

## It's going to take PEOPLE POWER

In last month's newsletter you would have read the Gloucester Community is in the early days of what will most likely be a long and arduous fight; 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.

On April 22 Gary Ferris and Dianne Montague travelled to Newcastle at the request of the Hon Jodi McKay (Minister for Tourism and the Hunter). At the meeting the Minister stated she is strongly opposed to mining around the Gloucester town-ship. She indicated that the valley is rich in coal deposits and the State Government is determined to extract the resource wherever possible. She also informed us the decision about the licences will be announced in about four weeks (late May). Minister McKay stated that the Government had no legal grounds not to renew the licences and as such they would most likely be renewed.

We explained to Minister McKay that GRL and Ian Macdonald continue to state that it is only "exploration" and GRIP should wait until the Development Application is in progress before protesting. Minister McKay had very different advice. She urged the Gloucester community to **"maintain the rage"**. She said the community needed to unite in the fight against mining around the town. **"You need to be vocal and active"**, she said. **"People power is the only thing that can stop this"**.

After now meeting with Ministers Ian Macdonald (in March) and Jodi McKay (in April) GRIP expects an unfavourable outcome to the first stage of our fight to protect Gloucester. Unfortunately we expect that the coal exploration licences held by GRL will be renewed. So don't let this come as a shock if you see it reported in the media.

Given what I have just shared, I'm wondering how you feel? I feel outraged. I know that sounds like a

strong word, but it really is how I am feeling. Outraged and angry!

How is it that decisions which have such a profound impact on the community can be taken without any real consultation with that community? 1,000 people signed a petition urging the Minister (Ian Macdonald) not to renew the licences. The strength of community feeling and concern is plainly visible. Yet the minister responsible has not even taken the time to come up to Gloucester and address the community concerns. And as for the labour leader, the Premier Nathan Rees? Countless letters have been written to him and he just flicks them onto the Hon Ian Macdonald.

Yes, I feel outraged and believe the time for political correctness is over. It is inevitable that the Gloucester community will need to butt heads with the State Government. Complacency will result in defeat. To do nothing is submission in the eyes of this State Government. Minister Jodi McKay said the only way to stop the mine coming to fruition was people power. She urged us to maintain the rage, and said she would be working within the labour party to support and lobby for the Gloucester community's concerns.

Your opinion is more important than ever. Make sure you share it. If you don't want a mine around the town then tell people why. Write to the local paper, the Newcastle Herald and the Sydney Morning Herald. Put your concerns and the concerns of many other Gloucester residents on the State radar.

The Government has shown it is prepared to completely disregard the welfare of our community. Now it is time to show that Government that Gloucester won't just step aside.

The State Government now has a potential fight on its hands and it needs to understand that Gloucester **will** go the distance.

By GARY FERRIS

## What Ian Told Nancy

Nancy is a Gloucester local and she bumped into Ian Macdonald at the Easter Show. He was doing a cooking demonstration (good to see he has time for

the important things). After the demonstration Nancy mentioned Gloucester and asked Mr Macdonald how he could be contemplating mining there. The Minister responded by explaining the mine would be underground, it would create 500 jobs and there was already mining here.

How is it that the Minister can share this critical information with Nancy, yet it is never shared with the wider community through the independently chaired Community Consultative Committee? Surely this sort of information would have come from the current licence holder (GRL)?

There is something fundamentally flawed about the whole process. The community really doesn't seem to matter, we just happen to live in the affected area. And until only very recently the very same Minister had dismissed the community anxiety by saying "it is just exploration". Shame on you Ian Macdonald! Shame on you GRL!

You can see and hear what Nancy has to say by visiting  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FD39osbVYY>

## What about Barry?

Whilst we have the strong support of George Souris (our State Member) Barry O'Farrell has given no clear indication where he sits on the issues confronting Gloucester. We hope to report more detail on Mr O'Farrell's position in next month's newsletter.

## Membership Update

Our membership continues to grow and it is vitally important that this process continues.

It has become increasingly obvious during the last month that the strength of any argument we put forward to government needs to be reinforced by the fact that our case has the support of the Gloucester Community.

