

INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING HUME COAL PROJECT

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Hearing.

My name is Ross Parker. I am a retiree who has lived at Sutton Forest for the past twelve years in a home on the boundary of the Hume Coal lease. We are surrounded by established and productive rural properties and some significant historic dwellings. It's a significant rural area which must be protected.

I would like to comment on two aspects of the Hume application to mine in the Southern Highlands.

Firstly - I totally support the scientific approach used to oppose the application and to rebut significant issues in Hume's EIS.

Coal Free Southern Highlands has conducted a sensible program of scientific investigations which have been professionally developed and peer reviewed. This approach has been critical in objectively assessing the impact of the application.

The Battle for Berrima group took the lead in providing a detailed (and award winning) assessment of the heritage qualities of the district and both organisations have worked to ensure that the community is fully aware of the implications of this project.

The response from the community has been measured and intelligent and has been sustained over these 8 long years. There is a strong awareness of the impact this mine will have on our magnificent aquifer, the lowering of the water table, the contamination of groundwater, dust pollution, visual considerations and the impact on the historic town of Berrima.

I gratefully acknowledge all those associated with the response to the project. It was an impressive contribution by many people over many years involving huge amounts of time, effort and financial support - and often at a gut wrenching personal cost.

Secondly - I want to focus on the effects upon the community over the past eight years and continuing concerns about the project.

The many difficulties associated with the overall process:

- Length of the process
- Disputes over land access for exploration (Blockade at Carters Lane)
- Years of uncertainty affecting capital investment
- A Community divided by the strategies of Hume Coal (offers of sponsorship/conflict within organisations/used as evidence Hume is welcomed)
- Uncertainty for rural holdings re future bore levels and the suggestion of trucking water to replace drops in bores (an insulting and impractical solution from Hume.)
- Costs of legal proceedings
- Necessity for individuals to contribute significant amounts of money
- Mental health implications and stress on relationships
- Decreased or stagnant property values
- Prospect of the environmental trashing of a beautiful region
Does this project pass the pub test? Not on basis of future employment
- Damage to local thriving tourism industry
Concerns as a fly fisherman and golfer: damage to waterways, water quality will diminish outdoor activities.

At a personal level, like so many in our community, I have found the last eight years demanding. It has been very difficult to witness the effect on those residents subjected to demands for property access for exploration and threatened livelihoods.

Finally I would like to take the opportunity to give voice to the late Michael Luscombe. Tragically Mike died almost a year ago - way too young and well before the many plans and hopes he had for his much loved Sutton Forest property could be realised. Mike was a retired CEO from the retail food industry. His vision and passion was for the Highlands to remain a strong and economic agricultural centre. His commitment to this vision was backed up by significant improvements to his property. An enthusiastic participant and financial contributor to Coal Free Southern Highlands, he was also a founding member of Sustainable Southern Highlands Inc.

Mike totally understood that without a viable aquifer the agricultural heritage and potential of much of the Southern Highlands would be destroyed. Michael's experience and sentiments mirror so many in our community.

Surely the maintenance of the aquifer should be sufficient reason alone to kill of this project.