only a few hundred meters away from my property, surely we deserve more information. There is no safe exposure to airborne coal dust.

I note that Hume coal intends to monitor the health of its employees because of the health risks that are inherent to working near a coal mine. My family will be CLOSER to the coal stockpile than most of the employees. If an employee's health needs to be monitored because of the risk, how will our health be monitored? Living within a few hundred meters of a coal stockpile will expose us to a significant health risk. How much coal dust will enter the lungs of my family and myself over 2-3 decades? Who will pay our medical bills? It may be many years before the full effects are revealed. How will we be compensated for chronic illness or premature death caused by such high exposure to air pollution and coal dust? I still cannot fathom how a coal stockpile could be approved within a few hundred meters of domestic dwellings. I beg the decision makers to ask themselves how they would feel if such a toxic health risk was going to be built a few hundred meters from their home.

Visual pollution:

The enormous Hume Coal stockpile will not only be visible from my property, but in plain view from my bedroom window. I will be forced to look at their eyesore when I open my eyes every morning.

Noise:

My husband and I made the decision to move away from the city to Medway because of the peace and quiet. I can stand on my veranda and listen to the native birds, and the wind rustling between the leaves of the trees. If this mine is approved the quiet peaceful lifestyle we have worked so hard for will be ruined. This is not just or fair. We will not be able to enjoy being outside on our own property because of the noise pollution. How ironic that we moved away from the noise of Sydney for a quiet life only to have a coal mine operation built next door. The noise pollution will result in a profound loss of lifestyle. The Hume Coal EIS

made limited mention of noise pollution in Berrima, however the noise impacts on Medway and our property were not disclosed. How much industrial noise will we have to tolerate???

Wildlife:

My property is home to native and endangered birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles. How much of their habitat will be destroyed? How will they be affected by the air, light, and noise pollution? The Wingecarribee Shire council has categorized and zoned the land in Medway according to the needs of the local wildlife. We pay our council rates and abide by the rules imposed by the council to ensure that the land we live in is protected. An industrial coal operation in this suburb is not appropriate and an insult to the Council and community who have worked together to protect and live in harmony with the unique and beautiful land we live in.

Land water:

Our land is home to more than three spring fed dams. Hume Coal admits that springs such as ours will be destroyed, perhaps permanently but certainly for the span of my working life. The clean, reliable, and permanent water provided by these springs is vital for the prosperity and running of our property. In times of drought, how will we water our plants and provide drinking water for our animals without our springs? Even if compensation is offered, how can money compensate for the loss of our springs for the duration of our working lives? Our property and farm will not be viable without these springs.

Community:

The clean image of the Southern Highlands drew us to live here. Once this community is stamped as a 'coal town' there will be no going back. Unlike suburbs closer to Sydney, our community does not suffer from high unemployment. Hundreds of jobs in tourism and agriculture stand to be lost if the coal mine is approved. Tourism and agriculture are the lifeblood of our community and this is all at risk with the Hume Coal proposal. After Hume Coal does their damage and leaves, the long term economy of our region will be ruined. The local community has been surveyed and our voices are clear, we do not want this coal mine. If we truly live in a democracy, our voices will be listened to. Pru Goward has listened to us, and I hope Gladys Berejiklian will listen when the Member for Goulburn speaks on our behalf.

Financial ruin:

As thousands of other Australians, my husband and I have built our dream home on our dream block of land. To do this we have borrowed money and have a new mortgage. The value of our home and land is reliant on the clean, peaceful, pristine reputation of the place we live. The value of our land will without doubt be significantly lowered with a coal operation next door. With a coal mining stockpile within HUNDREDS of meters of our property, how could it not be? How long will it take the bank to foreclose on our property when our debt sinks below the reduced value of our property?

What if the air, noise and visual pollution reduces the quality of our lives to a point where we are forced to leave? Apart from the pain of losing our dream, our home, our memories, our land, our thousands of hours of hard work we have made to make our property beautiful, we will be forced to sell for a significant loss and continue to pay a mortgage for the property that has been ruined by this mine. Is this fair? Is this justice? Is this 'low impact'? How can amends ever be made to us for taking away our hard earned dream and causing financial ruin? No money can buy what we have here.

My husband and I have commenced building a cottage on our property, which we intended to be used in the future to provide income. If this mine is approved, this plan will be ruined. Who on earth would consider paying to visit a cottage with a mammoth coal stockpile in plain view? No one. If this mine is approved, we will have no choice but to continue paying the debt for this building, which will be useless. We will lose hundreds of thousands of dollars if this mine is approved.

I cannot begin to explain how much anxiety and depression the concern of the matters raised above has already caused my family and myself. I cannot fathom what hardships we will go through if this mine is approved. I have dedicated my life to cancer research so Australians can hope to live better and longer lives, and the fear that our elected government will approve this proposal that will risk the health of my family and community is ruining my life. Who will look out for our welfare and make sure we are not exploited and abused by this foreign owned Hume Coal. Who is the arbitrator for compensation? Who can we appeal to if Hume Coal shortchanges us? Who will help us stand up to such a huge company? What will stop this foreign owned company bullying us?

In conclusion, I implore the decision maker to stand up for the people of Medway and the Southern Highlands and reject this proposal. I live in hope that the powers that be will prioritize the well-being of the citizens of NSW over the interest of South Korean owned POSCO.

