

14/7/2021

My name is Jane Lawler.

I live with my family at our property on Medway road Medway. We share two common boundaries, South and West, with Evandale, historic agricultural land now owned by Posco. Hume Coal.

In 1998 we purchased a bare 5acre block, since then we have built and established a home and garden. We have a beautiful place to live that we are very proud of, surrounded by good neighbours, friends and family.

Our property will be severely impacted by the noise from the Hume coal project day & night.

We will be able to see the towering coal stockpiles from our kitchen/living room window, directly south at a distance of 750 metres.

Oldbury Creek runs between us and the coal stockpile.

We are one kilometre from the main mine infrastructure & rail loop.

We will be able to hear, see and smell this project twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

Welcome to our world.

Our water security:

We rely on rainwater for use in our home- town water unavailable to our block. We are extremely concerned about our water supply being contaminated if there is a coal mine next door.

Our bore flows into our dam.

Our stock and gardens have relied on this constant supply of water over the years. The importance of this water supply was no more evident than through 2019/20 drought and subsequent fires, approaching us from the north and south.

In preparation for this, we had connected a sprinkler system around our home and sheds.

The system is run by a pump from the dam backed up with a generated supply of power.

We felt we were prepared and were able to stay and defend ourselves and our home only because we had water.

Anyone who lives in a rural area is under no doubt of the importance of water and how our lives can be altered if our water supply is gone.

Both for stock and domestic use.

Water is our greatest resource and must be protected.

No one, not a farmer, an industry or a person in an apartment in the middle of a city should take water for granted.

To see it disappear or be irreparably damaged is not acceptable, as we believe the land should be improved to pass onto future generations.

Further to this point – Bushfire plan:

The threat of bushfire is now part of our lives, as is drought.

After the experiences of 2019/20 it has become very apparent that we need to be prepared for anything – no one can afford not to be.

Part of this preparation is to know your neighbours and have an idea of their plan. From experience, it will only be an organised local effort that will make it possible to survive, without losing everything.

Sharing resources is a key element. Equipment, water, information & support.

Hume Coal have said on many occasions that they will be proactive in communication with neighbours in regard to mitigation and ‘make good’ policies. This has not been our experience in past 2 years – no communication even through the approaching fires in 2019/20.

Our Community:

Our family building company has operated for over 20 years.

It employs 5 full time tradesmen and always an apprentice.

Another 10 are employed as main contractors.

All local.

Our 20+suppliers operate local businesses.

As we can only put forward our own experience and try to relay our value in the community. A community that has already changed as neighbours have decided to move on.

This process has extracted a huge price both emotionally and financially to all involved.

For the last 10 years we have lived with the pressure and stress of planning and decision making without certainty.

Throughout this process, our lives have been reduced to a particular coloured dot on a map in a report.

To read & try to understand that our home & our lives will be significantly affected by noise day and night in calm or adverse weather is soul destroying.

To read that you may or may not be able to sleep during the night without being woken by industrial noise is unbelievable!

Our property is one of two entitled to ‘voluntary acquisition’ because of the noise factor.

The visual impacts during the day and the lights at night will be overwhelming.

We are not alone in this situation, all our neighbours - our friends - have dots of various colours. They will all experience noise disturbance and visual impacts. Let’s not forget or dismiss our constant winds. Dust and coal covering everything.

Our response to this constant reminder that our lives have changed forever has always been measured and reasonable but if this proposed coal mine goes ahead, we will not be able to continue to live at our home and would have to question our future here in the Highlands.

The outcome of this, the ripple effect, is extensive.

We live and work with an unknown future with many plans put on hold.

We question any outlay of capital as our property will not return what we have put in if there is a coal mine next door.

This is our reality.

Social Impacts:

We have waited for years for our future to be decided by others.

And still we wait.....

How can this process have taken so long?

The effect that this has had on us cannot be understated.

Our daughter was in primary school when this became part of our lives, she is now in year 12 about to complete the HSC.

Both my husband's parents have passed away and my father as well, all while waiting for a decision to be handed down.

They were aware of this project and their concern was always for our wellbeing.

As Medway Road residents, we have met on two occasions with the Dept of Planning representatives. We met with their noise expert.

We would like to take this opportunity once again to thank them for their decision not to approve this project.

These people did all they could to keep us informed and to be realistic about our situation.

In 2018 when I spoke to the panel, I asked them, while in the Southern Highlands to please drive down Medway & Liebman's roads and have a look at the area.

The homes, farms, & the lifestyles that will be affected by the noisy & visually imposing, working end of the coal mine day and night.

It was my hope that when they saw this, they would think of us and the future generations that will suffer the effects on their water and landscape being permanently damaged if this project goes ahead.

We don't know if they ever did drive down our road.

Our hope is that this new panel of Commissioners will be able to be across all the history and emotion of the proposal.

The decision this panel is going to make will change all of our lives, one way or the other.

We hope that the correct decision for us, our families & friends, our neighbours and most importantly - our community, will be made to NOT approve this project in any way or form.

The Final Outcome.

Our Hope is that no one ever has to go through this process again.

Fair enough that everyone has the right to put forward their opinions, their facts & truths. That they be given every opportunity to state their case. We do not question this.

But enough is enough.

Please make a decision so we can all move on with our lives.

Buy the mining lease back. Let this country go to a better future.

Thank you for this opportunity.