

Good evening,

I am Josh Reid; I am speaking today to put forward my opinion on the assessment report and application on why the Hume Coal and Berrima Rail Projects should be approved.

I am a qualified Geologist and Environmental scientist and a former employee of Hume Coal Project of 5 years.

I have an extensive career spanning of +15 years in the mining industry working on various projects and operations around Australia.

Over the years of working on the Hume Coal Project, I found that this project was like no other I have worked on before.

It was an extensively environmentally orientated project in all aspects (Monitoring, studies to even the design).

Working on the project I witnessed the **“demonization of a coal project”** first-hand within the community. I never experienced this level of **“Anti-coal”** sentiment before within a community.

As the project progressed through the approvals process, it was **“bashed from pillar to post”** by the select few, that have no sense of the practicalities of **mining in everyday life**.

Since moving on from Hume Coal, I noticed that the campaign against Hume Coal continued, it was **less vocal** but **more prevalent online**. I observed a divide in online community between members. When you take a deeper look into the campaign, there is defiant ideology being portrayed **“Not in my backyard”**.

This ideology was being generated by a number of influential individual's that had infiltrated the general community by utilising misinformation about the project. This groups opinion was being portrayed everywhere (social media, signage etc), and the spread of misinformation was rife, with the notion **“if you see it or hear it enough”** people come to the conclusion it is true without even questioning it.

As a quote by Albert Einstein **“If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.”** This is exactly what I've seen regarding to the opposition against the Hume Coal project.

What has been presented across different forums to the general public it is often left up to interpretation of the audience that leads to the hysteria. Often when I was involved in Hume Coal community information sessions, I had to spend a significant amount of time providing community members with an appropriate response regarding data that was been presented.

This determination to obtain support **against** the Hume Coal project was done so in an **abhorrent and unscrupulous** manner, engaging people from outside the community and having them allegedly 'sign' petitions both interstate and internationally for the 'community'.

It is noticeable that this movement against the project has driven a **'Wedge'** into Southern Highland communities, to the extent where individuals in support of the Hume Coal Project don't want to speak as they fear retribution which has been obvious in response to submissions phase and first IPC hearing (Video evidence).

It is clear to see that there are two sorts of individual's in opposition to Hume Coal Project **“Those who don't know any better and those who do or should know better”** the majority involved in this

movement **“Should know better”** than making accusations against this Hume Coal Project throughout these whole approvals process.

This toxic burden that these group of individuals have put on the communities of Southern Highlands has a much greater effect than they think.

This **“Fight against Hume Coal”** puts a significant amount of stress on the blue collar workers (like myself) of area, as there brings a shadow of doubt where future jobs will be generated from, this lack of job creation without Hume Coal is the **“sacrifice”** that these select few are willing to take as majority of them have finished their illustrious careers in there white collar roles at the peril of the generations to come and these individuals are enabled to keep their slice of the Hamlet.

This movement on numerous occasions and even throughout these IPC hearings, have found that it was easy to lie with statistics, one example was the **“survey of local communities- saying that 1000’s were in objection to project”** but when go through finer details it works out not as one sided as one would think.

No one likes change, I gather that, but the **“potential change”** in lifestyle is miniscule, the perceived effects of this mining project on the community has been vastly exaggerated throughout the whole projects life, which aligns with **“Not in my backyard”** mentality.

These Potential changes to quality of life are not derived from the actual facts, but utilise this mentality of misinformation to **‘skew the opinions’** of the general community, below are examples:

- the train line usage - the train line down to Port Kembla from Moss Vale was first proposed in **“1880s by the residents of Moss Vale and local industry”** who were keen for connection to the Port. The rail line was open 1932 and initially carried limestone from Marulan Quarry to Steelworks, in the latter years the route has been utilise for transport grain, cargo and coal,
- Dangerous coal dust particulates from the trains - well this has been addressed by Hume Coal several times and a lot of time and effort has gone into researching this item and to mitigate that issue the coal wagons are going to be covered,
- Delays to traffic - On Illawarra Highway (Not Hume Motorway as there is underpass existing which is going to be utilised), extensive traffic studies had been completed and there will be minimal delays, also you to take into account notably low amount of traffic as it is rural setting,
- Property value will decrease- Not seen any evidence regarding property prices reducing in mining areas only the opposite,
- Last but not least, groundwater and effecting 94 bores, a number of individuals currently allow baseline monitoring to be undertaken on their private ground water bores others choose not to engage which is their right. Hume Coal gather this information to ensure that there won’t be disputes if mining progresses, but the select few individuals didn’t allow this to happen and are main instigators that run the scare campaign regarding groundwater.

The fundamental part of all this opposition is **“Not in my backyard”**, these individuals have tried to shape there identities as being the **“saviours”** or in better terms the **“environmental advocates”** and they are working for best interest of the community suggesting that they’re going to protect all who have signed up, **“We are providing a voice for the little guys- against large corporation”**.

This comprehensive campaign is jeopardising the local area of substantial revenue, as noted in the application process both projects are classified as **“Significant”**, which in turn would provide

“Significant investment” by potentially creating hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, Hume Coal has already spent hundreds of millions of dollars throughout the project life thus far, through rates, licenses, sponsorships, wages, charitable foundation etc. Tell me what other project or development will create such as benefit within this region? Nothing will come close.

This group of individuals is prepared to **‘deny’** this resource from all of us, the taxpayers. Hume Coal’s projected revenue could feed into upgrades of local schools/hospitals, sporting grounds, infrastructure alike, even economic stimulus for COVID relief.

Tell me this the majority of the fundraisers run over the years by this group of individuals were lavish dinners with high profile CEO’s, entertainers, ex-politicians and the like, could any of the locals afford to attend “No” just look at the photographic evidence from the fundraisers (on social media), don’t see any struggling local business owners there. Exactly, I am not against what these individuals have done in their working lives nor care about how successful they are.

As an average family man, working hard to make a living and care for my family, that’s all I care for, but when these certain Individuals affect the whole social-economic landscape by deceiving community with **‘there smoke and mirror act’** to drive companies like Hume Coal out of town who are willing to give future generations the opportunity to a well-paying industry with misinformation and threatening behaviour, and destroying the prosperity for generations to come.

The demand for Australia’s Metallurgical Coal hasn’t been in higher demand, than it is right now.

There are challenging times ahead for all of us, with job losses (small business closing) and downturn in economies on all fronts, off the back of the pandemic. It has been proven that a lot of rural communities are still struggling after the first wave of COVID, but there are a number of rural communities that have bounce back quicker than others. This is due to intervention of local mining companies, lending a hand to local business by donations and other means.

Mining has been the life blood of the communities around Australia and especially within the Southern Highlands, now more than ever mining is requiring to provide economic stimulus, through royalties’ that they pay, hundreds of direct jobs also the thousands indirect jobs to bolster the local economies. This is how we are currently surviving locally, as a state and even as a nation. This project needs to be approved to provide certainty to economic survival of the Southern Highlands.

We can’t afford to throw this billion-dollar investment into New South Wales away, especially not now,

Please consider this State Significant Project for approval, as mining is part of everything we do as individuals.

Thank you all for your time this evening.