

To the NSW Department of Planning

Ref: Rocky Hill Coal Project – Application No: SSD-5156

In noting the closing date for submissions commenting upon the Environment Impact Study relating to a new coal mine proposed by Gloucester Resources Limited for development in Forbesdale in the Hunter Valley and proposed extensions to existing processing activities in Stratford, I wish to register the strongest possible objection to these proposals that, if approved, will directly affect long-established communities and farming activities around Gloucester and Stratford. I also wish to express very grave concerns to the Department of Planning, to the Government of the State of New South Wales and to all relevant agencies.

The premise that more coalmining is critical to the region, to the prosperity of the State and generally good for humanity, would be farcical were it not for the parlous state to which decision-making in the mining sector and at all levels of governance has been reduced. The singular imperative in this particular proposal is clearly and unequivocally profit, regardless of the irreversible losses such brief corporate success would inflict upon us all.

Despite commitments made in Paris and much strutting upon the proverbial stage by our Prime Minister, and to our lasting shame, this country was not amongst signatories to ratify in September the very agreements on more responsible management of resources reached last December. In light of this disheartening reversal, the continuing assault upon the rural sector and upon non-extractive sources of energy in Australia, including research and development initiatives, infrastructure and associated institutions, is not surprising.

Nonetheless, for elected decision-makers to approve and applaud a dying industry in the rich arable lands of the Hunter in its efforts to prolong the ravaging of Australia's agricultural and grazing common wealth for short-term gain is madness. A concomitant concern must continue to be the negative impact of the proposed activity upon the physical health of local residents, most particularly children.

That most of the profits would go offshore is even more galling and, I submit, arguably indefensible.

Our one extended family of seventh-generation Australians is descended from the first European settlers to engage in and to benefit from responsible grazing and agriculture through their lifelong commitment to the land, to thoughtful management of soil and water and to the best standards of animal husbandry. A century and more ago, such practices co-existed with coalmining through necessity but we now live in a radically-changed world, and on the driest continent on the planet. Quite simply, food and water must take precedence.

I urge those responsible to reject the Forbesdale proposal in its entirety and to halt any extension to Stratford's mining activities in the district. For all our sakes.

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cc: the Right Honorable the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull