

9 September 2013

Director, Mining Projects
Development Assessment Systems & Approvals
Department of Planning & Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Sir/Madam,

Submission opposing Rocky Hill Coal Project - Application No SSD-5156

As a resident living in Forbesdale, south of Gloucester, and approximately 1km from the proposed Rocky Hill open cut coal mine I express my total opposition to this, or any other mine, so close to residential areas.

The complete disregard which the proponent has for the people they intend to inflict this monstrosity on is alarming. The proponent has had absolutely no contact with me and my family, nor my close neighbours. Despite claims in the local newspaper, The Advocate, that the proponent, Gloucester Resources Limited (GRL) is open and willing to “consult” with the public, it has no publicly listed phone number and has no GRL website. The Rocky Hill Coal Project website contains no names, addresses or phone numbers.

GRL has opened a temporary “shopfront” in the Gloucester community, but as it only opens for 2 x half days a week for only 4 weeks – not even the length of the exhibition period – it is easy to see the company’s contempt for the community. Unfortunately I am not able to avail myself of this wonderful opportunity to hear the company propaganda. What I have heard is that GRL has not kept its promise of having a 3D model of the Rocky Hill mine. What other promises are they not keeping?

The NSW Government’s approval system makes it very difficult for those who wish to lodge submissions as the EIS exhibition period is relatively a short, especially when compared to the time taken by the proponent in its EIS preparation, and is insufficient time for expert opinion to be sought – even if we had the funds to do so.

Consequently, I must rely on various other organisations with the Gloucester Valley which have more resources to respond to the EIS. I fully support the submissions which will be lodged by the Forbesdale Resident Action Group, Gloucester Residents in Partnership and Gloucester Shire Council, among others, and I hope these submissions will be given the time and attention they deserve.

I realise that my protestations will have little impact or influence on your decision – Forbesdale residents are destined to become collateral damage in the quest to fill Government coffers and feed the insatiable appetites of overseas investors. Those of us in the firing line understand the futility of this EIS exhibition period.

There are so many reasons why **this mine should not be approved**. And these reasons should reinforce your decision to **place my home within an acquisition zone** so that I may leave this living nightmare.

I am genuinely too upset and distraught about the whole situation to try and refute the opinions of coal-company paid consultants. The mental health impacts of this proposal have brought me near to breaking point, and I am not alone.

Since there are 2km exclusion zones for wind farms, and now some CSG fields (although not for the AGL project in Gloucester and Forbesdale), I find it unbelievable that I can be forced to live with an open cut coal mine as close as 200m from my home. Surely out of coal, wind and CSG, coal would be the most harmful, so why are we not protected? Why am I and the 30 families who live nearby not worth considering?

The health issues related to open cut coal mining cannot be ignored, despite GRL's "peer-reviewed health study". One only has to read information from Doctors for the Environment, or to hear Dr Au from Singleton speak about the health issues there to know what we are in for.

Additionally, the information contained in books such as "Rich Land, Waste Land" by Sharyn Munro provide insight into what has been endured by many people, yet ignored by Government and mining companies. Have you read that book?

My views of the valley at the moment are wonderful. They are the reason why I chose to live here. The visibility barriers are aptly named. The barriers might try to hide the mine workings but they will be very visible and a total eyesore. I can assure GRL that after 6 months I will not be so used to them that they will disappear from view and become part of the landscape. The steepness of the barriers will not allow vegetation to grow successfully but rather will be eroded by rain or create dust storms when it is windy. Every time I look out the window, walk out the door, or try to work in my garden, I will be confronted with this nasty view.

This proposed mine has no social licence. Over 80% of the Gloucester population do not want any expansion of mining in this valley. And certainly there are no residents of Forbesdale who want this mine.

Many of us would like to leave the area but houses are just not selling. And even if they did, we are lead to believe that the price would be so low that not only would we sustain huge losses, but we wouldn't even get enough money to buy another house. Why should residents such as me (who have worked hard all their life to purchase their only asset) have to experience such heartbreaking monetary loss on top of the loss of our wonderful homes, neighbourhood and beautiful views. The loss of everything we hold dear.

You might be interested in taking a look at the website www.rockyhell.com – read some of the stories about the people who live in Forbesdale. We are real people.

Issues which concern me as a nearby resident are:

- Health issues, both physical and mental. Particularly in relation to noise, dust, infrasound, sleep deprivation, blast fumes, etc., etc. Including the level of exceedences which GRL proposes.
- Loss of value of my home, and in fact the inability to even sell my home.
- Loss of visual amenity.
- Damage to my home from blasting and vibration.
- Loss of the pleasure of the environment, my property and my garden.
- Even if there is no Stage 2 of Rocky Hill (which is highly unlikely) it will be up to 21 years before this Stage 1 mine finishes. Many older Forbesdale residents will either need to move to supported living arrangements or will die before the end of this mine's life. How do families cope with an unsellable property and the financial implications of this? What do we do?

Other issues which concern me are:

- The proposed bio-diversity offset area is not a like-for-like situation. The offset area is on a relatively steep hillside which has been partially cleared and also has been recently burnt.

- The proposal that there will be no void left at the end of this mine life. If you take out 50 million tonnes of coal (2.5 million tonnes per year for up to 21 years) where is the replacement material to come from? And at what cost?
- Lack of social licence for this mine, despite what GRL says.
- Over-estimation of the positive economic impacts of this mine, and the under-estimation of the negative impacts.
- The impact on health for the residents of Gloucester. Schools, hospitals and many homes fall well within the 5km impact zone for the Rocky Hill mine. PM2.5 dust particles travel great distances and cause the most health damage. I'm very concerned that with the race to extract as much coal as possible we will have a generation with coal dust related health issues, much like that experienced with asbestos. The NSW State Government may well have to contend with class actions in the future.
- Loss of farm land, and the families which that land supported.
- Impact on tourism, which is a \$30M industry with the potential to increase.
- Increased traffic volumes which will have a negative impact, not only on Council infrastructure, but on those residents who live near Jacks Road and McKinleys Lane.
- Risk of contamination of the Avon River, which forms part of the water catchment for the water supply for 80,000 people in Taree and other towns in the Manning Valley.
- Loss of the Aero Club as it currently operates.

And of course you are not allowed to consider cumulative impacts, which means that you will consider this proposal in isolation, notwithstanding that GRL intends there to be a Stage 2 - and more - of the Rocky Hill mine; that the Yancoal Stratford mine is awaiting the outcome of its application to extend that mine; and that AGL is wanting to commence Stage 1 of their CSG project and a number of these wells will also be within 1km of my home. How much do you think one little community should bear?

For me and my neighbours at Forbesdale the only thing which we will experience is loss. Loss of health, loss of home, loss of money, loss of the reason why we came to live here. We have absolutely nothing to gain. Not a thing.

Please, refuse this mine application. Even better, extinguish EL areas so that we don't have to live through this again. If you don't, then the least you can do is to place my home in an acquisition zone. Any other outcome will be unbearable.

Yours sincerely,

Name withheld