

The Manning Alliance Inc
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NSW 2429
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Objection to the Rocky Hill Coal Project, Development Application SSD-5156

Health

The health impacts of mining, transporting and burning coal are well known and pose one of the most significant mass health issues of our time. We note that the highly respected organisation "Doctors for the Environment (DEA)", have recently expressed serious concerns about the health consequences of coal mining on communities throughout Australia.

Yet Gloucester Resources Limited (GRL) are proposing to build a mine as close as 1700 metres from residents. These health impacts involve physical damage to the cardiovascular system, respiratory system, brain, liver and kidneys.

Additionally there is also significant individual mental health damage, from psychosocial stressors, noise and sleep disruption.

The intrusion of GRL even in its exploration stage has already caused enduring psychological stress particularly for those residents in the direct path of the mine.

The consequences incorporate mortality, deaths and morbidity, which includes both disease and disability. These are both acute episodes of illness e.g. asthma and cardiac arrhythmias and chronic damage e.g. chronic obstructive airways disease (COAD) and strokes from cerebral arteriosclerosis, which involve impairment accumulating over time.

The NSW Government should not be deliberately permitting such health consequences to permeate throughout any community let alone in the confined geographical circumstances of Gloucester.

Distance from the mine.

There is a significant concern and the obvious consequences of the proximity of the proposed mine to the built up areas and residences.

Statement from GRL: *"The closest resident to any pit will be 1.7 kms away."*

Fact - From the main extraction boundary area:

- Is the Forbesdale Estate, of 35 rural / residential properties, which are situated only 900 metres to 1800 metres away,

- the Thunderbolts Estate and Avon View residential estates, to the north, situated 1.8 kms to 2.5 kms,
- the rural /residential properties along the Buckett's Way are situated 1.8 kms to 2.5 kms.

There are many residents who will directly suffer the consequences including the noise and the dust from this mine. Even coal seam gas wells and wind farms are legislated to be no closer than 2kms from a residential areas.

Open Cut Coal Mining results in negative health consequences in a number of ways.

Dust causes multiple types of health impairment both from the different sizes of particle and the different chemical contents of those particles. Dust is produced both from overburden and coal in extraction, processing, transportation and rehabilitation.

Mechanical processes tend to result in coarse, PM 10 or 10 microns, and very coarse sized particles PM 50. These cause amenity problems such as depositing coal dust on your roof accelerating rusting through the sulphur content and coating your washing line. Coarse particles get trapped in the nose and large bronchi and can exacerbate bronchitis, COAD and irritate the eyes.

Incendiary processes such as working diesel machinery, locomotives and blasting result in fine PM2.5 and ultrafine PM 0.1 particles. These fine particles can get into the lung tissue, between the alveolar cells, like bacteria. The particles set up inflammatory reactions, which release chemicals into the blood supply, which narrows fine blood vessels. This causes strokes, heart attacks, diabetes and reduces the birth weight of babies. Ultra fine particles, like viruses, get inside cells where they can damage genes and lead to cancers and mutations. Toxic gases such as sulphur di-oxide, nitrous oxides and carbon monoxide are also produced. PM 2.5 and PM0.1 particles are like cigarettes, there is no absolutely safe level and the higher the dose the higher is the risk. If you live near a mine on average your life expectancy is reduced by nine months. The very young, the elderly, the chronically sick and the socially disadvantaged are at greatest risk.

There are no mandatory maximum levels for diesel exhaust emissions from off road machines.

They use about a litre of diesel for each ton of coal produced i.e. 2 million litres+/yr. Diesel exhaust fumes are a Grade 1 carcinogen.

Employment

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

The "employment" is offset by local employment, ie tourism and agriculture. This is not an economic win for the Gloucester Valley and its surrounds.

Noise

GRL have refused to state specifically when coal trains will be loaded - a process which they claim will take 90 minutes per train. Clearly this 90 minutes is an average time, calculated over a number of loads extrapolated from other locations. The noise harm is not just from an average loading time, but from the more extreme examples where it takes 120 minutes or 180 minutes to load a train at midnight or at 3 am. Trains could be loaded at any time of day or night. In regional and country areas noise travels significant distances and echoes throughout open spaces, particularly in a valley such as Gloucester, surrounded by mountains. It is unacceptable for the NSW Government to allow such loading operations without the imposition of strict curfew. There is already have an established process of curfews for the airline industry.

If GRL has to work in with ARTC operations, then the Gloucester community should not have to subsidize this commercial cost of operating this business nor quite frankly the activities of ARTC. This is an area worthy of critical, community-biased, scrutiny by the Assessment Committee.

Rehabilitation

Mines are never rehabilitated to the same level that the land was previously. The very nature of stripping the topsoil destroys the structure and water holding capability of the soil. Ripping the understory out and replacing with mine tailings then re-piling the topsoil will cover holes, but it will never hold water, or emulate nature. Rehabilitation is a myth.

Implications on the Manning Valley

The Manning River and many of its 300 odd tributaries all emanate around the Gloucester Valley and the Gloucester Region. It has already been widely acknowledged that Gloucester Valley has a highly complex and very sensitive hydrogeology. The cumulative impacts of mining, particular the GRL Coal mining projects together with the already approved AGL 110 CSG well project (which could be

expanded to over 330 wells), may have very severe consequences upon the Manning River and ultimately on the 80,000 people who rely on this river for their water supply and for their livelihoods.

Clearly there are risks to the health of the entire river system and consequence that will flow. The downstream river system supports aquaculture businesses, which require clean fresh water to continue business of oyster growing, tourism, fishing and supports fish habitat for fish breeding.

We note that the AGL project is the subject of further studies including a bioregional assessment; clearly the cumulative impacts of the GRL together with the AGL project cannot be excluded nor

ignored from the region as their collective impact many have quite severe consequence on the entire region.

Social Licence

The NSW Coalition Government promised to introduce the Triple Bottom Line assessments for major projects. The Rocky Hill Coal Mine is strenuously opposed by the population of Gloucester and its surrounds and it clearly does not have a social licence.