

Submission to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment  
re:

**Rocky Hill Coal Project – Application No SSD-5156**  
**Stratford Coal Extension Project – Application No SSD - 4966 MOD1**

Name: Rex Graham  
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Date: 10 Sept 16

Director – Resource Assessments  
Planning Services  
Department of Planning & Environment  
GPO Box 39  
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Dear Sir/Madam

I oppose the Rocky Hill Coal Project and Stratford Mine modification on the following 2 grounds

**1. The predicament of climate change & a key cause: coal fired power generation.**

What is widely understood in the community nowadays (not just the scientific community) is that climate change is caused by human **emissions of greenhouse gases** (GHG's - carbon dioxide and the like). Indeed, a national survey by Lonergan Research of 1300 randomly selected Australians released in May 2014 showed "*7 in 10 (72%) Aussies are concerned about the risk associated with the reliance of Australia's economy on the fossil fuel sector*" (see <http://bit.ly/1kxAiOL> p.16). Reducing GHG emissions is critical to limiting the destructiveness of climate change.

In his landmark report 8 years ago, Professor Ross Garnaut underscored the importance of action to reduce GHG emissions. To quote from his report:

"While an effective response to the [emissions] challenge would play out over many decades, it must take shape and be put in place *over the next few years*. Without such action, if the mainstream science is broadly right, the Review's assessment of likely growth in global greenhouse gas emissions in the absence of effective mitigation tells us that the **risks of dangerous climate change**, already significant, will soon have risen to dangerously high levels".

(Ross Garnaut, 2008, Introduction to The Garnaut Climate Change Review: Final Report, p.XVIII )

Sadly the "the next few years" spoken of by Prof. Garnaut have passed and in that time world GHG **emission have increased**, not stabilised, let alone declined. Year upon year,

GHG's are accumulating in the atmosphere - the more that accumulates, the greater the destructiveness of climate change down the track. In Australia GHG emissions have declined slightly from around 550 million tonnes per year (MtCO<sub>2</sub>-e) to an estimated 537 million tonnes last financial year (Fed Dept of the Environment, Dec 2015, Quarterly Update of Australia's National GHG Inventory, p.5).

However, this 537 Mt figure for the last financial year represented a small increase in Australia's GHG emissions over the previous year (up 0.8% from 2013-14) with the biggest single contributor to the increase being the **electricity sector** (through the burning of coal). Electricity production's GHG emissions rose last year by 3% from 180.8 million tonnes to 186.1 million tonnes (Fed Dept of the Environment, op. cit. p.6). Clearly there exists in Australia, "the absence of effective mitigation" in GHG emission that Prof. Garnaut feared, and accordingly our emissions are now at "dangerously high levels".

Given our woeful performance as a country to date, in reducing GHG emissions, it is palpable madness to be approving new coal mines such as the Rocky Hill Coal Project.

## 2. The risk of water contamination and loss of water accessibility

Approving the Rocky Hill Coal Project ignores the precautionary principle applied to water security for residents of communities in the catchment areas below the mine. The very same arguments that were valid for pressuring AGL to close its Gloucester CSG operations - which it did early this year - apply to coal mining. There are significant risks associated with the Rocky Hill Coal Project such as effects on the level of the **water table** (affecting bore access to water by farmers) and **water contamination** by hazardous chemicals.

Independent reactions of key civic bodies to AGL's CSG mining make equal sense in relation to coal mining in the Gloucester region. Take for instance the concern expressed by the **The Greater Taree City Council** which requested an end to CSG extraction by AGL in the Manning River catchment (includes Gloucester) and late last year 150 businesses signed an open letter to AGL asking it to stop its Gloucester CSG operations. See the report at ABC News Online of 23 Dec 15, entitled " Christmas appeal to AGL to end to its Gloucester CSG project" :

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-23/manning-catchment-businesses-and-community-groups-call-for-an-e/7049944>

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