

The Gloucester Community is in the early days of what will most likely be a long and arduous fight. Our's is a fight to preserve our way of life, our vibrant community and precious natural resources that make Gloucester such a special place. Our fight is not just about 3 coal exploration licences currently held by Gloucester Resources Limited (GRL). Our fight is about ensuring that the land covered by those licences is protected forever, never to be mined and thus preserved for future generations. A victory here will mean a sustainable and positive future for a vibrant community and town with so much potential.

It is now almost two months since the rally where a concerned community filled the Recreation Centre and there has been much to report.

## Support for Our Cause

There has been a great deal of media coverage, particularly from NBN and Prime TV, ABC Radio, the Newcastle Herald and The Land. A petition has been presented to the NSW parliament by our local State Member George Souris on the 4th of March. Upon presenting the petition to parliament Mr Souris made a speech with excerpts below.

*"I express my support for constituents in the Gloucester area who, without much warning, awoke one day and encountered the prospect of coalmining exploration activities taking place in the immediate proximity of the Gloucester township. There has been considerable adverse reaction in the local community against the prospect of coalmining occurring at such close proximity to the township.*

*"I am surprised that a government could contemplate coalmining activities taking place so close to a township as proposed by the exploration areas referred to in the licences. The community is unanimously and anxiously opposed to the prospect of exploration activity as well as the renewal of exploration licences that may result in highly visible coalmining taking place in the immediate proximity of the Gloucester township.*

*"I intend to table in the House a petition with approximately 1,000 signatures, which contains a very large number of signatures gathered from a relatively small community in a relatively short period. There is considerable community concern that the acquisition of land and the exploration activity that is occurring are in close proximity to the township of Gloucester.*

*"The petition states:*

*"The possibility that future mining will occur in such close proximity to the township and closely settled areas is creating great anxiety and uncertainty and will undermine the development and growth of businesses.*

*"Gloucester with its scenic outlook and beautiful rivers is the gateway to the World Heritage listed Barrington Tops. Tourism to our area contributed \$28 million to the local economy last year and has been growing strongly for many years now. This long-term sustainable industry is now under threat. Future mining within the boundaries [of these explorations] will seriously damage the scenic and social features that define the character and appeal of the region.*

*"From my observations the words used by the petitioners do not exaggerate the situation. As the local member I know exactly how much interest there is in this issue as I have received a surprisingly considerable number of emails and telephone calls about it. Given the size of the public meeting and the large number of signatures on the petition that I am about to lodge, many people in the Gloucester area fear that mining will occur in close proximity to their beautiful town and district."*

Bob Baldwin, the Federal Member for Paterson recently visited Gloucester where he met with members of GRIP. Subsequent to his visit, Bob made a speech to the Federal Parliament on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March. Included below are some excerpts from that speech.

*"I rise today to speak of a matter which is of grave concern to thousands of constituents in the Paterson electorate: three coal exploration licences held by Gloucester Resources Ltd. The Gloucester community and the local council are vehemently seeking that these licences not be renewed.*

*"Let me say from the outset that I am not opposed to mining per se. However, I do find it irresponsible and incomprehensible that a government of any persuasion at any level would allow a licence to be approved where the implications of a proposed mine would have dire consequences for the established community, natural landscape and local industry. The Gloucester district is a tranquil and unique landscape rich in natural and cultural diversity and heritage, and the damage associated with these proposed activities could be irreparable.*

*"On Monday, 9 February, more than 850 people gathered in the Gloucester Recreation Centre to express concern about coal exploration on Gloucester's doorstep. At that meeting, the crowd unanimously endorsed Gloucester Shire Council's position that three coal exploration licences held by Gloucester Resources Ltd not be renewed so that no coalmining can ever occur in those areas.*

*"I have met with a number of residents who are genuinely concerned about the devastating impacts that renewing the three coal exploration licences will have*

on the township of Gloucester. I have also received letters from individuals, families, business owners, farmers and retirees who are convinced that, if the proposed licences were to be renewed, it could spell the death of the township. Concerns raised are about the landscape scenery being damaged forever, reduced water and air quality, increased noise pollution, decreasing long-term employment in the area, reduction in agricultural capabilities and tourism numbers and poorer road conditions. The Gloucester community are unanimous in their view that a balance needs to be achieved. I share with the township a view that longer term developments such as agriculture, tourism, rural, residential housing and active retirement bring jobs and economic development that are a priority.

*“The Mayor of Gloucester Shire Council, Julie Lyford, has also raised her concern about the effects of coal mines on the shire, citing the decline of agricultural productivity, residents moving away, reduced tourism opportunities and reduced tree-change migration as very likely consequences of exploration licences being renewed. However, her views were opposed by Ian McDonald, the New South Wales Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy, Minister for Mineral Resources and Minister for State Development, who short-sightedly opposed the calls to suspend the licenses and stated, ‘We will renew the licences unless there are compelling circumstances not to.’ Unfortunately, the very real concerns presented to the minister about the future sustainability of current industry and the deterioration of the natural environment in the Gloucester shire are not compelling enough for the minister to relinquish the licences, therefore sentencing the township of Gloucester to a much starker and less-prosperous future — one where the shire will struggle to survive on a presently thriving agricultural and tourism based economy*

*“What we do need is for the federal and state governments to listen to the cries of constituents who live in the town, who have helped build the town and whose livelihoods are dependent on the future sustainability of the town. Gloucester shire is a wonderful area that depends on the natural beauty of its surrounds, including the Barrington Tops. Please do not allow the native fauna and flora and the livelihood of locals to be sacrificed for the sake of the New South Wales government capitalising on mining royalties to repay the debts it has incurred.”*

## **GRIP meets Minister Ian Macdonald**

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March Gary Ferris and David Marston met with Ian Macdonald, (the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy, Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for State Development) at Parliament House in Sydney. He is

the Minister who will ultimately decide if GRL’s exploration licences should be renewed.

He explained that prior to the meeting he had already met with Terence Healy, the independent Chair of the Community Consultative Committee and representatives of Gloucester Resources Limited.

He couldn’t understand what all the anxiety was about so we took the opportunity to detail some of the current impacts:

- ◆ Agriculture and coal mining can co-exist (as adjacencies on separate parcels of land) **BUT**;
  - ⇒ People and mining cannot co-exist when the prospect of mining is immediately adjacent to the township,
  - ⇒ Tourism cannot co-exist when mining is in close proximity to town and impacts on the natural attributes that tourists come to experience, and
  - ⇒ The intensive dairy industry cannot co-exist when mining disturbs the valley soil and water.
- ◆ These Exploration Licences (ELs) are not recognising the legitimacy of the Shire's LEP and the community's objectives that have gone into its development.
- ◆ The ELs currently issued to GRL are in very close proximity to the township of Gloucester. The very existence of these ELs and activities of GRL are causing enormous social and financial concern in our community and we ask you as the Minister responsible to resolve the problem.
- ◆ The Managing Director of GRL stated *"While one of the licence applications covered an area just kilometres from Gloucester people should not be alarmed. One cannot even contemplate mining so close to town, but it provides data on the structure of the basin"*.
- ◆ The CCC Independent Chair – Terence Healy was quoted in the Newcastle Herald as saying he believed it would *"beggar common sense to believe that any responsible government would allow an open-cut mine on the doorstep of Gloucester. It could never occur,"* Healey said. But, he added, *if he was a resident of Gloucester he would be very concerned.* There are over 1,000 very concerned residents.
- ◆ Many people’s lives are on hold. We have been copied on many letters sent to the Minister and know that you (the Minister) must be aware of the strength of the community's concerns.

- ♦ GRL keep saying that they are only exploring, but the impact this activity is having on the town's people, prospective developments and relocations is significant and unnecessary. Dismissing the activity as only exploring treats the residents shamefully as the DPI guidelines clearly state that exploration data is so that the *"Department can support a development proposal in so far as it maximises the resource recovery of the area"*. The primary objective of an EL is to develop a mine if at all possible.

**The Minister acknowledged that another mine close to Gloucester township was a possibility.** He added that an arduous process would need to be navigated before any company could actually establish a mining operation. Referring to a reasonably detailed map of the exploration areas, the Minister confirmed the area suggested would be to the east of the township between the Mograni range and the town, and north of Fairbairns Lane. His understanding was that the coal seam ran parallel to the hills and dipped at about 25 degrees running in a westerly direction back towards the town.

In the one hour spent with Minister Macdonald we obtained more critical information than GRL has been able to provide the Gloucester public through its Community Consultative Committee over the past 3 years. We explained to the Minister that there has been no real consultation or community engagement, just a "process" that GRL hide behind. We stressed that just because a Committee is formed and advertisements are placed in the local newspaper, this does not mean that the community has been engaged and that important and relevant information is being shared with the community. **The Minister conceded that the consultative process needed to be improved.**

The Minister informed us that he would consider whether the licences held by GRL would be renewed over the next 2 to 3 months. He would take into account all information and whether GRL had met their previous licence conditions. An officer from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) who was present indicated that GRL had met the requirements from the department's perspective.

