

## **NSW Planning Assessment Commission Determination Rocky Hill Coal Project (SSD 5156) Stratford Extension Project MOD 1 (SSD 4966 MOD 1)**

The Planning Assessment Commission has decided to refuse consent to the State significant development application by Gloucester Resources Limited for the Rocky Hill Coal Project, and the modification application from Yancoal to amend the development consent (SSD 4966) for their Stratford Extension Project at their Stratford Mining Complex.

In reaching this decision, the Commission has carefully considered the two applications, concerns raised by the community at the public meeting and public submissions, views of the MidCoast Council and the Department of Planning and Environment's assessment report.

The Commission acknowledges that the project is a permissible land use under *State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007* ('Mining SEPP') and is predicted to be compliant with the relevant non-discretionary standards of the SEPP.

However, the Commission finds that the creation and operation of an open cut coal mine in the proposed location, within the RU1 and E3 zones of the *Gloucester Local Environmental Plan 2010*, would be in contravention of the zone's objectives, which seek to protect the scenic amenity of Gloucester township and the broader Gloucester Valley by retaining the scenic and rural surroundings of the town.

Furthermore, the disturbance of 497ha of agricultural land within the landscape would not represent a development that is sympathetic to the Gloucester Valley's character and would impact on far-ranging and localised views. The Commission finds that the mine would create significant visual impacts throughout all stages of the project.

While the Commission acknowledges that the project may have the potential to create positive economic and social impacts, the Commission finds that these possible benefits would be outweighed by the detriment to the quality of life for residents near the mine site caused by visual impacts from the project and potential risks associated with an increase in noise and air quality impacts above what is currently experienced. In balancing both the benefits and adverse impacts, the Commission finds that the project is not in the public interest.

The Commission finds that the changes associated with the Stratford Extension Project modification form an essential operational part of the Rocky Hill Coal project and would have no critical purpose or utility outside of the project. For this reason, any determination of the Stratford Extension Project should be linked to the determination of the Rocky Hill Coal project, and is also refused.