Do GRIP and the Council's opposition to the activities of GRL reflect the views of the vast majority of the people of Gloucester? We know that it is true but various politicians have been fed the line that there is strong local support for GRL. The Minister for Primary Industries thought there was a high level of support for GRL.

The same Minister is convinced there will be a mine in the Avon Valley close to town which will employ five hundred people! So much for the façade being maintained by GRL that they are "only exploring" and their main focus is "breeding cattle and growing trees."

Their current strategy of currying favour in town by supporting sporting clubs and events is not altruism gone mad. To invest the amount of money that has been channelled in this direction is a public relations exercise aimed at countering the opposition to their activities.

The good folk of Gloucester should pay heed to history, particularly the siege of the city of Troy by the Greeks when they were defeated by the gift of the wooden horse. They failed to take seriously the warning "***Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!***" It is not my intention to malign our Greek friends but we have a modern day "Greek" among us! At the risk of another lesson from history, or more likely folk law, we should learn from the good folk of "Hamelin's fair city" and accept that one day ***we will have to pay the piper.***

So as members what can we do? To this point of time the demands on the majority of members have not been onerous but we are coming to a critical time in our battle.

1. As individuals we should not pass up the opportunity to get the message out to friends and neighbours who may not be aware or realise the seriousness of the situation and encourage them to join GRIP
2. Be ready to support our public activities. They will come!
3. Use the web site to forward your ideas, information and any further support or expertise you can contribute.
4. Write letters to the paper explaining your point of view and the impact this issue is having on you and your family.
5. Continue to write to the politicians who haven't answered you or have provided an unsatisfactory reply. Don't let them off the hook.
6. Hold GRL accountable (via the Community Consultative Committee and through GRIP) and ask them the questions you think they should be made to answer.

By JOHN WOODFORD

## **Community Consultative Committee Meeting Update - April 30**

We started half an hour late because Mr Wingett had a more important meeting that he attended to first. We only discovered this after he failed to arrive and failed to answer his own phone. Victor Tadros did not attend.

Four letters with questions had been sent to Terry Healey and they were given to us and I raised the issue of a question on drilling that Gary Ferris had sent on Feb 28 (a week prior to the last meeting). Mr Healey said it was the first that he had seen of this letter and it was handed to Brian Wingett who said the same thing and also said since they were technical questions he needed Victor Tadros to answer the questions.

The answers to most other questions were "I can't answer that, it is commercial in confidence" or " We are doing exploration not mining".

Questions from Murray Pakes regarding Minister Ian Macdonald's reported comments about 500 jobs and underground mining had been forwarded to the minister since everyone present found it difficult to believe such a statement.

A discussion about the lack of useful information about coal exploration in the latest Community Conversations was illustrated by several CCC members commenting that they had no interest in the Gloucester Magpies Rugby League Team. This triggered the answer that since he pays for this out of his own money he will put into it what he wants. The coach of this team who happened to be fetching coffee for us gave us a run down on the declining numbers of locals in this team. The relevance of this seemed to be that youth are leaving Gloucester for want of work and that a mine would solve both the problem of declining youth numbers and declining football players.

In his report BW stated he had applied for renewal of licences with no reduction in area. He said the personnel he had employed were two thirds local and one third out of area (for jobs such as drilling which is highly specialised).

He proposes to launch a website which may also be used to carry the agenda and minutes of the meeting if the chairman so wishes. A Communications Company will be doing this for him and issuing a quarterly newsletter.

The GRL budget for exploration over the next two years is reported as \$27M. Mr Wingett stated GRL had drilled 60 holes, all to a depth of approx 70metres (which doesn't sound like underground mining). When I asked how many of these were in each of the exploration areas he said he needed Victor Tadros to answer this 'challenging' question. (We have heard nothing of exploration in the southern-most area and little of the Craven area)

A letter from John Woodford requesting he join the CCC was supported by most present and there were no objections and so I gained the impression he will get a guernsey.

I suggest John stocks up on his supply of Valium if the next meeting is as frustrating as this one.

