

February 26 2019

Independent Planning Commission
Level 3 201 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Wendy Alexander.

I live in Medway adjacent to the Hume Coal Project's proposed coal stockpile and processing area and I thank you for the opportunity to comment today on the findings within the Department of Planning & Environment report as a local resident.

Just before I draw attention to the areas of the report that I find most alarming, it's important to point out that my husband and I are signatories to a Conservation Agreement over our property, **Billarimba**, which was created **between the NSW Government and us on the 4th of November 2010**.

Amongst other things, the agreement, which encompasses some 91 hectares (225 acres) on both sides of the Wingecarribee River, states that our property is now:

- Part of the Conservation Partners Programme
- That we are 'active partners in managing the state's system of protected areas' and that we must 'facilitate access to a range of monitoring and support services'
- That this is a formal agreement under the NSW Act
- And that the agreement is 'In Perpetuity' and binding upon current and successive landowners, as well as the NSW Government

It's important that I explain why my husband and I entered such an agreement with the NSW Government, before I focus on the

Department's report, as I believe the finding's of the Department's Assessment Report have the potential to implicate the NSW Government in a breach of its contractual commitments, were it to approve the Hume Coal Project.

Put simply, Billarimba plays host to:

- **Three rare and endangered plant species** under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 – Kunzea Cambegei, Eucalyptus Apiculata, and Grevillea Raybrownii
- **The Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby**, which is also classified under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995
- **A Koala corridor, as identified by experts from the National Koala Survey (2014)**, and documented by numerous sightings of scats and tracings since 1992, all of which confirm that koalas are living and moving through Berrima and Medway properties as well as Billarimba, and that this area represents a crucial habitat imperative to their breeding, and therefore the future of the species

And, the property adjoins Crown Land linked directly to Bangadilly National Park, which is an active and proven wildlife corridor used by many animals, both common and endangered.

My husband and I joined the Conservation Partners Programme in 2010 in order to better protect the extraordinary wealth of wildlife species we have discovered that make Billarimba home - over the past three decades.

The Department of Planning and Environment's assessment of Hume Coal's EIS confirms our concerns that the project is not in the public interest.

My greatest concern are statements in the report concerning:

- The mine's untested 'Pine Feather' design
- The risk of mine water being discharged into surface watercourses

- That fact that Hume Coal has not assessed this risk, or proposed a water treatment plant to prevent polluted water reaching the water catchment
- The significant impacts on the groundwater table's drawdown
- The potential for coal dust particulates to affect both residents and wildlife
- The uncertainty about the mine's design and the methodology underpinning the geotechnical model

It seems extraordinary that when the Department says it has never been in a situation where there are such large predicted impacts on private water bores, that the NSW Government could contemplate that the Hume Coal Project is compatible with the Conservation Agreement it has entered over Billarimba.

The threat to the groundwater table cannot be disassociated from the threat posed to both wildlife and the habitat we have agreed to protect, in perpetuity.

If Billarimba's habitat is adversely affected by a combination of the predicted groundwater drawdown - which will occur for a minimum of 76 years - as well as future and present drought conditions, it is impossible to imagine that the flora and fauna we have sought to preserve will not be permanently altered.

That is before considering the additional impacts mentioned in the report such as:

- Noise
- Vibration
- Air quality
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Traffic
- Biodiversity

I would suggest that the IPC cannot contemplate approving any mining application that would result in such a large a coal processing area, within 3 kilometers of Billarimba or the Wingecarribee River, without identifying that this would breach the Precautionary Principle.

After nearly three decades of living at Billarimba, I can verify that its native fauna is exceptionally shy, sensitive to human movement, and particularly active at night. Billarimba is very quiet, virtually unaltered by development, and is thriving today despite showing signs of stress caused by the current drought.

But this habitat, which is conducive to the preservation of our endangered species and plants will be forever changed if you allow the Hume Coal Project to proceed.

Even if operating conditions were applied, it would be impossible to mitigate the cumulative effect of its 24-hour a day, seven day a week noise, vibration and night light that would be generated.

There will be coal stockpiling, a coal washery, conveyor belts, diesel trains, a loading facility, heavy machinery movements as well as all the associated traffic and activity generated.

If the NSW Government approves this mine, POSCO, a company that has never built a coal mine before, will be granted approval to risk the preservation of Billarimba by building an ecologically unsustainable project that is not in the public interest.

Please recommend that the Hume Coal Project not be approved.

But please go a step further and recommend that the exploration license that Hume Coal owns be revoked permanently, so this vital habitat can be permanently preserved for future generations, and not be the subject of repeated attempts by successive leaseholders to build a coal mine that will affect the aquifer.

Wendy and Mark Alexander

