

Mhairi Clark:

Chairperson Southern Highlands Branch National Trust of Australia (NSW)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

As Chairperson of the National Trust Southern Highlands Branch I represent more than 800 local Southern Highlands members of the Trust, who have asked me to speak on their behalf.

We would like the panel to perhaps better understand the human dimension of the impact of the proposed coal mine on this region and the community – not just the objections of property owners and other parties who may have their water affected.

A major charter for the National Trust of NSW is the preservation of our local environment, heritage and ambience – all of which are constantly under attack, none more so than with this current mine proposal.

The current quality of the Exeter/Sutton Forest Landscape Conservation Area is in its intactness and integrity. Exceptionally little of cultural heritage value has been destroyed or compromised within the area.

In the context of the history of European settlement of NSW, the Southern Highlands area has had a unique social and economic role and its heritage values need recognition and protection if they are to survive into the future. These values are incompatible with the development of a coal mining landscape.

The Exeter-Sutton Forest and Berrima Landscape Conservation Areas were listed on the National Trust Register in February 1998. The reasons for this were:-

From 1822 it played a vital role in the development of the Australian cattle and horse breeding/racing industries.

It contained the country residence for 16 Governors of NSW from 1879-1957 as well as the country homes of a range of prominent citizens who built significant buildings from 1826 to the late 1930s. i.e Cecil Hoskins – Iron and Steel founder, Arthur Yates (Seeds), Paul Sorensen – garden designer, Irene Hope Meek founder of Australian Brownie movement, Benjamin Carter who discovered shale in the Joadja Valley, Christopher Bennett proprietor of the Sydney Evening News and so on.

Berrima is arguably the most in-tact Georgian village in Australia with the core village sitting within a designated significant cultural landscape and conservation area.

There are 64 heritage items within the village (16 of which are on State Register)

Berrima is surrounded by a landscape conservation area listed under Council's Local Environmental Plan 2010. Should this mine be approved, the above ground mine surface infrastructure area proposed is within 3 kms of this historic village.

Regarding Sutton Forest:

Aboriginal and colonial land management is still visible. The area is significant due to the travels of the First explorers. The first colonial land grants were given in this area to luminaries such as John Macarthur, Hamilton Hume and many others. Plus the addition of churches, graveyards, an historic railway station complex, original subdivisions and numerous outbuildings.

Exeter is significant as an original area used as a nursery and the development of heritage food plants needed for war self-sufficiency etc. Within the Exeter/Sutton Forest landscape conservation area there are 43 properties individually listed on the National Trust register.

Finally, I would like to touch upon the current local economy which is largely dependent on tourism.

This Southern Highlands area is currently developing a \$90,000 major plan in conjunction with Wingecarribee Council, for an annual Heritage Festival which will focus on the significant heritage values of the Berrima and Sutton Forest and Exeter Cultural Landscapes in which our community and stakeholders live.

This annual festival will highlight the unique character of the highlands. Here we are the custodians of Australia's most intact colonial village, Berrima, dating back to the 1860s with infrastructure built by convict labour. It is the only original village in NSW virtually unchanged since John Macarthur.

The festival will be highlighting the experience of "Stepping back in time" for visitors. An experience which will be severely compromised by this proposed mine development.

Whilst we are greatly relieved that the DPE considers this mining project to be against the public interest we do urge the IPC to also endorse that view.

Thank you.