

“Reclaiming our Valley”

Hunter Communities Network

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Thursday 20 December 2012

SUBMISSION of OBJECTION

Drayton South Coal Project
Application Number: 11_0062

Dear Mr Mooney

The Hunter Communities Network (HCN) is an alliance of community based groups and individuals impacted by the current coal industry and concerned about the ongoing rapid expansion of coal and coal seam gas exploration and mining in the region.

HCN is lodging an objection to the proposed Drayton South Coal Project because the Hunter Valley environment and communities who live in the region have reached saturation point from the cumulative impacts of open cut coal mining operations.

The proposal to continue open cut operations up the Hunter River to the west of Jerry's Plains will cause cumulative impacts on surface and groundwater, community health, traffic movements, biodiversity and the viability of other industries adjacent to the proposal.

HCN considers the effort taken in the environmental assessment report for the Drayton South project to prove that there will be no impact on neighbouring world class thoroughbred horse studs is a cynical exercise at best and misleading at worst.

The proposed open cut mining operation will be conducted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 27 years. To compare this with the impact of transporting horses and claim that horses already live in dusty environments is a misinformed demonstration of compromised expertise.

The Hunter River is already suffering from too much loss of base flow and surface flows through cumulative mining interception. The catchment already has too many final voids with many centuries worth of unmanageable impacts. Too much remnant vegetation has already been

cleared from the valley floor removing too much habitat for threatened species with national environmental significance.

Too many properties have already been purchased by the mining industry and sterilised from agricultural production. Too much dust is now being generated across the region, as demonstrated by the regular high alerts measured by the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network. The health of remaining communities in the valley is at severe risk.

The loss of a diverse agricultural economy in the region is at a tipping point with the Drayton South proposal. The possible loss of the neighbouring Coolmore and Woodlands world class thoroughbred horse studs will cause the Hunter's reputation to diminish. Other studs are likely to follow and the region will no longer be known as a centre of excellence for race horse breeding.

The proximity of eleven dairy farms, four vineyards, three wineries and an olive farm with processing plant gives an indication of the diversity of economic opportunities at risk from this proposal. These industries employ local people from local communities and have a much longer lifespan than coal mining operations. These industries cannot operate sustainably in conditions of increased air pollution, noise and blasting impacts.

HCN is concerned that the economic assessment for the Drayton South project has been conducted by Gillespie Economics, the same consultant used to assess the Ashton South East Opencut, Warkworth Extension, Cobbora Coal project and many other mining proposals in NSW. This consultancy has been found to use out dated input-output modelling methods that are no longer used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. These methods inflate the economic and job creation benefits of a mining project while discounting other considerable social and environmental costs.

HCN is also concerned about the increased danger on local and regional roads through increased heavy vehicle movements and mine workers driving after 12 hour shifts. The mortality rate on the New England Highway caused by mine related traffic is now untenable.

The environmental assessment of the Drayton South Coal project has not adequately addressed the range of cumulative impacts that cannot be mitigated or offset.

The lives of the remaining community members hanging on in the Upper Hunter are already severely impacted by existing open cut mining operations. There is no suitable justification for these impacts to continue to increase.

HCN calls on the NSW Government to reject this mining proposal on the grounds of unmanageable cumulative impact.

Yours sincerely



Bev Smiles

On behalf of Hunter Communities Network