We stressed that for Gloucester, no mine would be acceptable in the areas covered by the 3 ELs. Whilst there were no commitments made and no decisions given, it was agreed that GRIP could share information with the Minister's policy advisor where relevant and appropriate.

What next? GRIP is now in the process of actively lobbying all State Labor Ministers who might be able to influence Ian Macdonald's decision. The key ministers concerned and their contact e-mails are listed

below. Please feel free to contact them and ask for their support.

**The Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, MP**

Deputy Premier, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Minister for Commerce  
[dp.office@tebbutt.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dp.office@tebbutt.minister.nsw.gov.au)

**The Hon. Kristina Keneally, MP**

Minister for Planning  
[office@keneally.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@keneally.minister.nsw.gov.au)

**The Hon. Jodi McKay, MP.**

Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Science, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)  
[newcastle@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:newcastle@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

**The Hon. P.J. Costa, MP.**

Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development  
[office@costa.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@costa.minister.nsw.gov.au)

GRIP will be meeting with Jodi McKay on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April. Our Mayor, Julie Lyford, is meeting with Carmel Tebutt and Christina Keneally on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April. GRIP will be requesting a meeting with Carmel Tebutt also.

**GRIP Visits Camberwell**

Some members of GRIP were invited to Singleton to attend a meeting that was called by NSW State Planning (this dept is responsible for assessing mine applications). The purpose of the meeting was to introduce a cumulative impact study on the effects of noise, air quality and water contamination caused by the mines in the area on the residents of the small village of Camberwell.

During the meeting, members of the community raised the following points:

- ⇒ The negative impact on real estate prices;
- ⇒ The need for the appointment of a local Compliance Officer to follow through all the breaches of operating conditions (the mines currently self-assess their controls over emissions and noise and there is no independent body checking that the mine is adhering to their conditions of consent);
- ⇒ The averaging of data allows mines to temporarily exceed emission limits. There was poor containment of toxic nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide gases that are emitted in high concentration levels when blasting occurs. These acid gases are measurable out to 5km from a blasting site. Temporary high concentrations of toxic gases are

apparently allowed even though they are known to have adverse effects on human health) because the emission laws allow mines to average readings over a 24 hour period;

- ⇒ Fatigue being caused by noise at night and then not being able to work the next day. Noise levels are measured during the day. At night sound can travel further because it is colder - this is not taken into account by the noise control laws, and results in residents not being able to sleep;
- ⇒ Small dust particles (level PM2.5 - which are the most damaging to human health as they are absorbed into the body through the lungs) are simply not being monitored; and
- ⇒ Someone asked why the State Government does not seem to care about the community?

In addition to the above points, the following concerns were voiced privately:

- A layer of coal dust builds up on everything inside the house, even with doors closed;
- In Camberwell water tank tests have shown up to 19 times the maximum safe level of lead. No sane person would drink this water; and
- Residents have to purchase their own drinking water.

## GRIP Visits Carroona

At the beginning of April members of GRIP undertook a visit to Gunnedah to experience first-hand the issues confronting the farmers on the Liverpool Plains. The Liverpool Plains yields 40% above the national average (tonnes per hectare) for food producing land and contributes \$332 million to GDP annually. We were given an extensive tour of this incredible food producing area and spent time with local farmers at the Carroona blockade. BHP has acquired access rights through the courts to one property, however the locals have formed a blockade not allowing them onto the land. The blockade has been in place for nine months.

We spent a day in the Mining Warden's court in Gunnedah. BHP is seeking access rights to 4 properties on the plains (the rich alluvial flats) even though they claim they only want to mine the ridge country. The Farmers Federation has provided financial support to the 4 families involved so that they can undertake this expensive legal battle. Local supporters have also made significant donations eg donating truck loads of sorghum and other crops. The resolve of these farming families was very inspirational. This is an ongoing battle GRIP will continue to monitor and support. For more information visit [www.ccag.org.au](http://www.ccag.org.au).

We would like to thank John Polglase and Pauline Roberts for their kind hospitality whilst we visited. John makes very good porridge!

## GRIP Technical Group

A subcommittee has been formed to collect and analyse the wide range of technical information necessary to understand the impacts of exploration and mining in the area. This ranges from social and health issues to impacts on the economy and the environment. Some of the data will be available from other areas where mining is occurring but some will be unique to Gloucester and have to be collected by local surveys and studies. The subcommittee is developing a work plan and needs more members to undertake the data collection and analysis. So if you have an interest in technical matters or have some experience in social and environmental or economic analysis please contact GRIP and let us know.

