

Submission to the PAC Public Hearing on the Rocky Hill Coal Project (SSD 5156) Stratford Extension Project MOD 1 (SSD 4966 MOD 1) – D489/17 by the Gloucester Knitting Nannas - 14 November, 2017

I would like to begin my submission by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we stand, the Worimi and Biripi people, and their elders past, present and future.

I would also like to clarify who I am actually representing – I am speaking on behalf of the Gloucester Loop of the Knitting Nannas Against Gas and Greed.

The Gloucester Knitting Nannas are opposed to the Rocky Hill Project, and would like to congratulate the Dept of Planning on their decision to recommend that this proposal not be approved.

The Nannas do not claim to be experts, but we are sure that over the next 2 days you will hear in-depth submissions from those with the necessary expertise regarding the problems relating to water, air pollution, noise, health, etc. etc. We would however like to mention a few of the many concerns we have relating to this proposal:

Water

Located in the catchment area of the Manning River, this mine places the water supply for the 80,000 or so people who live downstream in the Greater Taree area at risk. Given the complex geology of the Gloucester Valley, no-one can say with certainty what effect this open cut mine will have on the aquifers and waterways, and that's without the proposed discharge of run-off and attendant likelihood of pollution, especially in the inevitable major flood event. It also does not take into consideration the 1100 ML/year of groundwater that GRL plan to extract from the Permian overburden strata. Both DPI Water and the Department of Planning have expressed concerns regarding this. I have no doubt that water-related issues will be addressed more fully by other speakers.

There is also an issue for those of us who are not on town water and rely on **rainwater tanks** (a high percentage in this rural area). With the presence of heavy metals in coal dust there is the potential for these metals to end up in the drinking water collected in rainwater tanks.

Health Issues, including noise and air pollution

The cumulative effect of the mine on the health of local people does not bear thinking about. There will be **air pollution** from **dust** related to working an open cut mine (including small particulates PM 2.5 which will not be monitored, but are widely accepted to cause the most physical health damage); from blasting (up 120 blasts a year); from stock piled coal (apparently GRL only plan to market the high value coking coal, and it seems will just stock pile the balance, approx 59%); from the transport of the coal in open trucks on a newly constructed road to the washing facility at the Stratford Mine complex; from diesel fumes and dust from an estimated 68 truck movements per day; and from the transport of the coal to

Newcastle in open rail trucks. There will be **noise pollution**, both audible and non-audible, from blasting, general mine activities and increased truck movements. There will be **light pollution**, with proposed working hours for the initial 3 year period of 7am to 10pm 6 days a week, but as we know from experience, likely to increase to 24 hours a day. All these will be exacerbated by the closed-in nature of our valley, a mere 8 kms across, plus the temperature inversions we experience, which will trap everything below the inversion layer. All this places the most vulnerable, especially the young and the elderly, who form a high percentage of the population of the area, at risk from lung-related diseases, heart attacks, strokes and other stress-related illnesses. Apparently, our community is considered too small to fit the NSW Government's criteria to warrant a health risk assessment.

Proximity

If approved Gloucester would be the most closely settled area with an open cut mine - 5.5 kms from the main street; 4.6 kms from the hospital and aged care facilities; 5.1 kms from primary schools; and a mere 900 metres from a residential estate. In his submission as the (previous) Administrator of Mid Coast Council, John Turner stated *"this coal mine proposal is simply in the wrong place"* and is *"simply too close to residential areas"*, and in their executive summary the Dept of Planning says *"The proximity of the proposed development site to Gloucester is a key factor in the Department's consideration"*.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the major industries in this area, worth in excess of \$51 million per annum. Who will want to visit a mining town, even if they could find accommodation, which is likely to become virtually unobtainable when taken up by itinerant mine workers? The loss of tourism to the area will result in job losses in the currently vibrant local hospitality industry, as well as to those providing accommodation.

Employment

In their revised EIS, GRL have already reduced the anticipated number of workers in the construction phase from 100 to 60, and in the operational phase from 150 to 110, how many jobs will there actually be? While GRL claim they will provide employment for local people, it has been the experience of other places that the workforce is largely made up of **"drive in/drive out" workers**. There will be a negative impact on the township, both socially and economically. For example, rental prices are likely to rise, putting them out of reach of current local residents, and forcing them to move elsewhere. Many existing job opportunities available to local people will be lost, especially in the agricultural and tourism industries. A local business which employs many local people, including numerous apprentices, has already stated that if this mine proceeds, they will move from Gloucester.

Flora and Fauna and Rehabilitation

There are many endemic species whose habitats will be destroyed, resulting in their demise. We also seriously question the adequacy of GRL's rehabilitation proposals.

Indigineous Issues

We do not believe that the local Aboriginal people have been properly consulted by GRL over this proposal, but they will be addressing this during this meeting.

Other potential risks

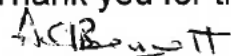

- We are concerned at the possibility of **spontaneous combustion** events, which in the Department's view *"are a risk to the amenity of residents of Gloucester due to the proximity of the mine to residential areas"*.
- We believe there will also be 200 tonnes of **ammonium nitrate explosives** stored in 1 tonne bulk bags in a shed onsite. It's a Class 1.1 Hazardous Material - if one bag blows they all blow.
- GRL have indicated that 7 tonnes of chemical-laden solidified **salt** will be produced daily from their water treatment plant. That's 40,880 tonnes a year, with no indication of how or where they plan to dispose of it.

In 2012 a survey conducted by the Council showed 80% of Gloucester residents believed the mine would have a negative impact on the town. In July of this year an independent survey conducted by ReachTel showed 72% of those surveyed disagreeing with the approval of the mine; 63% believed there would be adverse health effects, and 58% felt it would have an adverse impact on the tourism industry; 62% agreed there should no new coal mine permits issued within the valley. At the local government level, opposition to this mine has been tabled by the erstwhile Gloucester Shire Council, John Turner, when he was interim Administrator of the new MidCoast Council, and at their first Council meeting the current MidCoast Council voted unanimously to oppose the approval of the mine. Other public figures who have voiced their opposition to this mine include Dr David Gillespie, our Federal MP; Jeremy Buckingham, Greens spokesman for Mining; Adam Searle, Labor Shadow Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy; Bob Baldwin, former Liberal member for Paterson; George Souris, our former state MP; Doctors for the Environment and others.

The people of Gloucester have lived with the spectre of this coal mine for over 10 years, since back in 2006, when the now infamous Ian MacDonald first approved the exploration licence for a mere \$20,000, and we deserve to have it resolved once and for all. The Knitting Nannas respectfully request that you, the members of this PAC, take on board the recommendation from the Dept of Planning, and do not approve this development. We would go further, and request that you recommend that the exploration licences be cancelled, so that the residents of Gloucester can be assured that the threat of a mine in this location will no longer exist.

I would also like to state that we are opposed to the Stratford Extension Project MOD 1 (SSD 4966 MOD 1) – D489/17.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice our concerns regarding this project.


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