

# GRIP Newsletter

## October 2009.

### GRIP Membership Drive

Your membership is very important to us.

If GRIP can prove that it represents most of Gloucester Shire's residents then it has far greater weight than just a few hundred residents.

If you are a couple and only one is a member please ask the other half to join.

If you are one in a family then please ask family members to join.

The Application form is at the back of this newsletter.

We need everyone to sign up. Just \$2

### A change in Mayor for Gloucester

On the 16th September 2009, the Gloucester Council voted in a new Mayor. GRIP's position is to continue to oppose any suggestion of compromise on the issue of coal mining in the three exploration licence areas held by Gloucester Resources Limited. We will also work to ensure that the Council maintains or strengthens its current policies of no additional mining or land rezoning.

We are aware that a lot of our members feel outraged by the change in Mayor but GRIP's position must stay true to its purpose to stop exploration and mining and will not, at this point, contribute to this political process.

Of course you are encouraged to participate in this important issue as individuals. **GRIP will be asking each Councillor exactly what they stand for and against regarding coal mining and exploration.**

We will keep members and the community informed of their replies.

### Greens Member Lee Rhiannon MLC visits Gloucester

Ms Lee Rhiannon's visit and presentation at the Services Club was well attended and had first class discussion of the coal mining versus agriculture predicament. Ms Rhiannon was asked by Mayor Julie Lyford to visit Gloucester because the Greens want to protect agricultural land from mining. The Greens Bill on this subject was defeated in Parliament by one vote. The Nationals, too,

supported the Bill and are now writing their version which is scheduled to be presented to Parliament in November. Ms Rhiannon stressed the need for the community to stay vigilant and pressure the Nationals to keep to their commitment.

### Nationals to present their own Bill protecting agricultural land

Below is an extract from a letter received from Nationals Member Mr Duncan Gay, in regard to protecting agricultural land. You will notice that Mr Gay used the term "prime" agricultural land and seeks to "balance" agriculture and mining.

These words may convey hope but can easily fit a bill still favouring mining everywhere except very exceptional cases.

*"As you may be aware, I am currently in the process of developing a Private Members Bill on behalf of the NSW Liberals and Nationals, in relation to access to prime agricultural land.*

*Inherent in the development of the bill, it's important to acknowledge that there will be some agricultural land that simply should not be mined.*

*The aim of this Bill is about getting a better process in place than is provided by the current legislation.*

*I'm sure you can appreciate that is important to get this right and is not something that can be rushed. I am working closely with key stakeholders to ensure we get the right balance between agriculture and mining. That said, I hope to be in a position to introduce the Bill in November".*

### Formal Invitation to the Nationals

GRIP has formally invited The Hon. Duncan Gay, Mr Andrew Stoner, Leader of the Nationals in NSW, Mr Adrian Piccoli, Deputy Leader and The Hon. George Souris, Member for Upper Hunter, to visit Gloucester and address the community. We want to know National Party's policies specifically to protect agricultural land from mining. GRIP will follow this issue closely to maintain pressure on the Nationals with regard to the wording, intent and priority of the Bill. We need to discover just what the Nationals stand for regarding Gloucester Shire. GRIP will

keep members informed of the responses from the Nationals.

**We really need you to write letters to the four National members.** Ask them when the Bill will be presented and what their policies are in regard to agricultural land versus mining. Your letter could also ask will they void existing exploration licences and critically inquire into the practices of the exploration company.

Mr Andrew Stoner  
NSW Government Offices  
104-110 Banna Avenue  
Griffith 2680  
oxley@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Mr Adrian Piccoli  
Nationals Office  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney 2000  
murrumbidgee@parliament.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Duncan Gay  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney 2000  
duncan.gay@parliament.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. George Souris  
20 Bridge Street  
Muswellbrook 2333  
upperhunter@parliament.nsw.gov.au

### **Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) Workshop**

The EDO is a non-profit, independent community legal centre that helps individuals and community groups working to protect the built and natural environment. Thirty eight people attended their four hour workshop. There was a lot of information to absorb and much of it referred to what happens after the lodgement of the Development Application.

#### ***This is a brief summary.***

Gloucester Resources Limited (GRL) can lodge a Development Application at any time within its three year exploration licence period. A GRL Development Application would be handled by The Department of Planning and Minister Kristina Keneally. Coal mines are classified as Part 3A developments and can be approved with minimal input. The Minister for Planning has personal authority. The Application can be approved in as short as three months.

Part 3A projects allow the minister to simply override any local zoning provisions. Even if mines are prohibited in a zone, the Minister can approve them.

There is a process after lodgement and a time when the public can write submissions etc. However the process is aimed squarely at approval not protection of the community's interests.

### **The Liberals and Part 3A**

GRIP is lobbying the NSW Liberal and National parties to state their position on **Part 3A which is receiving unprecedented criticism across NSW.**

Mr Barry O'Farrell has informed GRIP that immediately upon election The Liberals will institute a full public review of planning laws and **Part 3A will be repealed.** We note that this does not constitute a 'policy'. What is their view about upholding and improving the community's rights?

