

From: [Sally Mcglashan](#)
To: [IPCN Enquiries Mailbox](#)
Subject: Public comment on Departments response to Commissions letter regarding questions on notice
Date: Sunday, 8 August 2021 11:54:03 AM

I have previously submitted my verbal objection to the proposed Posco/Hume coal project and am now writing to further give a “local resident’s perspective” on this issue relating to the recent matters raised below by the Commission.

Extract:

1. In consideration of potential disruptions, please provide further information regarding the existing and proposed number of additional rail movements per day, the number of ‘at grade’ level rail crossings between the project site and the Port Kembla terminal and how the potential impacts of train movements were considered in the Department’s assessment.

Submission

The Department’s response seems to be about minimising the overall effect of the purported extra 8 train trips per day. But before I progress into the effects that will be lived and breathed by us locals I’d like to question the surprisingly low number of additional trains Posco have estimated. They say they will be extracting “about” 3million tonnes of coal per year which will have to be transported by train to Port Kembla note in other parts of their proposal they mention 3.4m tonnes.

Background: The current trains on the freight line vary from 40 to 60 wagons long. Having personally observed this over the last 20 years one can assume that this limit is for good reason and based on the carrying capacity of this now rather old and restricted rail line due to it being a single track and the extreme gradients involved. Each wagon carries about 85 tonne of coal (ref. Aurizon the country’s biggest coal freight rail operator).

Taking the lesser total annual extraction amount of 3million tonnes p.a. as Hume’s annual payload

40 wagons x 85 tonnes = 3,400 tonnes per trip = 882 trips p.a. or 16 trips one way only per week or a total of 32 per week including return trips

50 wagons x 85 tonnes = 4250 tonnes per trip = 705 trips p.a. or 13 trips one way only per week or a total of 26 per week including return trips

60 wagons x 85 tonnes = 5100 tonnes per trip = 588 trips p.a. or 11 trips one way only per week or a total of 22 per week including return trips

Perhaps Posco are planning on their trains being even longer than the 60 wagons - but this will only serve to further exacerbate the road traffic delays at the many level crossings while we wait for these very long trains to pass.

Quite simply it just doesn’t add up - Posco/Hume are purposefully misleading and downplaying the real additional number of rail trips on the whole extent of this already increasingly stressed freight line.

Extract from Department’s response:

The rail network between the site and Port Kembla is shown on **Figures 1 to 3** below, and comprises:

- the Berrima Branch Line (including the proposed extension);
- a short section of the Main Southern Rail Line between Berrima Junction and Moss Vale;
- Moss Vale to Unanderra Line; and
- Unanderra to Port Kembla Coal Terminal.

The Berrima Branch Line has a practical operating capacity of approximately 40 train movements per day (20 in each direction), and Hume Coal's assessment assumes that there are currently 26 train movements per day on the line (13 in each direction). In other words, the line is currently operating at approximately 65% of practical capacity.

Submission

WHY IS THE DEPARTMENT ONLY REFERRING TO 'THE BERRIMA BRANCH LINE'?

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER 3 SECTIONS? WHY IS THE DEPARTMENT RELYING ON HUME COAL'S ASSESSMENT AND ASSUMPTION ON NUMBER OF TRAIN MOVEMENTS? THIS IS NOT THOROUGH ON THE PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COURSE HUME ARE GOING TO GIVE AN ASSESSMENT THAT SUITS THEIR CASE. AGAIN IT IS ONLY REFERRING TO THE VERY SHORT INITIAL PART OF THE WHOLE LINE THE BERRIMA BRANCH LINE - WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE LINE??

Extract

Hume Coal notes that this figure is highly conservative, as current Berrima Branch Line movements typically average 8 train movements per day (4 in each direction), mainly associated with the Berrima Cement Works.

Submission

AGAIN I ASK WHY THE DEPARTMENT IS ACCEPTING HUME COALS OPINION THAT THIS FIGURE IS HIGHLY CONSERVATIVE? WITHOUT VERIFYING IT.

