

Name Virginia Ellsmore

Rural Property owner in the Hume Coal Lease area.

This property has been owned by my family since the 1830's so I inherited not only my farm and an unexplainable deep love for this land but also the personnel responsibilities that go with this type of family history, which are to protect it for following generations.

Hopefully leaving the land better than I found it.

When I see the state of Posco's Mereworth property i feel total disgust. This once fine property now a dustbowl full of dead thistles and very much alive serrated tussocks.

My initial reaction to hearing about this mine proposal was one of horror ( how could anyone think to mine my Southern Highlands ) What on earth would my father have said to this threat to the farm he, his father & his father before him had worked and loved & sacrificed to keep. I still remember his last words to me & my brother "never to be sold" Breaks my heart to think of the destruction a coal mine will wrought upon the land.

I then moved on to **serious** anger which in turn emboldened me to join with others to fight this proposal, which we have been doing for 9 long years.

But a strange thing started to happen, I was starting to feel a type of gratitude for this unthinkable abomination that had disturbed my existence & affected most of my thoughts. You may ask why? has fighting a coal mine sent her crazy?.. **Well almost**

NO ! it's because I became part of a community which formed a committee of caring people with one purpose **To stop this mine destroying our environment.** Bad sometimes begets good.

So we have fought this 'war' sometimes losing battles sometimes winning them, all the time forming deeper & deeper bonds supporting one another through those many down days

The effects on members of the community & landowners within the lease area tell a story of the feelings of hopelessness leading to

depression, listlessness, from the inability to make decisions due to the huge amount of uncertainty we have in a future. Can you imagine 8 years of that gnawing type of stress that surfaces many times a day & the feeling of fear that permeates your subconscious & you are not sure what's wrong with you That you shouldn't feel this way **but you do**. Some even resort to alcohol or medication to bear these feelings.

We feel marginalised by a system which makes the mining industry assume they have the right to ride roughshod over us, throwing money around to sporting groups, charities & local media, dividing the community while denigrating any opposition calling us either greenie activists one day OR wealthy selfish landowners destroying jobs & development, the next. all the while ignoring the fact that it is the community as a whole which does not want mining in this area, implying that the mine is wanted.

I feel after listening to the gentleman from the chamber of commerce yesterday that there is a forgotten group in the highlands. They are the people who work to support our farms & agricultural endeavours and also our tourist industries. He talks about jobs but what about the jobs lost due to this mine. these denigrated so called wealthy landowners create a lot of employment for example. Fencers, builders, Haulage contractors, farm managers & various farm workers, landscapers. Vets. Cattle yard contractors, Farm Supply Traders, Lawn mowers & garden helpers, Sand & gravel companies the list goes on even before we get to workers & businesses involved in tourism. No jobs on a property with no water, tourists don't visit dead gardens and empty creeks & dried up fields and **surprise surprise** a dirty coal mine with attendant infrastructure Perfect backdrop for a wedding

We will win this war because the majority of the community does not give it a social licence AND I say to Posco Hume coal. Not only is the science against this project, you have no social licence and never will. You have treated the landowners in the lease area with disdain & i'm being polite. Our water & the future health of our environment must be protected.

Lastly I also ask the question of what “make good” means with regards to loss of water. I have a creek running through my land. How do you make good that water

I have only tank water for my house which will be full of 2.5 particle matter .Will Hume Coal supply me with drinking water? how do you make good the inherent moisture within the soil which is lost with the lowering of the water table?

In a country becoming dryer & dryer, with serious soil salinity & abysmal action on water policy where is this huge amount of “make good” water going to come from ?

Posco will not mine here because too many of us, newcomers & and old hands have this unexplainable love for our land & we shall overcome.

Thank you