



DRIFTA

CAMPING KITCHENS

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Submission regarding my opposition to the rocky hill mine...

My name is Luke Sutton and I own and manage Drifta Kitchens. I have been operating this business for 14 years, and 10 years now in Gloucester... I came here with no employees, just ourselves, and we have built the business to now employing 26 staff... Drifta really comprises 5 separate businesses, although all linked.. 1, we manufacture a range of camping trailer kitchens, all of my own design, 2, a large range of 4wd drawers, also we fit out a lot of vans, 3, we are fitting out now our own brand of camping trailer, soon to be building them here on site, 4, we sell a large range of camping accessories, 4wd accessories, and 5, we are the national importers of a camping brand 'snow peak' that is made in Japan....our current turnover is averaging \$85 000 a week.. \$20 000 of this is wages.. every week..

We sell all our products online, thru our extensive website, and youtube videos.. we send out products out Australia wide, and even overseas..

Every year I have been here, for the last ten years, we have expanded our factory.. currently we are about to put down a concrete slab, and start to build a 30 meter factory, so we can manufacture our camping trailers.. our trailer is unique in the industry, it has a niche market, and we are already selling one a week... I think we'll be building and selling two a week by Easter next year...

Our factory is in Lowe St, near the railway, and not far from Rocky Hill mine. We live in the end of our factory. We often have early/late pickups or drop-offs of goods, customers on weekends, so it's important for us to live here..

We have a great business, employ a lot of people, are still expanding, but the Rocky Hill mine has me very concerned..

Why am I objecting..

While personally not totally against coal mines, I am very much against Rocky Hill mine.. for no other reason that it is simply too close to Gloucester.. there must be a line, a boundary, or a rule as to say where is acceptable and where is not.. if coal was under our Billabong Park, should they create a mine and start to dig it up? No, it's too close.. well Rocky Hill is simply too close also.. it's wrong, it's completely wrong, and it should not go ahead..

I think it's terribly dishonest for the way Jacks Road subdivision blocks have been sold to people, who have come and built their dream home in a country setting, without disclosing information about the mine. These people are there, they are living there, they are there first, and you cannot allow a mine to be created so close to these residents..

I live just over the hill from Jacks Road estates.. I am right on the edge of town...

If the mine goes ahead, I will be leaving.. firstly, I will do everything I can to ensure the mine doesn't go ahead, but I am not going to stay, and live next to a coal mine.. Australia is a big place, a clean, natural, beautiful place, and I wouldn't choose to stay next to a noisy, dirty polluting mine.

Unfortunately, being the owner / manager of the business, where I go the business will go..

Many of our staff are not from Gloucester.. we have staff from Taree, Nelson Bay, Dungog, Stroud Road, Wales, Bundook, Craven etc.. some travel here to work, others have relocated to Gloucester.. currently, I am having real trouble sourcing staff from Gloucester.. if I advertise for an apprentice cabinetmaker, I often can't fill the position with someone suitable.. all our recent staff have come from outside Gloucester..

The mine/ mines in the area already has an impact on our staff.. I have upwards pressure on our wages, because of the threat of staff leaving for the mines, but at the same time I have downwards pressure on our prices, as we are competing directly with China for the products we produce.. if Rocky Hill comes to town, it will compete for staff with businesses already operating in town.. there are plenty of people around, but there unfortunately are not many people around who can work, have the skills to work, and want to work.. with the offer of big money, businesses in Gloucester, not just my own, will lose valuable staff to Rocky Hill.. most businesses in Australia are struggling.. very few are doing well..

manufacturing and retail particularly so.. many business owners gets to a point, where it just isn't worth continuing... retaining our staff, and being able to employ the people we need, is a real issue for us, and if rocky hill goes ahead, it will make it much more difficult.

As a business, we initially bought two blocks here.. i had no idea or intention of creating a business with 26 staff.. we are still growing rapidly.. once our new factory goes ahead, by early next year, we will have 30 staff.. where will it end, how far will it go.. i'm not sure, but i'm happy to take it as far as i can... one of our main concerns , for me, looking ahead for the next ten years, is that we have run completely out of room.. our office was designed for two, it now has 6 staff.. we don't have any more room to build new factory space... this is the single factor that will stop the growth that we have achieved so far...

