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Madam Chairwomen – Members of the Commission, Ladies & Gentleman

My name is Stuart Redman and I speak to you this afternoon as President of the Gloucester Business Chamber.

Madam Chairwoman, the Chamber recognises that the role of determination is yours, and as such my role this afternoon, is to present to you facts about businesses in Gloucester.

Firstly I would like to say that there appears to be a lot of claims and counter claims that range from slightly exaggerated to completely untrue and everywhere in between. The role of sorting the good from the not so, Madam Chairwoman no matter how difficult, is yours.

Madam Chairwoman, if the conditions of consent are not met, then we believe you should either defer consent until they are, or refuse consent altogether.

However, if the commission believes that the conditions for consent have been met, then surely the commission must grant that consent, and indeed the Chamber would ask that you do.

Madam Chairwoman, the Gloucester economy has been kicked pretty hard, and pretty often in the last few years and yet we are still here, but only just.

The business and Community Leaders in Gloucester have been working long and hard to get existing and new business and tourism industries into town and moving forward, and with some success.

Madam Chairwoman, we don't want to be a mining town, or a dairying town, or a timber town, or a tourism town, or a beef industry town, or a poultry town.

Madam Chairwoman, we want to be a fair go town, promoting economic diversity without fear or favour, and if that economic diversity includes approved coal mining then so be it.

Madam Chairwoman, since Gloucester Resources Limited, amended their Environmental Impact Statement, the Business Chamber has been in continuous negotiation with G.R.L. management in order to achieve that best possible outcome for the businesses and general population of Gloucester, if the project should go ahead.

We have negotiated with G.R.L. a minimum workforce percentage that must live within Gloucester Postcode. We have achieved a minimum 75% of the workforce will be local within 3 years of project startup. Not in towns nearby and calling themselves local, but actually in the 2422 postcode.

G.R.L. has also agreed to set up an apprenticeships scheme for Plant Fitters, Welders, Boilermakers, Electricians, Plant Operators, even Office Staff.

We have also successfully negotiated an agreement to use local contractors during construction, mining and Re-hab, so that means employment and apprenticeship possibilities for all local businesses. Engineering Workers, Builders, Painters, Civil Contractors, Plumbers, Motor Mechanics, Vehicle Repairers.

Also G.R.L. has agreed to source consumables for its offices and workshops locally. That adds up to a lot of flow on jobs.

Retail, Hospitality, Accommodation, School Teachers etc. The list just goes on and on and on. The flow on, when combined with the successes already achieved and the direct employment of G.R.L. might just be the economic syringe needed to apply a booster shot into Gloucester's economy.

We already have a waiting list of businesses keen to either set up new or relocate existing operations to Gloucester, if the Rocky Hill Mine is approved.

I know some of the Real Estate Agents have business operators on their books just waiting for this decision.

Local existing businesses are also prepared to enter into supply and/or service contracts with G.R.L. which would then in turn see those businesses investing varying sums of money in infrastructure and equipment. This in turn would see an increase in-services available to the general community.

So now I want to talk about Tourism.

At the moment there is no Tourism in that area.

We are going to change that.

With all the open cut mining that take place on the East Coast and Hunter Valley there is currently no possibility of the General Public ever seeing how a mine works.

We are going to change that.

At the moment, all the Grey Nomads, and anyone else that wants to sticky beak in a mine, see all the big trucks, Bulldozers and Excavators and let's face it, given the opportunity most of us want to, have no choice but to go to Western Australia.

We are going to change that.

A whole new industry for the Eastern half of Australia, right here in Gloucester.

Combine this with the neighbouring Dairy Farms. They have been trying to get a Tourism Industry happening. Let's work together and make it happen.

The Dairy Farmer is keen, G.R.L. is keen. All we need now to kick this goal is Rocky Hill Mine. Then we can link into other Farm Tourism - up onto Barrington Tops, A World Heritage Area. Nowhere else in the world is there such diversity, so close together.

Try to imagine the economic boost to the Businesses of Gloucester, Motels, Restaurants, Cafe's, Fuel Stations, Supermarkets, Motor Vehicle Repairers, and every business will benefit.

Madam Chairwoman, we know that there are opponents to this application, just as there are supporters, and those who genuinely do not care. Everyone is entitled to their view and aren't we lucky that we live in a place where that view can be freely expressed.

But please try to separate the submissions that are commenting on the Coal Industry generally from those that are more specifically relating to Rocky Hill.

Obviously, I speak with lots of business owners in Gloucester and the number that are prepared to close their doors is frightening. They are just waiting for your decision. As they see the Rocky Hill Mine as their best hope.

Finally Madam Chairwoman, please do not allow yourself to be swayed in your decision making by emotional outbursts or exaggerated half truths.

Trust in your knowledge and expertise. Deal only in facts and remember, whatever your decision, it is going to impact a lot of people in Gloucester.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the views of Businesses in Gloucester and thank you for listening.