

27 September 2013

3 Forbesdale Close  
Gloucester NSW 2422

The Director General  
The Department of Planning and Infrastructure  
23 – 33 Bridge Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir

Re: Development Application SSD 5156 – Rocky Hill Coal Project – Forbesdale

I am writing to you today to voice my opposition to the proposed Rocky Hill Coal Mine.

It is my fervent hope that this mine will be stopped or, if the unthinkable occurs and it is approved, that the Department will order GRL to include the Forbesdale Estate in the “area of affectation” and purchase my property and those of my neighbours so that we can move on and resume our lives in an area that is not within 2km (and in many cases closer) of an open cut coal mine with all its attendant health, noise (both obvious and low frequency), light disturbance and visual amenity horrors.

If the human face of this situation is not paramount in your consideration of whether or not this mine should be approved, it should be. I recently heard an interview with Political Strategist Mark Textor who claimed that “politicians seek to understand the person not the issue...” That certainly does not sound like the successive State Government’s that have ridden roughshod over our rights as home/landowners.

Let me tell you my story.

After having visited friends in the Gloucester area during our holidays for almost 8 years, there came a day when my children and I said to ourselves “Let’s move here!” as we loved everything about the place and had done enough research over the years about the accessibility to the city and the coast, the vibrant community, wonderful High School and my employment prospects to know we could make it work. When most 12 year old girls are still playing with dolls, my daughter was trawling the internet looking at Real Estate sites. She found the house we ultimately bought in early 2009.

My husband passed away in 1996 after a long and devastating illness (melanoma) when our son James was 4 years, and our daughter Caitlin 11 months old. The children and I moved from the Gold Coast hinterland to live with my parents in South Turramurra on Sydney’s North Shore in 1998. After caring for both parents until their deaths in 2000 and 2007 we were left grieving and devastated having lost our three most loved family members and our entire support system. We were left emotionally and financially compromised and were forced to sell our home in Sydney.

Gloucester became the light in our future. We bought a house that we could afford and one in which we could realize our dream of a quiet life in a rural town with the kind of lifestyle that many people envied.

Despite the sadness of having lost my husband (soulmate and best friend and the irreplaceable father of my children) and both parents (both adored and a huge part of our lives) I had a renewed optimism that moving to the country (a lifelong dream) was absolutely the right thing to do despite some concerns from well meaning friends and relatives in the city. I was able to find full time work, I had a house that I loved on just under 4 acres that would support a horse and chickens and a veggie patch. The proximity to town, views that most people only see in postcards and fresh air and peace and quiet sealed the deal. Not to mention exquisite neighbours who would all eventually become friends.

Sadly for me, I have been unable to plant any trees or gardens or that veggie patch on my block as I feel mentally crippled by the knowledge that any money, time or effort spent will ever be rewarded. By the end of 2009 my dream was quickly turning into a nightmare with the exploration licences in the area having been given the go ahead by the State Government. Fast forward four years and countless worried, sleepless nights, and here we are living the nightmare that is now GRL's Rocky Hill.

A huge rally in town attended by myself and over 900 people in early 2009 told us that there was vehement opposition to the mine. The fight has been waged ever since and this has taken a huge toll. Along with many others, I have for the first time in my life, experienced anxiety and depression so crippling at times that I have had to accept the prescription of anti-depressant drugs and psychological counselling. I still see a counsellor once a month.

Since the beginning of time, the Worimi and Biripi tribes had custodianship of this fertile and abundant valley. In the 1840's early European settlers founded a significant agriculture area and this valley was developed and proved its farming worth. Farmers in this area are running productive viable operations. Politicians need to ask themselves – where does my food come from?

As an island, we need to feed ourselves, and so we should with all the resources available to us. Freight from countries far away is mindless as is the theory that we are a global economy and need to share and apportion resources with our neighbours. This may to some extent be true of small European countries where freight costs and distances are much smaller – but Australia is a long way from the rest of the commercial world and I believe we have a responsibility to feed ourselves and to export food to other less lucky countries rather importing it which is what will ultimately happen if we turn our beautiful farmland into coal mines and gas fields.

With less than 6% arable land available, it astounds and dismays me that governments don't take this issue more seriously. This is a big country with many more appropriate places to mine – it is beyond me how anyone could take for granted the beauty of this valley, its town and rivers and farmland, its tourism value – Barrington Tops is a world heritage site for goodness sake!

People who drop into our business in town constantly remark what a beautiful area we live in, and it used to be with pride that we agreed. In the last few years I feel sorrow when I hear these remarks as I fear the knowledge of what a coal mine will do to this town will send tourists packing and many locals to the wall.

Gloucester is a unique and well preserved town with profitable, vibrant businesses employing many, many people. Towns like this in NSW and around Australia should be valued for what they represent - a link to our diverse and productive past and a reminder of the history and origins of our farming roots and should remain a vital hub for food production, tourism opportunities and a haven for the flora and fauna of our pristine rivers and forests. Natural resources (not mineral resources) found in this agriculturally viable land should be protected. Especially its people and the special community spirit and values they share.

I am one of those people.

To conclude, this is how I see my position:

My property is my only financial asset.

I have all my eggs in one basket.

I have minimal superannuation (my house was to represent that).

My property is virtually worthless.

I have debts that will take me the rest of my working life to repay.

My children are looking down the barrel of zero financial legacy from me.

I have no choices for my future.

I hope that in your decision regarding the future of this coalmine and our town you can tell me that I am wrong and that I do have a future.

As I sit here this morning witnessing the peace - listening to the birdsong wake the valley, watching the mist rise and fall and rise again, observing our horse peacefully grazing and the colours of the sunrise, I am reminded of the reasons we chose this place to live.

For us this is paradise.

Rocky Hill will mean paradise lost.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Wardrop

e: [k.wardrop@bigpond.com](mailto:k.wardrop@bigpond.com)

m: 0413 133 429