

My name is John Dugas, I am a semi-retired University Business School Academic and a vineyard and cellar door operator within the mining exploration area of the company which is the subject of this PAC hearing. I came to Gloucester in 1950, went to primary and secondary school here and although I worked away in Newcastle for much of my adult life, I owned and maintained property here, paid rates here, for all but four years since 1972. I am a former Shire Councillor of Gloucester, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and currently a Committee / Board Member of two local social enterprise entities, a Water Users / Rivercare Group, and a Marketing Co-operative, the Essentially Barrington brand that promotes local visitation, farmstay and food production. On the last occasion when I spoke about Rocky Hill at a MidCoast Council meeting chaired by the then Council Administrator, it was from the perspective of that Essentially Barrington Marketing Co-operative. On this occasion I speak for myself and my boutique winery, cellar door and farm-stay business.

This proposal by the Rocky Hill entity poses unacceptable risks across a range of areas. I will restrict myself to discussing

- Health risks
- Business and local economy risks

Taking health first, the proposed mine will increase particulate loading, especially so as this valley's morphology resembles that of a bathtub. Adding in the known historical inversion effect here, the valley will have elevated levels of particulates, from coal dust, from blasting, from diesel fumes generated by machinery that will operate in the proposed pit and along the proposed valley floor haul road to the processing plant at Stratford. The research evidence on strip mining in the American states of Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Alabama clearly demonstrates increased adverse health impacts from particulates, with children especially affected by environmentally generated diseases such as asthma. If a health risk is known, is indicated, then it follows that whoever foists that known risk on unwilling parties has some level of culpability. It is Madam Chair, akin to known risks associated with smoking. Risk transferred to others must raise issues about culpability. Who is responsible if they knowingly create conditions that harm others? Who bears the responsibility? There are other health risks, such as the impact of low level industrial noise so proximate to the town, the psychiatric / mental health issues arising out of 'solastalgia', the distress effect brought on by rapid environmental change, however I will let others address these.

The Business and Economic Risks are those associated with a mining proposal that is capital intensive, and which has a large and what is in effect, pathological impact on other businesses. Businesses that rely on the relatively 'clean-green' image of the region for the purposes of tourism cannot co-exist with this type of mining and scale of mining. The tourism industry here in Gloucester is now over \$50m per annum, up from \$30m less than a decade ago. Tourism and associated diversions at local farms, on the waterways and in the nearby World Heritage Barrington Tops creates jobs and economic activity. If I look at the Upper Hunter which once had such attractions as wineries at

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places like Muswellbrook, Singleton, Denman and the now abandoned, near abandoned and despairing villages such as Camberwell, Ulan, Broke it is clear that mining has a negative effect on existing tourism businesses.

An allied economic effect is de-population. Gloucester has a substantial tree-changer population who are attracted by the quiet, the cleaner environment, and the sense of 'community' that is possible here. These tree changers, often 'superannuants' bring money with them that has been generated out of the town and they spend a lot of it here on housing, rural residential acreage, food and the local shops. Change the environment to an industrial level, complete with dust, noise, lights, drive in -drive out workers and the entire dynamic changes. Drive in – Drive out workers don't usually bring family with them, don't usually have kids in the local sporting teams, don't usually have kids in the local school, don't feed their family by shopping at the local shops. There is lesser community and its associated economic activity in the broader sense. Basically, the money earned here migrates elsewhere. Tree-changer and superannuant money migrates here from elsewhere, a point lost at times on some who struggle to see the connection. Unfortunately, some who made the tree change to Gloucester have already left and moved elsewhere in the decade of Rocky Hill indecision, anticipating the less than desirable kind of life in the valley that a mine approval so close to town would bring.

Some argue that a mine approval would bring jobs, and yes, a few, the crumbs, but hardly the substance. A mine approval will also destroy jobs in tourism and associated activities.

My final point about economic activity is this – just as some have fled fearing a mining Armageddon perched on the very edge of the town, some have played it cautiously, with-holding further investment until they can see which way the wind is tending. As an example, I have kept my planted vineyard area relatively small, restricting it, adding to my vintage stock by sourcing some grapes from other local vineyards and in the interim bought a property beyond the Shire's boundaries and out of the valley 'just in case'. I have a situation where I am in effect staging a capital investment 'strike' locally and putting my money elsewhere. This is unfortunate.

And, I am not alone. As others, I have waited a decade for a decision. This has been maddening. In this decade capital has fled, economic activity muted because of the investment climate uncertainty.

Madam Chair, this mine is not wanted here. It is a very bad idea on so many fronts. Bad health, bad economics, bad location, bad idea.

The Department of Planning says no, the Council Administrator said no, I also say no.

This mining exploration licence so close to town should not have been granted in the first instance. This zombie mine proposal has been wandering the valley for a decade. It is a horror for locals. Let us be rid of it. Please reject this application. Assess it as unsuitable.

ends

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