

18.10.2013

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

Dear Sir

ROCKY HILL COAL PROJECT – DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION SSD-5156

I am writing to oppose the Gloucester Resources Ltd's development application for an open cut mine near the Gloucester township. I am concerned that there seems to be no real regulation of this industry in that it is permitted to explore in closely settled areas with the clear intent to mine if generally porous, negotiable, 'reasonable' consent conditions can be agreed.

Large areas of the Hunter Valley are already seriously degraded due to the activities of mining companies. It is clear that there is currently a push to approve as many mining projects as possible within the Hunter region. The chief beneficiaries of coal mining are large corporations, and this mining is done at the expenses of community health and our environment. I am strongly opposed to mining of any kind in the Gloucester area as the short term profits it generates are not justified when valued against the beauty and natural assets of the region, and the health and wellbeing of local residents.

In Rocky Hill's case there are real issues about GRL's conscience to curb its intrusion into this valley and equally government's readiness to acknowledge that Gloucester is worth protection. Historically, government has only recognised Gloucester's worth as a source of mineral and petroleum resources to be 'harvested' - regardless of community concerns. These concerns relate to personal health, children's health, environment, permanent damage to water and soil systems, and jeopardising the long term self sustaining industries that have generated naturally in this community.

In many respects Gloucester is already a very Significant State Development project. Different from GRL's short term damaging development with long term legacies, Gloucester is an ongoing project worth billions. It relies on natural growth via internal wealth and wellbeing processes. If it were allowed to decide for itself on a coal future, it would reject it because a damaging hungry industry is the antithesis of the defining qualities of Gloucester.

Much is made of the economic value that GRL might bring to Gloucester. Expert review asserts that GRL projections are wildly optimistic, do not accommodate the full costs to Gloucester the State and Federally, have not taken into account full life cycle costs, nor the acknowledged industry and community adjustment costs when mining finally and rapidly withdraws. GRL, quite inappropriately, has also applied a multiplier which will miraculously deliver unheard of prosperity. They have not detailed the potential impact and reach of a two-tiered economy on Gloucester. Neither have they costed it.

GRL makes much of the employment opportunities for Gloucester. Opportunities are not jobs. The Gloucester experience is that mining jobs commonly are filled by drive-in-drive-out workers who spend very little of their money in Gloucester. These workers are drawn from the ready supply of qualified staff in the Hunter and from larger population centres along the coast.

On the matter of noise, GRL will not state definitively when coal trains will be loaded - a process they project will take 90 minutes per train. Instead they argue that they cannot provide likely train loading times because they will have to fit in with ARTC operations. This seems superficially to be quite reasonable - until it happens. GRL needs to declare that there will be a curfew on rail

operations. The airline industry can do it. So can GRL and ARTC. This is an area worthy of critical, community-biased, scrutiny by the Assessment Committee.

On Forbesdale Estate and surrounding area, within 2Km of the proposed mine, families enjoy a healthy and peaceful life. This will be lost by day. Their nights will consist of strong lights reflecting off airborne coal dust, the noises of various vehicles, coal being loaded on coal trains for 90 minutes per train and the noise of the coal conveyor as it fills the coal loader. All this will happen in a small valley every night of their lives. GRL has no answer for this.

There is no rational reason why Gloucester Vale should be permanently damaged for the comparatively small coal resource being sought - and the highly questionable economic benefit touted as flowing to the state and local economies.

Please:

" -" Refuse GRL's Rocky Hill coal mine proposal.

" -" Permanently protect Gloucester and closely settled areas.

I have made no reportable political donations.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J. Castles'.

Ms Julie M. Castles