

I strongly oppose the Rocky Hill Coal Project and the modification to the Stratford Coal Extension Project.

The EIS addresses a number of issues of concern about the Rocky Hill Mine. However, the responses to the very real issues raised are sweeping, dismissive and unconvincing. They lack detail and evidence. Claims are typically unsubstantiated and there are inadequate processes suggested to ensure they are met.

The substantial, well documented health effects of coal mining are barely addressed – just as side comments to other issues. Yet the potential costs to individuals, communities not the mention State and national coffers are very very significant. In the past we may have turned a blind eye to the suffering of those made ill by coal dust (just one of the issues) but there is no longer any excuse. The studies are done and the evidence of damage is clear. In this day and age we have clean alternatives to replace coal, and with escalating climate change and stockpiles of used coal still available, there is absolutely no justification for the irresponsibility of commencing new coal mines.

Surely no government acting in the best long term interests of its voters could honestly and morally undertake such a retrograde step as to approve a new coal mine at this critical time.

A close reading of the EIS convinces me the Rocky Hill should not be approved. The proposed Rocky Hill mine is:

- Too close to town and town estates
- Too damaging to existing industries and employment
- Too noisy, too dirty, too outdated
- Too destructive of a uniquely beautiful environment
- Too threatening to the health and well-being of the local population
- Too injurious to the air quality we and our livestock have to ingest
- Too risky to the water catchment on a floodplain
- Too likely to bring unwanted poisonous pollutants to the surface by raising ground water.
- Too prone to create major disposal problems of contaminated water
- Too liable to be tempted to dump water with residual heavy metals and other undesirables on local pasture
- Too dismissive of the loss of local heritage sites, flora and fauna
- Too financially risky given the current volatile coal market and the current recognition by many financial pundits that the time to invest in coal is past
- Too vague about the financial viability of the company planning the venture
- Too discouraging of tourists and tree-changers who are so vital to our local prosperity
- Too detrimental to property values on which we depend for our livelihoods, our lifestyles, our retirement planning and the future of our families
- Too compromising to the quality reputation of our local agricultural products – our milk, our meat, our crops – because of the threat of polluted air and water.
- Too insignificant in its claimed possible contribution to local employment

- Too paltry in its compensation for its potential damage to existing local employment and industries, State health budgets and infrastructure costs, national taxation schemes.
- Too dismissive of the threats it poses and too cavalier in the protections and compensations it suggests.
- Too dismissive of the impacts of prevailing winds over the town
- Too unconvincing about its capacity to guarantee safety of its operations. There will be too much blasting, too much carriage of dusty goods, too much disturbance of the water catchment, too great a depth to the pit and too many years.

There are too many risks to allow this mine. Why are the reassurances unconvincing? Because lack of monitoring and action on breaches from existing mines elsewhere is well documented and the evidence of health risks and damage to local communities and industries is too great.

An examination of any number of slippery claims in this EIS illustrates its weakness. For example:

ES 31 Blasting and Vibrations: "All blasts would be monitored to enable continuous refinements of blasting practices and the development and refinement of blast design and operating procedures based on blast monitoring results".

Air Quality: No exceedances are predicted for the applicable annual air quality for TSP, PM₁₀, PM₂₅ or deposited dust and maximum 24 hour PM₁₀ and PM₂₅ for project only emissions.

This kind of language in these two quotes is typical – carefully misleading and completely unconvincing about the adequacy of environmental, health and quality of life protections. The claims are sweeping but there is no process provided to back up the claim. There is no strategy given in these examples to prevent problems or, for when something goes wrong as it inevitably will, there is no strategy to deal with it.

In the case of this proposed Rocky Hill mine, the risks are hugely magnified by the exceptionally close proximity to the town and its satellite centres of population, and the direction of the prevailing winds towards those populations.

There are a large number of inaccuracies in the document and use of old outdated data. For example the EIS claims tourism brings in \$40m per year to Gloucester. Current understanding is that it is in excess of \$50m.

However, even the smaller figure dwarfs the claimed contribution of the mine to the local economy. A mine would certainly have a negative impact on current tourism in Gloucester and even a small impact on this important industry would totally wipe out any benefits to the economy of Rocky Hill mine. Gloucester would be stuck with all the negatives of the mine with its damage to the environment and amenity of the town to no benefit but rather significant deficit!

The EIS claims (without saying how it would be achieved) that 30 people living in Gloucester would be employed in the mine development phase and around 70 (or 70% of total employees) during its operations. This is quite an assumption! Most employees in other mines nearby did not choose to live in the towns closest to their workplace. Most also bypassed Gloucester, so attracting up 70% cannot be a given. If the mine was not as profitable as claimed, or technology reduces the numbers required over the life of the mine (as has been the trend elsewhere) then even 70% will not mean 70 people. But let's be very clear. 70 people employed for 16 years is a very small figure. If only 8 new people per year were employed in the Gloucester area for the life of the mine (less than half of 1% of the workforce of the old Gloucester Shire council area) that would be greater than the number claimed in the EIS. How much better would it be for Gloucester if those few could come from new

clean small businesses attracted to the valley by its beautiful amenity, environment and lifestyle? The interest shown in Gloucester as a result of the recent Tree Change weekend shows how achievable this is, without recourse to dirty failing industries that bring such threats to health, lifestyle and existing industries!

The economic analysis set out in the EIS, in its best case, promises only very small contribution to State and national coffers and local economy. If Rocky Hill were to succumb to the current volatility in the coal markets which are predicted to trend down over time, as so many other coal mines have done, or if the company is not sufficiently financially robust (not established in the EIS) then the cost to State, national and local budgets would be significant, let alone the damage to the environment and long term health of the community.

The vast majority of people in Gloucester, when surveyed made it clear they were opposed to the mine. It is too close. It poses too many risks. It seems the answer from the Rocky Hill mine is to make a few community grants. Personally, I find that demeaning – it could be construed as a bribe. I certainly would be ashamed to think that I would allow my values to be bought so cheaply!

The EIS addresses a number of possible threats from a new mine. Its deliberations confirm the risks are great but the solutions, silences, unsubstantiated protections and lack of detail confirm my opposition to the Rocky Hill mine

I have not made a reportable political donation.

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