

Proposed Rocky Hill Coal Mine – SSD-5156
Presentation to the Planning Assessment Commission
Gloucester 14 November 2017

Chair, Commissioners

I live on a farm about 11km south of the proposed Rocky Hill mine site. My objections to the project stem from my concern to see Gloucester – which is a vital district service centre – sustained and prosperous, and my concern for residents close to the proposed mine who stand to be badly affected by mine noise.

GRL has failed to establish that there would be a lasting *net* benefit from the project at the local level. The net increase in jobs for Gloucester residents would be small – two thirds of jobs created could be expected to go to non-residents - and the small potential economic benefit would be greatly outweighed by the negative effects on the Gloucester community.

This development would conflict with well-established land uses - especially rural-residential and tourism land uses - that have much potential for further development and contribution to the positive future of Gloucester.

Other negative effects that must be taken into account include the risk of making nearby houses and properties essentially un-saleable. - Every two or three houses in the Forbesdale, Avon and Thunderbolts residential estates represent an investment of around \$1 million in Gloucester's future. These are not Sydney values of course, but in total they amount to a figure approaching the amount that would be paid as royalties to the State Government over the life of the mine. Depreciation of the value of those investments would be a tragedy for the families affected, but it would also act as a serious disincentive for potential new residents to invest here.

The Rocky Hill project offers an alternative future for Gloucester, but it's a future that has no attraction for most residents of the town and district. The surer way to achieve sustained prosperity for Gloucester would be to lift the cloud of Rocky Hill that is hanging over it.

The proposed location of the mine is too close to residential areas of Gloucester for there to be any realistic prospect of avoiding negative impacts on the town's amenity and on individual property values.

Noise from the mine - especially intrusive low-frequency noise - would affect large numbers of residences in and around Gloucester, especially in the nearby residential estates. On the basis of experience of noise from the nearby Stratford mine, which is a very similar operation in the same valley, there can be no confidence that attempts to mitigate noise from the proposed Rocky Hill mine would achieve adequate results.

GRL maintains that it would be able to mitigate noise, visibility and dust impacts to such an extent that they would be at acceptable levels for residents. It is important to note here that "acceptable levels" means levels that meet regulatory criteria. It does not mean *tolerable* for affected residents.

Living some 4km from the Stratford coal processing plant I know how intrusive noise that is *within* approved criteria can be. - How anyone could cope with noise that regularly exceeded the criteria I do not know.

The Department is concerned that the mine would operate not only at the margin of the noise limits, but would regularly cross those limits, in part because of the conflicting imperative for the mine to operate in the most efficient manner possible. The consequences of not meeting the relevant noise criteria are high. Should just one element of the proposed noise management program fail, "dozens" of additional residences would be adversely affected by noise.

It is clear that approval of the Rocky Hill coal mine would be sowing the seed for very damaging future conflict between a company confronted by the economic costs of compliance and a community judging that it had been failed by process.

I concur with the Department's conclusion that the amended Rocky Hill coal mine project should not be approved, and I urge the Commission not to approve it.

Philip Greenwood