

Gloucester Residents in Partnership
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Gloucester Residents in Partnership (GRIP) is opposed to the Port Waratah Coal Services Terminal 4 proposal.

As a community group representing Gloucester Shire residents we believe the coal terminal will increase the extraction industries hold on the Upper Hunter. The substantial increase in coal production needed will impact dramatically on the communities, land, water, air and environment of the region.

As more and more reliance is placed on coal extraction for employment and the economy, so other industries suffer. Sustainable industries such as agriculture, tourism, dairying, vineyards and horse breeding are already feeling the impact of the increased need by the mines for land and resources. Communities are under extreme stress from aggressive mining practices and the fallout from the cumulative effects of mining activities.

Coal production is reliant on overseas coal prices. The recent downturn has seen employment levels drop in the region. More reliance on coal production as the sole employer is not sustainable. When the mines cease operation, which is inevitable, what industries will be left to pick up the slack?

One area of concern is the increase in particle pollution from dust emissions. Regular warnings of excessive levels of pollution are already common place in the Hunter effecting thousands of people. With ten new coal mines the impact will multiply dramatically. An additional 70Mt of coal exported will mean thousands of extra train journeys on the rail line passing through communities. There are over 30,000 people living within 500m of the rail corridor and 23,000 students attend 16 schools. NSW Health noted in their submission to the EA that the contribution of coal dust from coal trains beyond 20m from the rail corridor needs to be carefully considered. This recommendation is ignored in the RT/PPR.

The World Health Organisation lists diesel emissions as a carcinogen yet the EA failed to address diesel exhaust emissions. A recommendation for a comprehensive health assessment was ignored.

The greatest concern for small communities like Gloucester is the heavy reliance on coal production as the answer to economic development. The recent Gloucester Resources Limited proposal for the Rocky Hill Coal Project illustrates how mining companies inflate their worth to communities. The cumulative impacts far out way any perceived advantages and leave rural communities reliant on a polluting, outdated industry with no sustainability.

To pursue the path of coal production is the death knell for the Hunter. The approval of this port is short sighted and counterproductive for continued growth and prosperity for the residents of the Hunter and Upper Hunter. It is time to look beyond coal and put the immense resources needed for its existence into sustainable industries.

Dianne Montague

President
Gloucester Residents in Partnership