

Malcolm Robertson
5 Missingham Parade
Robertson 2577
July 6th, 2021

Independent Planning Commission
Level 3, 201 Elizabeth St
Sydney 2000
SSD 7172 and SSD 7171 – Second referral

Dear Commissioners,

I have been a resident of the Southern Highlands for 10 years and I wish to express my absolute opposition to Hume Coal's applications (SSD 7172 and SSD 7171). The proposed mine represents a real threat to residents and the environment of the Southern Highlands as well as the Sydney Water Catchment. I endorse the DPIE conclusions.

- The estimated 118 bores that have been calculated by Hume to be impacted over life of the mine are sufficient for the refusal of the project alone, even if the DPIE believe that considerable negative uncertainty surrounds this number.
- The proposed make good arrangements for depleted bores were declared unacceptable and unworkable in the DPIE Preliminary assessment. Hume has tried to make the argument that other mining projects had similar groundwater impacts but this claim is not based in fact. Tahmoor cannot be seen as a parallel to Hume as differences in geology and the depth of mine. Hume's plans also involve the financial compensation to landowners in the event that make good becomes unworkable, amounting to the confiscation of landowner water entitlements. This is totally unacceptable.
- Water NSW are not convinced that all of the water produced in the mine can be stored underground in a timely manner. The mine water dam may over-flow and untreated water may discharge into catchment waterways. Water NSW consider the lack of a contingency plan for water treatment facilities to be an unacceptable risk. Why are we messing with groundwater and water supply in a drought prone country such as Australia?
- Hume has stated they have no interest in changing their mine plan. The DPIE advisors on mine design and subsidence have taken a strong position on the risks associated with the current mine plan. The DPIE advisors particularly point to impact on groundwater assumptions if there is any mine collapse.
- The Resources Regulator has reinforced its concerns on the viability of the mine plan particularly the impact of the mine on critical infrastructure, the Hume Motorway, the Sydney Moomba gas pipeline and major communication cables. The agency considers that the current plans to avoid catastrophic damage by the mine are

inadequate due to uncertainty surrounding Hume's subsidence predictions and the shallow depth of the mine. Known examples of subsidence exist in this region.

- Economics of the project: The DPIE and Hume have agreed on a figure for the expected financial benefits from the project higher than in the original assessment from the department but lower than might have been expected from a similar project. DPIE note that the benefits of the project may be overstated if uncertainties are taken into account, and in any event are offset by the negative impacts of the project on the community. With a defined shift to renewables the risk of fossil fuel assets being stranded is real.
- The lack of social license for this project is absolutely clear. Two successful petitions (15,000 signatures 2017, 13,000 signatures 2018) to the NSW Parliament that forced debate on the moratorium of coal mining in the Southern Highlands and a potential Upper House enquiry . Over 12,000 opposing submissions to the DPIE in response to The Hume EIS , with approx. 5,000 from the local LGA. 4,000 submissions to the first IPC hearing with an over whelming percentage opposing the project . Independent research conducted by Galaxy in the WSC LGA showed over 80% were against the proposals. Community opposition to this project will not go away with their resolve continues to build. The communities desire for this country to contribute to reduce emissions on our planet must be considered for the sake of future generations. Rulings along these lines already stand in relation to other fossil fuel projects.

Finally, Hume's standard response to the management of the identified uncertainties is to say that the project should be approved and operations 'adapted' to manage any issues as they occur which is inconsistent with the precautionary principle. We have seen 'adaptions' to managing environmental breaches with other mines nearby more of a 'make it up as we go' approach than a managed process.

Whilst there are many additional reasons why this project is not in the Public Interest and should not be approved, the above points I believe provide enough concern to the IPC the rule this project out entirely. Our collective intelligence tells us there should be greater focus on the water we drink and the air we breathe rather than a hole in the ground.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Robertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Malcolm Robertson