## Marketing Update

The Marketing team has grown to six members with regular meetings every week. Our main objectives are to inform, engage and encourage. For simplicity the activities are grouped and listed.

### 1. Media Liaison

Endless press releases have been sent to papers, radio and TV stations. Articles and advertisements have appeared regularly in the Gloucester Advocate. We plan to have regular updates of GRIP news in the Advocate as we believe that it is vital to keep the general community informed.

### 2. Public Relations

Flyers have been designed and distributed for upcoming events. Information handouts have been designed and distributed at the events. This newsletter is the first of what will be a monthly update to members and supporters of GRIP.

### 3. Events

- ◆ **Gloucester Show** - We had a stall for both days with information, games and face painting. Judy and Liz had an endless queue of eager children with shiny faces to paint which they did beautifully.
- ◆ **Stringfonia** - A very pleasant afternoon was spent last Sunday with approximately 130 people enjoying the sounds of Stringfonia at the Soldiers Club. The concert was the idea of Juen Van Hand, the director of Stringfonia, to raise money for GRIP. A BIG thank you goes to Juen and the orchestra members - we have so much talent in our small town. Thanks also to Marnie Johnson for

the beautiful Flyer; Chris Russell, Ken Johnson and Greg Van Hand for the photo power point display, all the people who arrived with the yummy afternoon tea and all the willing GRIP volunteers who helped all afternoon.

- ♦ **Raffle** - A raffle has been organised with three prizes.
  - ⇒ 1<sup>st</sup> Prize - A beautiful framed photo of Gloucester. Photo donated by Linda Benson. Framing donated by Jean and Gary Spokes.
  - ⇒ 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize - A Sri Lankan meal for four people at 'Room With A View' donated by Sue DeSilva.
  - ⇒ 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize - A stunning painted glass platter donated by Judy Simonson.

Thank you to all these people for their kind donations. The raffle tickets will be for sale at \$2 each and 5 for \$3 at the Easter Market and the GRIP street stall on the 15<sup>th</sup> May where the winners will be drawn.

- ♦ **Car Stickers and Road Signs** are available from Judy Simonson on 6558 2709. The message is "Save Gloucester, No MORE Mines". Cost is a gold coin donation for the car stickers and \$10 for the posters.
- ♦ **Post Cards** - The Gloucester Gallery have organised the printing of protest post cards. These cards are ready for people to sign and send to three politicians. It's very simple, drop by the Gallery to sign your card and they will send it off.

Thank You to Leanne Barrett and the Gallery Committee for this initiative. An official Launch for inclusion in the Advocate will be on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April at 11.00am.

If you have an idea for an event or fundraising please contact Dianne on 6558 3052.

## Membership

At this point of time we have one hundred and fifty registered members of GRIP. Of this membership ninety-four have e-mail addresses which makes communication not only more expeditious but also a lot less expensive. If you receive this Newsletter by post and you have an e-mail address or one where we can reach you please e-mail [support@grip.org.au](mailto:support@grip.org.au) with that address.

A problem we have encountered with membership is that a number of people who signed the petition thought that meant that they were making an application to join GRIP. Unfortunately not so!! If you have friends and family who think they are not "in our loop" it is probably because they have not made a

formal application to join. To do so they need to complete an application form and forward it to us. Application forms can be printed off the web site: [www.grip.org.au](http://www.grip.org.au)

## National's Roadshow

On Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> National Party MPs have organised a bus tour from Port Macquarie to Tamworth via Taree and Gloucester. They will be stopping in Gloucester for lunch at approximately 12.30pm. There will be 12 representatives on board including George Souris (our local MP). This will be a great opportunity for the community to talk to these politicians face to face and ask them what they are prepared to do to take up the fight.

## Website

Regular information is sent to the website. Check it out on [www.grip.org.au](http://www.grip.org.au). Please let us know what you think of the web-site and how it can be improved.

### Web-site Visitation Statistics

|                    | Total  | Weekly Average | Last Week |
|--------------------|--------|----------------|-----------|
| Number of Hits     | 41,146 | 4,571          | 3,638     |
| Average Page Views | 8,505  | 945            | 1,106     |
| Number of Visits   | 3,923  | 435            | 633       |

## Get Involved

GRIP will only ever be as effective as the level of support provided to it by the Gloucester Community and friends of the Gloucester Region. We urge you to get involved.

**Seek to understand the issues  
and their likely impact.  
Have an opinion. Share it.  
You CAN make a difference.**

You can e-mail the GRIP team through the website. We welcome all questions and suggestions and encourage community participation. Together we are strong!

Kind Regards,



GARY FERRIS  
President – Gloucester Residents In Partnership