

Director – Resource Assessments
Planning Services
Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Submission for the Rocky Hill Coal Project – Application No SSD-5156

Stratford Coal Extension Project – Application No SSD - 4966 MOD1

Dear Sir/Madam

I strongly oppose the Rocky Hill Coal Project together with the Stratford Mine Modification.

I am opposed to any more mines in the Gloucester area. The Rocky Hill mine will be the beginning of the end for the beautiful Gloucester Valley and town.

My opposition is as follows:

No 1: Dust

Gloucester Resources Limited (GRL) plans to generate 944 tonnes (over 1600 cubic metres) of dust every year. Children, the elderly, and people with respiratory disease will be at serious risk. Most of Gloucester township, including the hospital and schools, falls within the 5km health impact zone of the Rocky Hill mine, this will place a large percentage of the population at risk.

GRL's statement that there will be no negative health impacts from Stage 1 of their mine is at odds with the evidence in the public domain regarding health impacts from open-cut coal mining. I refer to documents by Doctors for the Environment – ["Policy Paper on the Health Impacts of Coal Pollution and Renewable Energy"](#) and Climate and Health Alliance – ["Coal and health in the Hunter: Lessons from one valley for the world"](#)

I am very concerned that the proposed mine is to be built within 900m of 30 homes and families in the southern part of the Valley. The future health and wellbeing of these people must not be dismissed.

I personally know four families living in Forbesdale and I know of the devastating mental health impacts they suffered through AGL's proposed, but recently abandoned, mining for Coal Seam Gas. And now they are confronted with the far worse prospect of an open cut coal mine on their doorstep. Why are these people considered collateral damage? Why must they suffer the mental anguish associated with the noise, dust, loss of amenity and an inevitable loss of property values?

No 2: The Environment, Tourism and Scenic beauty

GRL claims that overburden from the mine will be used for 'visual amenity barriers'. The largest is over 50m high and over 2km long. They will be visible to travellers along the Bucketts Way and residents on the eastern side of the valley. They will be an eyesore and nearly as ugly as the open cut mine itself.

As elsewhere in the Hunter Valley, the steepness of the barriers will likely preclude vegetation from growing successfully and rather will be eroded by rain or create dust storms when it is windy.

The mine will lead to a dramatic drop in tourist numbers. Any claim by proponents of the mine of financial benefit to the town will soon be superseded by a decrease in visitors and the loss of jobs in tourism.

The proposed mine is on the Avon River floodplain and in the catchment area of the Manning River, which supplies drinking water to over 80,000 people. In recent history the Avon River has flooded 5 times in 4 years, with 2 floods occurring in 2013. If the mine goes ahead there is a definite potential for contamination of the water in the catchment.

Gloucester's clean, green image contributes \$51 million in tourism to the local economy each year. Gloucester needs to thrive and grow not be buried under coal and overburden dust.

Gloucester needs industries that enhance the rural area and promote its enviable claim of being the gateway to the Barrington Tops World Heritage area.

No 3: Rehabilitation

GRL claim that they will fill in any voids and completely rehabilitate the area to look even better than nature has created.

You will be aware that the Planning Assessment Commission last year approved the extensions to Rio Tinto's Warkworth and Mount Thorley open cut coal mines near Singleton with final voids because Rio Tinto claimed that it would be too expensive to backfill the holes. If one of the world's biggest mining companies acknowledges that it would not have the resources to undertake the backfilling how can it be taken as a truth that the significantly smaller GRL will undertake such work at its mine?

And what if GRL go into liquidation and the mine ceases to operate? It is most instructive to use the example of other mines in the Hunter and elsewhere in NSW. The bonds put aside for rehabilitation are never enough to even partially remediate their works. Figures of ten-fold discrepancies are not uncommon. The mining companies move on and leave the clean up to the taxpayers.

No 4: Night Lights

Gloucester sits in a quiet, rural valley with dark, starry night skies. This will disappear with the lights from a mine in the Avon valley. Even though the mine will not be operating at night for three years, the workers will have shifts until 10.30pm. They will be travelling along the haul road and to and from the mine. Their lights will be visible to residents in the Avon valley and will glow into the sky.

No 5: Future Extensions to the mine

GRL have already earmarked the area north of the proposed Rocky Hill mine for 'Stage Two'. As with all coalmines, when the first mine is approved they follow on with extension after extension. If the coal is there then GRL will want to mine it. You will be aware that the exploration licence extends north up the Avon Valley all the way to the town of Gloucester.

There is no minimum distance from residences, as with the 2km for CSG.

No 6: Questionable benefit to Gloucester and the NSW Government

The nearby Stratford mine boasted of increased employment for Gloucester locals when in fact 60% of the employees were drive in/drive out workers. These employees did not spend money in the town. The economic situation for Gloucester did not improve when Stratford was in operation and families of mine workers did not choose to live in the local area.

Several businesses in Gloucester complained that they were training apprentices who then left and got employment at the Stratford mine, due to higher wages. Those businesses found the situation unsustainable.

When the Stratford mine slowed operations and eventually stopped production, many workers were laid off. This illustrates that mining is not a sustainable industry. When the price of coal goes down mining companies have no responsibility to workers or the local areas and they just cease operations. This is not what is wanted, or needed, for Gloucester.

On all these counts Gloucester does not need this mine.

Do not approve the Rocky Hill Coal Project.

Yours faithfully

Peter Donley
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