So, i have a big decision to make in the next 12 months.. do we stay here in Gloucester, attempt to purchase another block next door (currently not a possibility) , or do we sell/ rent our current factory, and build a new premisis... we need something on 3-4acres, and a much larger factory area..

I can choose to do this in Gloucester, or somewhere else.. as all of our product is sent out, or people come to us, the business can easily relocate anywhere.. we don't have really any sales in Gloucester itself.. the majority would be the Newcastle / Sydney area, then brisbane/ Melbourne, then other areas right round Australia.. the dollars that drifta bring to town, are like export dollars for Gloucester..

When i initially started my business, we were in blayney, central west nsw, where i grew up.. this was an ideal location for the business, but not somewhere i wanted to live, so we decided to move.. we could have located our business anywhere between Melbourne and Brisbane, and spent two years looking for a suitable location.. someone suggested Gloucester, which i hadn't heard of, we checked it out, and decided straight away this was such a beautiful place, we would love to live here, and establish our business.. which we have done..

Things are changing rapidly in the Gloucester valley, and it's quickly becoming a place that there is no way i would relocate to here if i had to move today.. i'm very much also against AGL's coal seam gas.. we'll end up having a situation here like fukishima in japan, where the pollution we create, won't be able to be reversed.... people need to remember, that we are just people on a tiny pin prick of a planet, the only one, floating around in an infinite universe... humans need firstly clean air to breath, secondly clean water to drink, thirdly clean food to eat... what we are doing to our planet is an extremely sad reflection of who we are as people.. people have been living on this planet for thousands of years, and should for thousands more to come.. what right do we have to destroy this planet in the space of 100 years.. our coal is going to china, people there cannot breath.. they cannot drink the water.. their food is contaminated.. the whole south of japan, now is suffering from chinese pollution, drifting across the ocean.. what the hell are we doing. !! if Gloucester, the beautiful natural place it is, becomes polluted, from coal and gas, what hope is there for any of us.. are the chinese so happy they have jobs, even though they can't breath?? History is going to look back on our generations, as the generation that destroyed our planet, the only planet with life, in existence.. for what, ?? so we can have a job.. for our 'way of life, for our standard of living'? for 'economic' reasons... currently, economic reasons are becoming the principle reason, the principle consideration, for whether something like a mine or gas operation goes ahead... this is wrong.. it should be firstly and solely an environmental considerations... one , does it pollute the air, does it pollute the water, and does it pollute the ground.. if it does, in any unsustainable way, then it should not proceed, irrespective of economic reasons.. we are looking only 5 -10 years ahead.. how much money can we make.. this is wrong.. we need to be looking a thousand years ahead.. what impact are we having on this planet that will impact on people in a thousand years time..

There are many places around here, some close by, where we could relocate our business if we had to.. dungog, forster, witham, Bulahdelah, we have already begun looking at these areas..

Another issue we have, is many of our customers travel a long way to come here to get our products.. people travel from Melbourne and Brisbane, to get for example drawers or vans fitted out.. because Gloucester is such a beautiful place, they decide to make a trip of it, and stay for a few days, often camping in the tops... it's not worth coming here from Melbourne to pick up our product and drive back, but to stay a few days and look around, then this is worthwhile... but already, the negative news from the coal and gas industry is having an impact on our customers, some are deciding not to travel here.. if rocky hill goes ahead this will become much worse, people will not come to town, and we will lose orders.. we are already seeing this, we deal with over 50 customers from round Australia every week. The perception is Gloucester is / going to become a dirty polluted place... all business's in town will suffer from this..

End of the day, it might seem selfish, but it comes down to where i want to live, and where i want to raise my family..i'm not from Gloucester, i have no family here, all my long term friends are not from here, and while i LOVE living here, at the moment, this may well change very quickly..i'm NOT going to continue to live here, if this mine goes ahead.. i'm very much hoping sense prevails, and the mine doesn't go ahead, and i can continue to invest myself, my family and my business in Gloucester, i would wish to retire here... but if rocky hill goes ahead, i will be forced to move out of town..

We employ 26 staff.. soon it will be 30.. how many more after that?? In two years we could employ 50.. We are still growing and expanding... four and a half million dollars a year we currently turn over, much of it spent directly in Gloucester.. 20 thousand dollars a week in wages, the vast majority of that i would think spent directly in town... rocky hill mine says there will be benefits to the town .. drifta moving out of Gloucester, would not be good for the town, and would be a direct consequence of rocky hill opening up..