

To: Independent Planning Commission

From: Grant and Gayle Mason, 10 Wilkinson Street, Berrima, NSW 2577

Date : 1 July 2021

Hume Coal Project (SSD 7172)and Berrima Rail Project (SSD 7171)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing today in response to the email I received on the 16 June 2021 regarding the Public Hearing and would like to lodge a "Written Submission".

We disagree with the Hume Coal and Berrima Rail Projects for the reasons stated in below and would like to state that both **Projects should NOT be approved:**

1. GROUNDWATER

- The project is predicted to have significant impacts on a highly productive groundwater aquifer including drawdown impacts on up to 118 privately owned bores. We live above a natural spring and there is a well built approx 1840 on our property. During the recent drought this was dry. If the project was to go ahead then I would expect the spring and our well to dry out much sooner.
- The proposed make good process would inevitably result in a large number of negotiations and disputes with local landowners, unavoidable delays to the development of the project, and significant disruption to the community.

2. MINE DESIGN

- There is a substantial degree of residual uncertainty about the mine design and, in particular, the methodology underpinning the geotechnical model.
- The combination of an untested mining method [pine feather] and an unconventional method of storing large quantities of mine water underground is likely to result in serious operational safety risks.
- The Department considers that the various safety risks may lead to the transfer of additional mine water to the surface and a need to discharge into watercourses. The Applicant has not assessed this issue or proposed a water treatment plant
- The Department, the EPA and Water NSW consider that any discharge of mine water (whether treated or untreated) may result in significant impacts on surface water'.
- There is a risk that the operational safety issues associated with the unconventional mine design may result in an unexpected sterilisation of coal, which may significantly reduce the economic benefits of the project.

ECONOMIC

- The Department notes that there are fundamental difficulties in efficiently recovering the coal resource for this project, particularly due to the shallow depth of the coal and the risk of environmental impacts.
- Importantly, even the Applicant's estimated net economic benefits of \$373 million is relatively low in comparison to many other coal mining projects in the Southern Coalfield and across NSW.

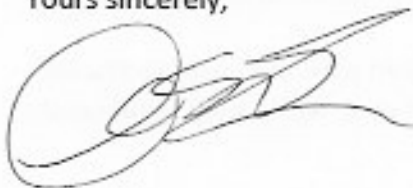
UNCONVENTIONAL MINE DESIGN

- Hume Coal's unconventional mine design presents a range of uncertainties and safety risks, as well as the likelihood of significant impacts on water resources. Consequently, the proposed project site is not suitable for the development of a new coal mine.
- The economic benefits estimated by Hume Coal's EIS cannot be realised without significant adverse impacts on the environment and the local community, particularly in relation to groundwater impacts. The economic benefits do not outweigh the likely adverse impacts on the environment and community.
- NSW Department of Planning & Environment states there is a threat of serious harm to both groundwater and surface water resources, and there is currently considerable scientific uncertainty about the level of environmental damage to both.
- As a result, the 'precautionary principle' is triggered so the project should not be considered an 'ecologically sustainable development'. Consequently, based on the information currently available, the project is not in the public interest and should not be approved.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The recent decision to not authorise this project also quoted environmental concerns. Whilst there is considerable debate at the highest levels concerning climate change and fossil fuels, I will restate my point made in my original submission on 26 June 2017, "Can your planning committee guarantee that the water table will not be detrimentally compromised affecting our drinking water and agriculture? Would you be prepared in the future to stand behind this decision should it be proved that water security has been compromised by the construction and operation of the Hume Coal Mine?"

Yours sincerely,



Grant Mason



Gayle Mason