

Name...JOHN WATTS

Address.. [REDACTED]

Delete my personal information before publication NO

Date: 16 September 2016

Director – Resource Assessments
Planning Services
Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Rocky Hill Coal Project – Application No SSD-5156
Stratford Coal Extension Project – Application No SSD - 4966 MOD 1

Dear Sir/Madam

I strongly oppose the Rocky Hill Coal Project and Stratford Mine modification on the following grounds:

1. Personal

My wife and I moved to Gloucester about 5 years ago to semi-retire. We moved here because of the natural beauty and lovely environment of the town and its surrounds. The thought that they might build an open cut coal mine so close to town upsets me and my family. If built, the mine will have a serious and adverse impact on the Gloucester community and will mean that many people will have no option but to sell up and leave. If we had known that this mine might be built, we would never have moved here. I know many other retired people who feel the same way. The mental and emotional impact of the residents of Gloucester has become a serious issue. Not only have we had to suffer from years of uncertainty whilst we waited for AGL to leave, now we have this issue to deal with.

2. Proximity to residential areas

The mine is proposed only 900 metres from the residential area of Forbesdale. These residents will carry an unacceptable burden and will be impacted by dust, noise and loss of amenity, resulting in risks to their health and loss of property value. I have many friends who live in this area and they are devastated by the prospect of the mine being built. These Forbesdale residents suffer daily from stress and anxiety. I have personally witnessed the mental health of these residents decline. They are extremely depressed and have no quality of life whilst they live in 'limbo' waiting to hear if the mine will be approved.

2. Impacts on Health

Health impacts from open-cut coalmines are well documented. With most of Gloucester township, including the hospital and schools, falling within the 5km health impact zone of the Rocky Hill mine, this places a large percentage of the population at risk. Those most affected by the health impacts are the very young, the elderly and the sick. We have neighbours who have three small children, one of whom has asthma and I know that they are very upset by the prospect of this mine.

Gloucester often has strong winds up the valley which will ensure that coal dust will be blown across all Gloucester residential areas.

3. Impact on Tourism, worth \$51M per annum to the Gloucester economy

Gloucester is path way to the wonderful wilderness area known as Barrington Tops. Literally thousands of tourists visit here to bush walk, picnic, white water raft, canoe, horse ride in this majestic area. The town is full of Bed and Breakfast businesses, coffee shops, restaurants and more. Each weekend it is a hive of activity, being enjoyed by tourists who want to explore the wide open clean space. The air is crisp and clear, and the beauty if overwhelming. An open-cut coalmine within 5km of Gloucester and within sight of the Bucketts Way will have an impact on the visual amenity of the area. The mine will risk the jobs of hundreds employed in the tourism industry. We often have visits from friends and family who are horrified at the prospect of an open cut coal mine being built in the beautiful Gloucester valley. The mine and tourism are simply incompatible.

The promise of local jobs is illusory, as was demonstrated by the Stratford Mine. In any event, any jobs created will be more than offset by the loss of jobs in the tourism and retirement and other industries.

4. Retirees

Like us, many people chose Gloucester as a place to retire because of its natural beauty. Retirees inject a large amount of money into the Gloucester economy. This industry will be destroyed by the mine. Who will want to retire in a town with an open cut coal mine on its doorstep?

5.Environment

The proposed mine is on the Avon River floodplain and in the catchment area of the Manning River, which supplies drinking water to over 80,000 people. The Avon River has flooded 5 times in 4 years, with 2 floods occurring in 2013. There is definite potential for contamination of the water in the catchment.

6. Hours of operation of the mine and visibility barriers

The proponent asserts that they will do no night-time mining. That is simply untrue because after 3 years they intend to carry out operations until 10pm, which is unacceptable. Imagine how this will affect the Forbesdale residents?

The so called visibility barriers are a joke. They are just really overburden heaps and will themselves be an eyesore and will destroy the amenity of the area.

7. Is all the coal really quality coking coal?

The proponent asserts that 95% of the coal to be mined is high grade coking coal. Can I suggest that the Department closely examine this claim, which I am told cannot be supported? This will seriously affect the financial viability of the project.

THIS MINE SHOULD NOT BE APPROVED, PLEASE DO THE RIGHT THING AND LEAVE GLOUCESTER GREEN.

Yours sincerely,
John Watts

I have not made a reportable political donation