

GRAEME HEALY

PRESENTATION TO PLANNING ASSESSMENT COMMISSION

ROCKY HILL COAL PROJECT

Commissioners

I have lived at [REDACTED] for 15 years. Despite being 5 km from the Stratford Mining Complex, I am very much within the mine's footprint.

I wish to speak about intrusive mine noise.

Particle emissions are probably the greatest health risk from living in proximity to a coalmine. But intrusive noise nuisance is likely to be the most immediate impact cited by people. This is the experience of every "coal" community in NSW.

I am a tree-changer from Sydney. I have lived under the flight path of Sydney airport, on a major road and opposite the Glebe Island Bridge. One of the reasons I moved to a peaceful rural environment was to escape noise. But I landed within the footprint of a coalmine. The noise nuisance I experienced in Sydney cannot compare with the intrusive nature of noise generated by a coalmine.

Noise has often been so loud, I have gone out to Glen Road expecting to see machinery in operation. But no, it has always been mine noise from 5 or more km. Noise that project modelling said I wouldn't hear and official monitoring said the mine was not making.

Noise is a complex issue that is presented in an EIS in a manner that is incomprehensible to the layperson. It is always presented as being so benign – mitigation, monitoring and management are the key descriptors. We see project noise contour maps conveniently skirting houses so they fall outside project noise limit boundaries – here is a good example from the Stratford Extension Project. I also refer Commissioners to the noise contour map for this Project at Page 52 of the Assessment Report.

And allowable project noise levels will only be 5 decibels higher than background noise – surely that can't be too bad. Can it? But most don't understand that noise is measured on a logarithmic scale so what appear to be incremental increases actually result in significantly greater noise for the receiver.

It is not just the loudness that is intrusive. It is also the character, constancy and context of the noise: the low frequency noise of heavy machinery that is not well attenuated by distance; machinery operating under load for hours on end; industrial noise in a rural environment where the only other sounds are birdsong and wind in the trees.

Commissioners, you have to experience it to fully understand it.

Coal mining is a heavy industrial activity that produces a lot of noise: the constant revving and roaring of large machinery; trucks negotiating steep inclines under load, blasting, digging, the dumping of tonnes of material into metal bins and the beeping of reversing machinery.

When GRL claims, as it did in the Gloucester Advocate in September 2016 that, "noise levels experienced by the mine's nearest neighbours ... will be similar to noise generated by a fan", you know that you are having the wool pulled over your eyes.

The Assessment Report is particularly damning about noise.

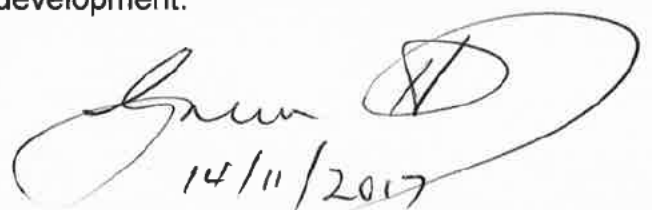
- The project would have significant noise impacts on nearby residents.
- Mitigation measures contain no room for error, particularly considering the number of sensitive receivers predicted to experience noise levels just under acceptable levels - remember those convenient contour lines;
- Should mitigation measures not prove to be as effective as GRL predicts, a large number of residents would be affected by noise levels that exceed relevant criteria.

