

21st October 2013

Michael and Karen O'Brien

5 Fairbairns Road

FORBESDALE NSW 2422

Director, Mining Projects

Development Assessment Systems & Approvals

Department of Planning & Infrastructure

GPO Box 39

SYDNEY NSW 2011

RE: THE ROCKY HILL OPENCUT COAL MINE-FORBESDALE NSW

Dear Sir,

We **oppose** the development of the **Rocky Hill open cut coal mine** at Forbesdale near Gloucester NSW.

My husband, myself and our two young sons moved to Forbesdale (Gloucester) NSW in January 1989. We wanted to raise our family in a rural area mainly due to our eldest son Shane having been diagnosed as a chronic asthmatic and we were hoping home grown food and good country air would help in the management of his condition. Gloucester was a lovely town, it ticked **all** of the boxes for us, that is; schools (preschools, infants, primary and high), good sporting facilities, a comprehensive commercial and cultural area, employment opportunities, great medical centre and local hospital. All this! Plus the best views and country side in NSW.

We purchased our property on Fairbairns Road, which has spectacular views to the Buckets Mountains, Morgani hills and the Avon valley. Michael gained employment at the local Dairy Farmers milk factory. Shane had excellent medical care. The boys started school, we had a third son and our family began our journey to become a solid part of the fabric of the Gloucester community.

In 2002 the Gloucester Dairy Farmers milk factory closed, leaving Michael unemployed. We started a business called Hillview herb farm. We supply local restaurants and the Newcastle rural markets with fresh culinary herbs. We also operate farm gate tours of our garden and supply morning teas and lunches to our visitors. Our business has consistently grown through our hard work and we have established a good name in both the produce & tourist industries. Tour groups visit our farm from all over Australia. We average 3 coach loads (48 seater of visitors per week, year round. We employ up to 4 permanent casual staff and 7 contract growers.

Gloucester Resources Ltd (GRL) has over a five year period purchased numerous properties in the Forbesdale, Waukiory and Avon Valley District. This has been done under the generally known pretence of GRL being an agricultural company with the intention to secure and protect Australian agricultural land. GRL recently submitted a proposal application to the NSW Department of Planning & Infrastructure (D.A No. SSD-5156) to develop the **Rocky Hill open cut coal mine** on the acquired land.

This mine will be less than a kilometre away from Forbesdale, our home! We cannot understand how a government could allow an open cut coal mine so close to a rural residential area. Also shouldn't the government be protecting our employment, food producing land and our water resources? Tourism is a major industry in Gloucester which is the base camp to the **heritage world listed Barrington tops**. Tourism has long term financial benefits to our community and to the NSW State. The local tourism industry contributed over 30 million dollars to our community's income

last year and that figure did not include day trippers (which would increase that figure considerably). The expansion of mining in the Gloucester district will significantly damage our tourism industry.

We are very concerned about the many problems associated with an open cut coal mine situated so close to where we live and operate our business. These concerns include but are not limited to:

- 1: The health implications for our family, our neighbours and the Gloucester community and environment.
- 2: Our property and other properties in the Forbesdale area are devalued and unsaleable.
- 3: The adverse effect on our business, the local tourism industry, the agricultural industry and the environment.
- 4: Air pollution: Coal dust particles and diesel fumes are having and will continue to have adverse effects and consequences to our health and our business ethos of growing produce organically.
- 5: Water quality: What damage will happen to our local catchment area in the Avon Valley and the Avon Valley River? Impacts from open cut coal mining activities could potentially destroy a major river system.

The proposed mine site area is in a flood zone which could result in overflow of "mining dirty water".

6: Noise pollution resulting from heavy machinery, commercial vehicles, increased large truck and train movements is replacing our quiet, rural area.

7: Exclusion zone: The current NSW state government recently passed legislation that a 2 kilometre exclusion zone would exist between residential properties and coal seam gas. The NSW Government has not addressed an exclusion zone or even considered a 2 kilometre zone from mining activities. Why?

We request that the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure thoroughly investigate the community and environmental impacts of this mining proposal (D.A. No. SSD-5156) and reject it as a totally unviable prospect.

If for some personally unfathomable reason this proposal should proceed we would at least expect that the residents in Forbesdale would be part of the acquisition zone required by the mine and that our homes be purchased at a true value.

We are hoping that our State Government consider the effect that this decision will have on all members of our community, their lifestyles, dreams, homes and businesses.

Yours Sincerely,

Michael and Karen O'Brien.