OF COURSE THE BERRIMA BRANCH LINE MOVEMENTS ARE MAINLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE CEMENT WORKS THIS SMALL BRANCH LINE WAS BUILT FOR THE CEMENT WORKS BUT WHAT ABOUT WHEN IT JOINS THE MAIN LINE AND INTERSECTS WITH THE MAIN SOUTHERN LINE AND THEN PROCEEDS ON TO PORT KEMBLA?? THE ROUTE HUME'S TRAINS WILL TAKE WILL START ON THE BERRIMA BRANCH LINE BUT THEN MOVE ON - IT SEEMS AS IF THIS FACT IS BEING COMPLETELY IGNORED BY LIMITING DISCUSSION TO JUST THE BERRIMA BRANCH LINE.

Extract

The project would generate up to 8 additional train movements per day on the network (4 in each direction), which would increase total movements on the Berrima Branch Line to approximately 34 train movements per day (17 in each direction). This cumulative total would represent approximately 77% of the practical operating capacity on the line. Similar capacity is available on the broader sections of the rail network to Port Kembla

Submission

SEE MY CALCULATIONS ABOVE THIS IS A GROSS UNDERESTIMATE OF WHAT WILL BE THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL TRAIN TRIPS. AGAIN IT ONLY REFERS TO THE SHORT INITIAL PART OF THE ROUTE, THE BERRIMA BRANCH LINE.

I LIVE IN ROBERTSON AND THE FREIGHT TRACK GOES ALONG 2 OF MY BOUNDARIES OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS I HAVE SEEN THIS SINGLE TRACK LINE CHANGE INTO A VERY BUSY FREIGHT LINE, THE TRAINS HAVE BECOME LONGER AND THE LOCOMOTIVES NECESSARILY MORE POWERFUL. FREIGHT FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY USES THIS LINE TO GET DOWN THE ESCARPMENT TO PORT KEMBLA. IT DOESN'T JUST CARRY FREIGHT FROM THE BERRIMA BRANCH LINE. IT IS INTERSECTED BY THE MAIN SOUTHERN LINE AND CONSEQUENTLY ALREADY CARRIES COAL FROM OTHER AREAS, PLUS WHEAT, PLUS ETHANOL TO NAME A FEW.

THE COAL WAGONS ARE CURRENTLY NOT COVERED. THE LOCOMOTIVES ARE DIESEL POWERED, OFTEN WITH THE HEAVY COAL LOADS THERE ARE 2 LOCOMOTIVES PULLING AND A 3RD PUSHING BEHIND. SO NOT ONLY ARE WE INHALING THE COAL DUST, THE DIESEL FUMES AND PARTICLES ARE ALSO IN OUR AIR.

IF YOU TAKE THE TIME TO LOOK AT GOOGLE SATELLITE YOU WILL SEE HOW THE TRAIN TRACK WEAVES IT WAY RIGHT THROUGH THE VILLAGE OF ROBERTSON, IT TRACKS WITHIN METERS OF THE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND NOT TO MENTION MANY RESIDENCES AND BUSINESSES. NONE OF THE LEVEL CROSSINGS ARE SAFE NOR PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY. SCHOOL CHILDREN HAVE TO NAVIGATE SEVERAL OF THESE CROSSINGS TO WALK TO SCHOOL. I KNOW OF AT LEAST ONE PERSON WHO WAS KILLED BY A TRAIN ON ONE OF THE CROSSINGS IN THE VILLAGE. THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE ROUTE OF THE RAIL LINE HAVE NOT BEEN DESIGNED TO COPE WITH ANYMORE TRAIN TRIPS - IT IS ALREADY OVERLOADED. EVEN BEFORE POSCO/HUME'S PLANNED ADDITIONAL TRIPS WE THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE CLOSE BY ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE INCONVENIENCED BY NOISE, POLLUTION AND WASTED TIME SITTING AT LEVEL CROSSINGS.

Extract from Departments response

Most of the other 16 level crossings are located on minor roads or private roads, and are located on the Berrima Branch Line and the Moss Vale to Unanderra sections of the route. Given the low road traffic volumes at these level crossings, no significant delays or impacts are expected.

Submission

AT THESE OTHER LEVEL CROSSINGS WHILST ON MINOR ROADS ARE USED OFTEN AND REGULARLY BY LOCALS, WHETHER ITS AGRICULTURAL WORKERS OR FARMERS ACCESSING THEIR LAND OR JUST VISITORS NONE OF THEM ARE SAFE AND WITH INCREASED RAIL TRAFFIC WILL BECOME EVEN LESS SAFE AS YOU LOOK LEFT AND RIGHT AND THEN MAKE A DASH ACROSS THE LINE - THERE IS NO PROTECTION YET THIS ACCESS IS VITAL THESE CROSSINGS SHOULD NOT BE DISMISSED AS UNIMPORTANT.

Extract

However, there are 5 more significant level crossings on higher trafficked roads, including the level crossings at:

- Suttor Road at Moss Vale;
- Sheepwash Road at Glenquarry;
- Illawarra Road at Robertson;
- Meryla Street at Robertson; and
- Fountaindale Road at Robertson.

Hume Coal's assessment notes that most of the train movements associated with the project would occur outside peak road use periods (ie. between 7:00 pm and 6:00 am), however it does acknowledge that two movements would likely occur near peak hours. These include one eastbound movement in the morning between 8:30 am and 9:00 am, and one westbound movement in the afternoon between 2:30 pm and 3:00 pm.

Submission

HUME'S ASSESSMENT THAT MOST OF THEIR TRAIN MOVEMENTS WOULD OCCUR OUTSIDE PEAK ROAD USE (IE BETWEEN 7 PM AND 6 AM) MEANS THAT NOW WE WILL HAVE ALL THOSE TRAINS OPERATING RIGHT THROUGH THE NIGHT, THEY ARE ALL OBLIGED TO WHISTLE AT EVERY LEVEL CROSSING, NOW ITS NOT A " WHISTLE" BUT A HUGE LOUD BLAST OF AN AIR HORN PLUS THE NOISE OF THE TRAIN ON THE TRACKS AND THE SOUND OF THE LOCOMOTIONS - THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE, NOW WE GET NO SLEEP WHILE WE ARE INHALING THE FUMES. I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHY THE TRAIN MOVEMENTS ARE MOSTLY IN THE NIGHT - I SUSPECT THAT IT IS BECAUSE THE TRACK IS ALREADY SO BUSY DURING THE DAY WITH EXISTING FREIGHT THE NIGHT IS ALL THAT IS LEFT FOR HUME !!
PERHAPS THE DEPARTMENT CAN ASCERTAIN THIS BY DOING SOME ACTUAL INVESTIGATION OF ITS OWN RATHER THAN RELY ON SPOONFED INFORMATION FROM HUME.

Others have addressed adequately the issues of negative effects on ground water, negative visual impacts on our beautiful countryside and I agree that this

whole project is wrong on so many levels I am angry that yet again we, the people of this area, have yet again been forced to stand up for what is right, what is sane - we shouldn't be in this position of having to battle to stop a COAL MINE!! in this day and age of climate change, extreme weather events, on a continent which is so lacking in fresh water it beggars belief.

You cannot have a coal mine undertaken in the most environmentally sensitive way. There is no way that this will happen we all know that it is a mortal wound to our land to our natural precious resources such as ground water, air quality, prime agricultural land - yet these are all treated as meaningless unimportant. I'm glad I'm an older person because this makes me weep for the future we're leaving for our children and their children.

Yours sincerely with great sadness in my heart that this project is even being considered.

Sally McGlashan