

Submission to “ PAC” determination for Rocky Hill Project Gloucester by Dr Garry Lyford.

I wholeheartedly agree with the recommendation that the Rocky Hill Project be not approved. The key reason given for this in the assessment report is the mine's proximity to Gloucester. For me this highlights having such a hazard to health on the doorstep of a population centre.

I offer comment on the report in areas of health and social effects particularly air quality and mental health.

The environmental assessment report, I believe, underestimates the risk that dust and blasting poses to this community. Gloucester is an old population with high levels of respiratory disease as a consequence of high rates of previous smoking. Furthermore Gloucester has been a retirement destination for many people and this aged community brings with it high levels of respiratory disease. I frequently see surges of acute respiratory symptoms at times of high ambient air pollution, usually with farm burning or bush fires. To increase the amounts of mine related particulate matter in our atmosphere so close to town will, I am sure, result in more respiratory symptoms in this vulnerable group.

While the report states that particulate matter increases would be in permissible ranges and monitoring take place, this would be of little comfort to those uniquely susceptible to dust pollution. The need for monitoring in the report implies that standards will not be met without due diligence and I fear the commercial reality of a coal mine will result in breaches of best practice with regard to particulate matter control. In this regard I note that in the Hunter Valley alert levels of poor air quality are too frequent despite assumed industry best practice. I am aware of residents in the immediate vicinity of the Rocky Hill mine proposal with severe respiratory disease and who are exquisitely at risk for deterioration in their levels of daily function with any reduction of air quality.

The mental health effects of mine operation are briefly mentioned in section 6.1. However the report fails to adequately appreciate the huge mental health impacts that this project has had and will continue to have if it is approved. I am aware of people in Forbesdale who have suffered acute mental distress at the prospect of mining on their doorstep. These issues are compounded by the loss of property value in their homes. I am aware of the stresses for people when dealing with large companies during acquisitions or when noise or dust issues arise and the powerlessness they feel as a small landholder near to a large multinational venture.

I have witnessed the negative mental health effects from the present mining at Stratford and Durallie where noise, dust and blasting plumes are too commonplace despite the Yancoal project apparently meeting all requirements with regard to noise and dust mitigation.

This mine is way too close to a centre of population for these negative health affects to be limited to a few people and managed appropriately. The proximity of this mine exposes too many people, including many with vulnerable health status, to noise, dust and blast plumes and the consequent illness they generate in the vulnerable.

I agree with the report that this mine should not be approved. Furthermore there are no conditions that will ever allow it to be developed safely in a position so close to a centre of population.

Dr Garry Lyford
[REDACTED] Gloucester

[REDACTED]