

Submission: Rocky Hill Coal Project (SSD-5156)

I wish to express my strong opposition to this project on the following grounds:

- Impact on Wildlife

The proposal involves the clearing of a large area of vulnerable ecological community (Lower Hunter Dry Rainforest) including the clearing of both the habitat and surrounding foraging areas of many species. This type of ecological community is already under pressure due to fragmentation, grazing and weed invasion and any further disturbance can only serve to threaten its survival even further. The site provides habitat for four threatened species, being the Large Footed Myotis, Grey Crowned Babbler, Squirrel Glider, and the Eastern Bent Wing Bat.

- Impacts on Local and regional economy

The area is well known world wide for its natural beauty and tranquility and as such attracts both Australian and international tourists. So much so that tourism is currently worth over \$30M to the economy of Gloucester. There will be a huge negative impact to this if the mine goes ahead and further consequences to the catchment areas as well as to the oyster farming, fishing and tourism of nearby downstream Forster and Tuncurry if the Manning River becomes affected. Service industries which also survive largely due to this tourist trade will also struggle to exist. The risk is simply not acceptable.

Property values in the area will drop dramatically, not only at the commencement of the mine construction but even further in the future after the mine is long gone and the town left as a damaged mess with no future as no one will want to visit or live there.

- Impacts on Health – Air pollution

Most of the town of Gloucester is within the acknowledged 5km within which fine particle coal dust can be expected to travel in the air. This dust will include particles so fine as to be able to be absorbed into the human blood stream via the lungs. Such small particles are a known carcinogen. Many residences and also the schools and even the hospital are within this zone. To place the health of people, including the many young children and the elderly and sick at such risk is totally unacceptable.

- Impacts on Health – Water Pollution

Coal mines are known sources of both chemical and heavy metal pollutants.

The proposed mine site is situated on the flood plain of the Avon River and the water catchment of the Manning River. The Avon floods frequently (5 times in 4 years, with 2 floods already this year). Due to this, there is a high risk of the catchment water being contaminated. This would affect the drinking water of over 80,000 people and also potentially affect the local oyster and fishing industries as well as the associated tourism to the area.

- Impacts on Health – Noise pollution

The noise of the blasting will be not only heard by those living close by but felt by people further away also. With the mine boundary being only 900m from the nearest estate many people will experience unacceptable levels of noise and vibration from shock waves. On top of this there is the additional noise caused by increased traffic into and through the town.

- Impacts on Health – Stress

The combined effects on physical health caused by the noise, air and water pollution, coupled with the stress of change from being a peaceful country town to one that is home to heavy industry takes its toll on people emotionally also. When you add to that the fact that many people's property values will drop to the point of making them unsaleable, thereby trapping people in the town they no longer feel happy living in will without doubt cause much anguish and be a cause and/or trigger of mental illness. Depression and suicide go along with the helplessness that people will find themselves in if this mine goes ahead. With the rates of suicide increasing rapidly in Australia already, we cannot afford to create a situation which will exacerbate this problem.

- Global impacts

With global warming rapidly increasing we cannot afford to open new coal mines and keep creating more pollution. Australia is struggling as it is to meet its commitments in regard to reducing its carbon emissions and every coal mine we create will only serve to make those goals even less achievable. It makes no sense whatsoever to risk the future welfare of the entire planet for a very short term quick profit. To do so is immoral and one could argue it is actually an insane thing to be doing. The coal industry is an industry from the past. It is a dying industry because it simply no longer makes sense in our modern world. It is doing nothing more than holding humanity back from having a healthier and more prosperous future. We can have a world with endless lower cost energy from renewables, a booming new economy and a healthier population

if we get on with letting go of the past and moving into the future. It is time Australia stood up and did this as we are currently a rather embarrassingly backward society when it comes to making positive changes.

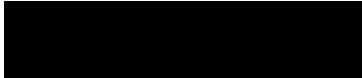
- Summary

As can be seen from all of the problems identified, Gloucester is certainly not suitable for any type of mining. It can also be seen from the large number of submissions being made that the vast majority of people are very much against the mine going ahead. The risks are just far too great as is the known damage which mining causes.

Furthermore it can be seen that coal mining itself, regardless of location is nowadays nothing more than a short term financial folly which continues to try to justify itself despite doing enormous harm to mankind and the environment generally. It needs to be drastically reduced as fast as possible and replaced with cleaner methods of energy production such as wind, solar, ocean and geothermal.

I really hope that common sense will prevail and that this (and any other proposed future coal mine anywhere else) does not go ahead.

Sincerely,

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