

Presentation to the PAC November 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to further present the case against the Rocky Hill Coal Mine.

I chaired the Public meeting in 2009 against the Exploration Licences where approx. 800 residents of Gloucester voted unanimously to oppose any further coal mining in the valley. I was the head, for 9 years, of the group opposing GRL. Needless to say GRL have pushed ahead against known community opposition.

While the Dept. of Planning recommended that the Rocky Hill Mine not be approved, they also commended GRL for many aspects of its application as 'best practice'. One of these was for 'Community Consultation'. I challenge the assumption that GRL have shown best practice in their community consultation.

My original involvement commenced because of my friendship with many of the residents along Fairbairns Road and the Forbesdale Estate. As a Psychotherapist and Counsellor for twenty years and with 9 years experience of managing the cancer support service at Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney I had a growing concern for the obvious stress and trauma these friends were experiencing.

Depression, insomnia, anxiety, reactive amnesia, headaches, eczema. The decision whether to stay or sell. The decision whether to wait it out. GRL wanted the properties on Fairbairns rd but for the residents of Forbesdale and surrounds, that are in close proximity, but GRL that don't want to buy, the decision goes on.

The Fairbairns Rd residents were in the area of the exploration activities of GRL, which was headed by a man who was intimidating and aggressive. No one knew if the mine would eventuate, so the unknown created fear. No one wanted to live next door to an open-cut coal mine. One friend had a drilling rig just outside her kitchen window.

More than one owner had their property covered by three licences. GRL, AGL and Gloucester Coal, now Yancoal.

In time nearly all of these people have sold their properties. Some to GRL, others, with difficulty, on the open market. A close friend, whose property would overlook the mine, just sold for \$100,000 less than other comparable properties in the area. Even with that loss she chose to sell. She has had enough.

I am speaking today on behalf the many owners of properties who sold to GRL and had to sign a legal agreement not to speak out against GRL. If GRL believed that their activities were best practice then why did they need this sort of tactic? GRL stated in communications to the community that the people who sold were 'willing sellers'. This is a blatant lie. All my friends sold under duress and even to this day many cannot go down Fairbairns Road as they find it too distressing. Many want to speak out today but are too scared because of the legal ramifications.

They sold because of the threat of a coal mine next door. Many regret the need to sell. Many have left the area. I don't know one resident of Forbesdale Estate who has had direct contact with GRL. Yet GRL say they have consulted with the community. Surely the most affected residents warrant some direct contact.

GRL only communicates directly with the groups and people who support them.

To say that GRL show best practice by giving donations to local groups is ludicrous. GRL's intent is obvious. They want to buy community support. If they didn't want to build a mine here would they be interested in our community. Of course not.

A brief comment on the CCC, another community consultation practice which is lauded by the Govt. All the people I know who have been community reps on the CCC dread attending. They believe they are not listened to, respected or given any information. Much is classified as 'commercial in confidence'. All consider it is a waste of time, but attend to represent the residents who don't want the mine.

I believe from my extensive experience in the mental health area that GRL have created untold mental health issues for the people of Gloucester. Lets be clear it is the company that is the catalyst. The people who will benefit the most from this mine do not live in Gloucester and never will. We the residents want what is best for the town. The company want profits.

The stress on the people directly affected by this company.

The stress on the people who do not want to live in a town close to a coalmine.

The stress on the residents fighting this long drawn out campaign whether they are for or against.

In the last 9 years we have had to deal with 6 Premiers, 6 Ministers for Planning, 6 Ministers for Resources and Energy and 4 Heads of GRL.

GRL have known and still know about the affect they have had on this community but they still continue on. This is not Best Practice.

Mental Health is the impact least understood and least studied in regard to communities affected by coalmines. It is not factored into the financial liabilities for the Govt. Yet, here we have Gloucester, a shining example of the overwhelming negative mental health affects of a multi national company insinuating itself on a small country town.

Best Practice cannot be applied to this project. If they can't deliver best practice when they are seeking approval how can we expect best practice after approval. The casualties are many and will continue if this mine is approved.

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