By STEVE ROBINSON

### **Message from Dianne Montague**

One year ago my partner Chris and I moved to Gloucester to make it our home. Chris and I have moved many times, this time we wanted a place where we felt we belonged. Why did we choose Gloucester? Yes, it was the beautiful scenery, the green valleys, the clear rivers and streams. But beautiful scenery is not why people feel they belong.

When we travelled for an extended period through Australia I was amazed by the number of people who said they loved where they lived. Most of these places were ordinary to say the least. Some I thought were ugly and depressing. The reason people gave for their love of their town was always the same, it was about the people.

Chris and I find the people of Gloucester friendly, welcoming and genuine. That's why we moved here. It is the same reason for why we are part of GRIP. No, we don't want a mine in town but the reason we got involved was because we saw how the threat of the exploration for coal was affecting the lives of several of our friends. These are people who found the home that they love surrounded by exploration licences. They don't want to sell but they don't want to be looking at a coal mine either. Their lives are on hold waiting. For some the stress is taking its toll.

This should not be happening. These people are under constant worry, intimidation and uncertainty and with no time limit. It is easy to become complacent, to get on with our lives if it doesn't affect us personally.

Do not be fooled, it will affect us all personally if we get a coal mine close to our town. Please stay involved and act when you can.

### **A Grandmother's Plea**

"This was our dream. To create a healthy haven for our family, especially our grandchildren, far away from the congested roads and cities, polluted air, vile tasting drinking water, water restrictions, poisoned river systems and catchment areas. A place where fresh meat, milk, eggs and vegetables are grown to supply many other areas. They don't just appear on the supermarket shelf all packaged up and ready for sale, they come from areas such as ours with lovely lush pastures where cows graze lazily and birds and wildlife are in abundance. There are no traffic lights in Gloucester, no traffic jams and no road rage. There are just ordinary people like us, trying to make a difference in this world and live the simple life."

Don't let anyone take Gloucester away from us, or the generations to follow. Let's stand up and not go quietly while bureaucrats and pillagers try to take our dreams away. We didn't work all our lives to have someone destroy a town that is the jewel in the crown of not only NSW but Australia.

Do it for our children and grandchildren, if not for ourselves. Our granddaughter and thousands like her in the future will love you for it.



By GABE DENMEADE

### **Show Your Support and Post a Pollie**

The Gloucester Gallery has 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. The "Post a Pollie a Postcard" campaign was launched on the 9<sup>th</sup> April at the Gallery. This has

been very successful with many cards sent from non residents of Gloucester who want to show their solidarity with our cause.

**Car stickers** and **road signs** are showing up around town. Many more are still available. The message is "Save Gloucester, No MORE Mines". Contact Judy Simonson on 6558 2709 to collect yours.

**Quarry Vision** is the belief that Australia's greatest asset is its mineral and energy resources, coal above all. Guy Pearse (a former member of the Liberal Party and speechwriter for former environment minister Robert Hill) argues that Quarry Vision is a trap and a blind faith we can no longer afford. He exposed the dirty politics behind Australia's response to climate change on *Four Corners* and in his book *High & Dry*. Find out more about Quarry Vision by visiting:

<http://www.themonthly.com.au/taxonomy/term/397>

### **GRIP Street Stall**

GRIP will be holding a Street Stall this coming Friday 15th May from 9.00am until 4.00pm outside Gloucester Pharmacy. Raffle tickets will be on sale with three great prizes on offer.

1st prize - a framed photograph of beautiful Gloucester, kindly donated by Linda Benson and framing kindly donated by Jean and Gary Spokes.

2<sup>nd</sup> prize - a Sri Lankan dinner for four, kindly donated by De Silva's (A Room with a View)

3<sup>rd</sup> prize - a hand-painted glass plate, kindly donated by Judy Simonson.

Tickets are \$2.00 each or 3 for \$5.00.

If you are in town on Friday please come and talk to the GRIP team.

### **Contribute to this Newsletter**

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. Please contribute to the newsletter. Write us a letter, share your thoughts and provide suggestions. You can make a difference. You can e-mail the GRIP team through the website:

[www.grip.org.au](http://www.grip.org.au)

We welcome all questions and suggestions and encourage community participation.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Ferris".

GARY FERRIS

President – Gloucester Residents In Partnership