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FORSTER NSW 2428

15 November 2017

The Commissioners
Planning Assessment Commission
Level 3, 201 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Email: pac@pac.nsw.gov.au

Dear Commissioners

**Rocky Hill Coal Project – Application No. SSD 5156
Stratford Coal Extension Project No. SSD 4966 MOD1**

I strongly oppose the Rocky Hill Coal Project and the Stratford Coal Extension Project. Thank you for giving the residents of Gloucester the opportunity to meet with you to express various objections to the Rocky Hill Coal Project. Much has been said on the financial, social and environment impacts of the proposed Rocky Hill mine, which is only six kilometres south of the township in the Avon Valley. I would like to draw PAC's attention to the loss of agricultural land should the Rocky Hill Project proceed.

LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND TO MINING

In Gloucester Resources Ltd's newsletter dated September 2016 on its website, it states: *"It is interesting to note that more agricultural land has been permanently lost to residential housing subdivisions in the vicinity of Gloucester in the past 20 years than will be temporarily lost due to the Rocky Hill Coal Project."*

GRL's statement 'in the vicinity of Gloucester', is misleading. Over the past eight years, land potentially lost to agriculture will be 'in the vicinity' of the mine which was bought up by GRL; one large dairy, several cattle producing properties and smaller parcels of land which were used as lifestyle properties including boutique vineyards, etc. Some residents were in the process of developing new businesses or had businesses in the town, as well as running their properties for agriculture. No amount of 'rehabilitation' of the land after mining will return the mined land to its original productive state.

Gloucester Council set aside land for subdivisions close to the township to attract families and retirees, as well as increasing the potential for small businesses to move to the town to enhance the agricultural mix of dairying, cattle production and tourism. GRL has purchased over 30 properties along the Avon Valley and at Stratford, covering well over 3000 acres. Problems have arisen where GRL has been relying on a Property Manager to oversee the needs of the properties, i.e. slashing, fences and weed control, etc. These jobs have been taken away from the farmers who originally owned the land.

On one occasion, cattle owned by GRL were found to be wandering over the road at dusk after breaking a fence and a local farmer had to round them up and corral them on his own property overnight until the Property Manager arranged to have them taken back to GRL's property.

GRL has presented, in its amended EIS to the Dept of Planning and Environment, its interpretation in 'photos' of how the land will be retained after the mine closes in 21 years. An example of rehabilitation is at Stratford mine area where Yancoal has just fiddled around the edges but how can a final mine pit 220 metres deep be rehabilitated to the extent GRL claims, where trees and grass will grow again? Without the coal seams, the geological structure will no longer be there to support water retention, compaction of the soil, etc. as it does today.

STAGE II FORBESDALE - REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Should PAC approve the mine, Stage II will happen. GRL state there will be no Stage II, again this statement is misleading. In GRL's approved Review of Environmental Factors Stage II Forbesdale, GRL states it **'needs to expand exploration of the initial mine to make it a profitable one'**.

GRL is playing with words. Stage II, modification and expansion all mean the same thing. I quote from my submission to the Department of Planning, dated 9 October 2016 "..... *it is common knowledge that the Department of Planning has rarely seen a mine which does not move beyond the first approval stage. It is therefore, a conclusion, as soon as GRL is given a mining licence, exploration of Stage II of the Forbesdale Exploration area will continue, followed by application to modify or expand the present mine area, thus sounding the death knell of Maslen's dairy** the destruction of the agricultural land it is on, other dairies and cattle producers' livelihoods north and south of the mine.*"

** Stage II Forbesdale REF Exploration Area is over this dairy, which was acquired by GRL in 2012, with a five-year lease and further five-year option. GRL has allowed the dairy farmer to use GRL's surrounding land for grazing. The herd has been expanded. Gloucester needs this dairy to continue but should the mine be approved, it will be shut down and other dairies and cattle producing properties will be at risk to further expansions of the mine.

Once GRL has a foot in the door, expansion will happen and Gloucester will become a mining town and will exacerbate all the problems the Department has listed in its Conclusion. The coal seams run north and south, therefore, the mine will expand closer to Gloucester township, hospital, aged care facilities, schools, businesses and its residents in housing estates along Jack's Road. The future sustainability of agriculture in Gloucester will be lost forever. The Dept of Planning and Environment has refused the Rocky Hill Coal Project and Stratford Coal Extension Project on the grounds the mine is too close to residential estates, impacts of noise and air quality is questionable.

I urge you to support the Department of Planning and Environment's recommendations to reject the Rocky Hill Coal Project and the Stratford Coal Extension Project outright without recommendations or conditions.

The only conditions accepted, would be to recommend the Minister revoke EL6523, EL6524 and EL6563 to give Gloucester a future, to uphold it as a predominantly agricultural region, to encourage expansion of small business opportunities and to be a continuing and growing tourist destination.

Yours sincerely
Mrs Robin Besier