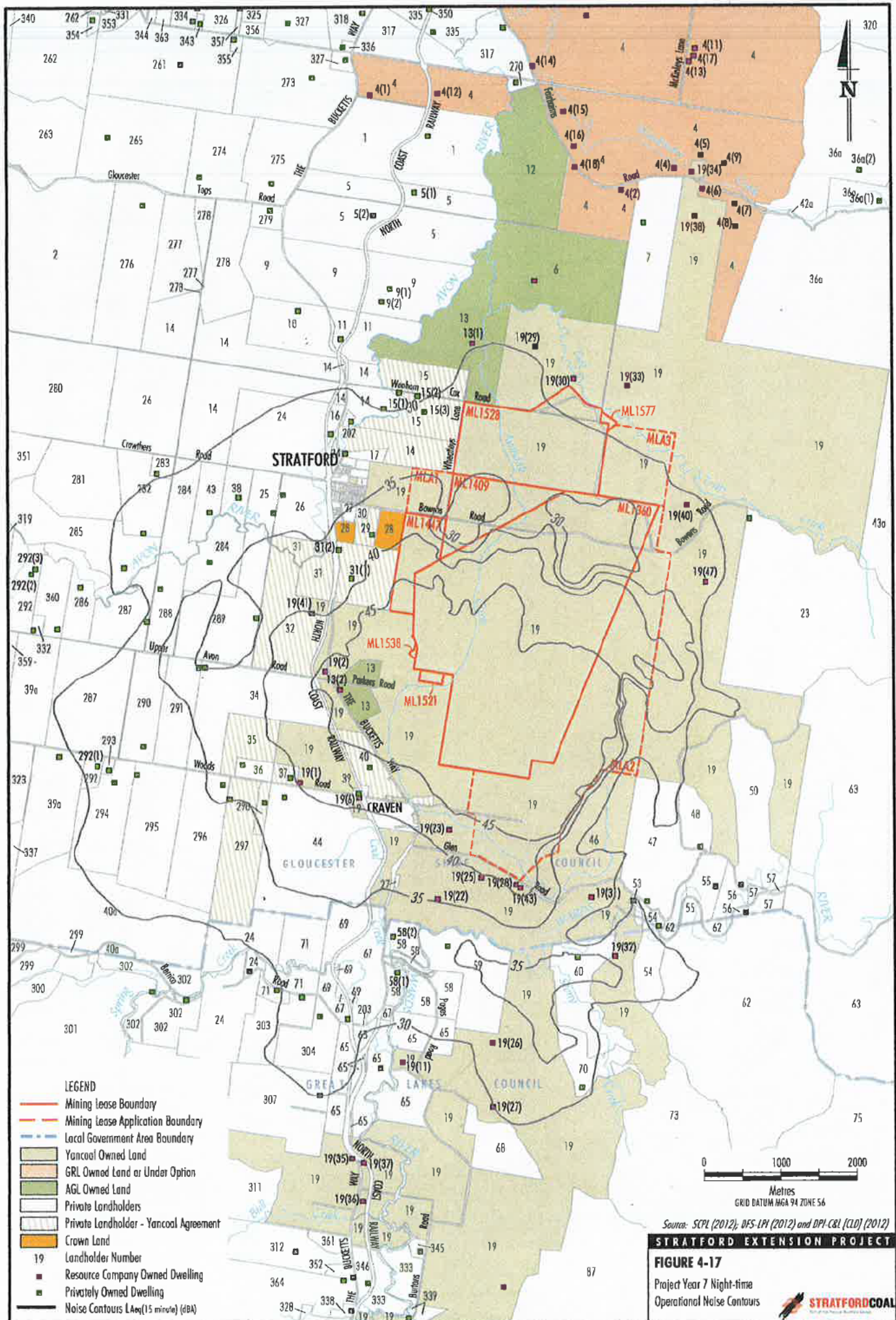
This is the first realistic assessment of noise impacts I have read for a coalmining project. But the kicker here is "relevant criteria". Background noise levels are always arbitrarily set at 30 decibels, about 5 decibels above the actual background noise level in a quiet rural environment, which means that those residents would already be experiencing intrusive noise despite being beyond the relevant criteria contour line.

I know, because I have experienced this on a daily basis.

Commissioners, the project site is not a suitable site for an open cut coalmine.

I recommend that the Commission refuse the development.


14/11/2017



- LEGEND**
- Mining Lease Boundary
 - - - Mining Lease Application Boundary
 - - - Local Government Area Boundary
 - Yancoal Owned Land
 - GRL Owned Land or Under Option
 - AGL Owned Land
 - Private Landholders
 - Private Landholder - Yancoal Agreement
 - Crown Land
 - 19 Landholder Number
 - Resource Company Owned Dwelling
 - Privately Owned Dwelling
 - Noise Contours LAeq(15 minute) (dBA)

0 1000 2000
Metres
GRID DATUM MGA 94 ZONE 56

Source: SCPL (2012), DFS-LP (2012) and DPL-C&I (CLO) (2012)

STRATFORD EXTENSION PROJECT

FIGURE 4-17

Project Year 7 Night-time
Operational Noise Contours



THE FACTS ABOUT DUST AND NOISE

More than 150 people have been through the Rocky Hill Information Centre with the vast majority supportive of the project that will bring jobs and economic prosperity to Gloucester. Some of the questions we have been asked relate to dust and noise. Below are some of the facts about these issues.

Noise

Testing shows that noise levels experienced by the mine's nearest neighbors are not expected to be more than 5 decibels above current background noise levels. To put this in perspective, noise levels at most nearby residences are not expected to exceed 35 decibels, similar to noise generated by a fan.

What measures are in place to reduce noise?

Noise minimisation measures include:

- three barriers to shield noise-producing activities
- no night time mining i.e. no mining between 10pm and 7am
- use of a predictive meteorological forecasting system to assist day-to-day mine planning and operations

- use of real-time noise monitoring to give advance warning of possible noise issues and allow us to reduce or re-position equipment
- using sound-suppressed mining equipment
- locating the sealed private haul road away from private residences. The road will have low gradients and a 60km/hour speed limit to reduce noise.

What will a blast sound like?

A low rumble for a few seconds

Dust

The mine will meet all criteria for dust outlined by the Environmental Pollution Authority.

At the height of the project the maximum predicted dust increase to the nearest residence will be well below the health-based limits permitted by the EPA.

If you have any questions about these or other issues, please call in to see us at the Information Centre.

Extended opening for Rocky Hill Information Centre

Due to demand, the Rocky Hill Information Centre at 33 Church St, Gloucester will open until Thursday, October 6.

Wednesday 1pm - 6pm

Thursday 8am - 1pm



ROCKY HILL
COAL PROJECT