

2 January 2019

Attn: Independent Planning Commission, NSW Government

I am writing to express my opposition to two related submissions: SSD7172 (Hume Coal Project – Mine and Associated Infrastructure) and SSD7171 (Berrima Rail Project).

I have been a resident of Berrima since 1997. I live here because of the quiet and pristine environment and because of the heritage nature of the village. My wife and I have restored and dwell in the oldest private residence in the village, built by convict labour in 1835.

There is no justification whatsoever for a coal mine on Berrima's doorstep – for many reasons – and the referenced submissions are misleading in their detail, to say the least, and they do not thoroughly address numerous issues associated with an underground coal mine and its associated infrastructure. The adverse impacts to the community and its environment are many and significant.

For the reasons listed below, I call on the Independent Planning Commission to uphold the NSW Department of Planning and Environment's recommendation that these two submissions NOT BE APPROVED.

From my perspective, the major issues are as follows:

Economics

- Hume Coal's proposal represents a poor economic return to NSW. Mining experts indicate that the proposition will not even be economic for Hume Coal unless it ultimately expands the mine considerably beyond the approval being sought. This possibility, in itself, is shocking.
- ^{[[L]]}_{SEP} Local tourism and real estate markets will be adversely impacted. This will have knock-on effects on the burgeoning local industries – wineries, equestrian properties, olive plantations, wedding venues, restaurants and other shops catering to tourists not to mention the impact on pastoralists and other agriculturalists from the degradation of their bores. ^{[[L]]}_{SEP}
- Predictably, more jobs in the community will be lost from the negative effects of the mine than will be added by the mine, itself. ^{[[L]]}_{SEP}

Water [SEP]

- Given the proximity of the pristine water aquifer above the coal deposit, the potential for contamination is high. Given the location within the Sydney Water Catchment, which services metropolitan Sydney, there is NO justification for assuming this risk. [SEP]
- Bores on more than 70 properties will be degraded from Hume's water drawdown. By Hume's own admission, this degradation will last for between 36 to 65 years and some may never fully recover. This cannot be permitted in any justifiable circumstance. [SEP]
- In periods of above average rainfall, Hume Coal will discharge surplus on-site mining water into Oldbury Creek. With an underfinanced EPA, who will monitor the toxicity of this effluent? [SEP]
- Hume will pump water used to wash the coal and residual "spoil" back underground into mining voids. Who will ensure an avoidance of toxicity of any leakage into the aquifer? Given that we are told the EPA lacks the budget and therefore the manpower to police and report violations, who is going to keep POSCO's subsidiary honest? [SEP]

Air Quality [SEP]

- Hume Coal's submission doesn't adequately address air quality issues and it appears their measurements were entirely inadequate and not positioned to properly measure the impact on the village of Berrima, not to mention other villages in the path of prevailing winds.
- Dust and diesel emissions will adversely impact on health of residents in its path, as well as animals and crops.
- [SEP]The elderly and families with children most susceptible to respiratory and lung disease are disregarded by Hume Coal as being of little consequence, as it prefers to identify its location as being 7.5 kms west of Moss Vale rather than 3.5 kms to the SSW of Medway, Berrima and New Berrima. The consequent health issues will be exacerbated because of the current expansion of aged care facilities in the Highlands and the number of young families moving to the area.

Noise

- The associated infrastructure which will operate 24 hours/day and the train line, also in use 24 hours/day, will adversely impact on the quality of life in Berrima, New Berrima, Medway and surrounding properties and other villages along the train line. Hume Coal acknowledges this increase in noise but is unable to mitigate it. [L] [SEP]
- Hume Coal virtually ignores the existence of Medway, New Berrima and Berrima with an estimated combined population of 1,340 people in 2016 – all of whom live within 5 kms of the three stockpiles. [L] [SEP] **Social and Health** [L] [SEP]
- The proposed mine cannot help by adversely change the social fabric of the community and its overall environment. These impacts are likely to result in increases in mental health matters, anxiety and depression, not to mention the psychological distress of people whose properties are directly impacted. There is no way that Hume Coal can compensate for this. [L] [SEP]
- Hume Coal trains will involve an additional 17 level crossings in the Southern Highlands and down the escarpment each day – this adds an extra 24 minutes of closures per day, impacting on the movement of emergency vehicles, business transportation and the increased likelihood of road and rail accidents. [L] [SEP]
- Little is said about the social implications of having several hundred workers, predominantly male, living temporarily on the doorstep of Berrima, New Berrima and Medway during an extended period while the infrastructure is built. [L] [SEP] **Misleading Information** [L] [SEP]
- For two years, Hume Coal stated that the purpose of the mine was to obtain high quality coking coal for overseas export and offshore production of steel. The EIS now shows that the company intends to also extract thermal coal for sale and will require a further stockpile to accommodate this. [L] [SEP]
- Hume Coal declines to provide any assurance on what approvals for expansion or even additional forms of mining processes will be sought in the future. Expansion approvals are commonly sought by mining companies. [L] [SEP]
- Only from the EIS did we learn that Hume Coal proposes to stockpile toxic mine rejects above ground at the site for the first two years of operation. This is entirely unacceptable. [L] [SEP]
- Hume Coal repeatedly gave assurances that it would engage in community

consultation. This did not eventuate (no doubt because of the vast opposition to the proposed mine). [L] [SEP]

- Hume Coal has handed out substantial amounts of money to community organisations in an attempt to influence the community to support the proposed mine. While this has not swayed the opinion of the vast majority of residents, as evidenced by various polls, such efforts to ‘buy’ support should be prohibited by law and, in the absence of prohibition, looked on unfavourably by the Government. [L] [SEP]
- Hume Coal acquired a number of properties in the area of its mining lease under the auspices of being a pastoralist company. For this, Hume Coal and any conspiring realtors should be prosecuted.

[L] [SEP] **Elbert L Mathews**

Company Director

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