**The community needs to make strong representations to the Liberal Party to honour this statement if they win the next election.**

Please write to Mr Barry O'Farrell to ask him what his position is on Part 3A and to state your concerns about our situation in Gloucester. Ask him how he will introduce an assessment process which favours upholding community values over mining profits.

Mr Barry O'Farrell  
NSW Liberal Leader

Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney 2000  
LOP@parliament.nsw.gov.au

### **Will this be Gloucester's future with further mining?**

#### **Cumulative Impact of Mining – Health Risks from dust pollution**

The cumulative impact of coal mines on communities is being studied across Australia. Of particular concern is the health risks caused by coal dust.

"Hunter Valley Research Foundation's 2008/09 report into Newcastle and the Hunter reveals an increased mortality; decreased life expectancy; increased rate of lung, skin and colorectal cancer; and increased rates of death from breast, cervical and prostate cancer when compared to the rest of NSW in general."

#### **Bleak Future for Camberwell**

THE village of Camberwell faces a bleak future after the first results of its cumulative impact study have been made public. The NSW Department of Planning commissioned a study, to be released in the coming weeks, following years of campaigning by local residents.

Camberwell residents have long complained about the quality of air in their village and this will only get

worse. If the mine expansions go ahead, there would be a predicted 25 per cent increase in particulate emissions. The successful reduction of airborne particulate concentrations and their associated health risks within the Camberwell village would require proactive and tailored air quality management and planning.

### ★ **Questions over asthma's toll on Upper Hunter children**

Summary of a Newcastle Herald article August 2009  
Hundreds of Upper Hunter residents want to know more about the health effects of mining dust and power station emissions. They have watched the area's hills, plains and creeks change into a lunar landscape. What was once a few isolated calls for a health study have become a chorus as more of the region is mined. ***Parents, who are watching their children succumb to asthma, question what sort of a future they are giving their children.***

### ★ **Chance of class action against NSW Government over coalmining in the Upper Hunter**

***The State Government could potentially face a multi-million dollar class action from Upper Hunter residents who became ill from the effects of coalmining and power station emissions, the Environmental Defenders' Office said.*** The office has agreed to take up the case of hundreds of residents who have been lobbying for decades for a public health study into the effects of the region's two largest industries. Accounts of local doctors who have recorded increasing incidences of respiratory illnesses in the region during recent years will also be referred to in the submission.

***"We will be putting the ministers for health, planning and environment on notice that this is an issue that needs to be properly investigated as a matter of urgency," Environmental Defender's Office principal solicitor Kirsty Ruddock said.***

"We are calling on them to satisfy their duty of care by doing a proper population health study in the region." If it was proved in years to come the Government failed in its duty of care, it could potentially face a class action from those who had contracted air pollution-related illnesses while living and working in the Upper Hunter. It is believed the case is one of the first of its kind. "It's a fairly unusual case for us to take on," Ms Ruddock said.

Health authorities have been reluctant to carry out a

public health study of the Upper Hunter because they believe the area does not have an adequate population base to make such a study scientifically valid. MineWatch president and Camberwell resident Wendy Bowman said she approached the Environmental Defenders Office as a last resort. "We are not going to go away there are so many people who have become sick as a result of the air," she said. The Environmental Defenders Office is expected to present its submission to the Government in the next six weeks.

### **Update, Community Consultative Committee (CCC) meeting of 30th October**

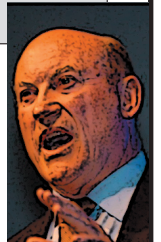
Mr Brian Wingett reported that he received an email on 26th June 2009 from Ms Melanie Brown, Titles Administrator at Dept of Mineral Resources with attached Exploration Licence diagrams and renewal documents for the three licences. Before he received the hard copies, he took it as indicating that the Exploration Licences would be renewed "from his past experience", not that they were actually renewed. ***This account is very different from the recorded CCC minutes of the 3rd July 2009. Why would that be?***

### **Nancy's Youtube**

The other issue which GRIP has been chasing for several months regards Mrs Nancy Fallon's conversation with Mr Ian Macdonald at the Royal Easter Show. Nancy stated on the Youtube video that Mr Ian Macdonald told her that the mine around Gloucester would be an underground mine and that it would employ five hundred people. He also drew a map of the proposed area of the mine. Mr Ian Macdonald, Mr Brian Wingett and the CCC have failed to clarify whether this assertion by Mr Ian Macdonald is correct.

### **Minister Ian Macdonald's statements still not verified**

Mr Terrence Healey, the chairman of the CCC said that he can't get a response from the Minister's office to verify the statements Mr Ian Macdonald made to Nancy at the Royal Easter Show. Mr Healey believes the video to be a "mischief". He also said that hearsay is not worth trusting in law – you can only take as fact what you actually know and see yourself. Mr Brian Wingett said he did not have a discussion about underground mining at his



meeting with the Minister and he didn't say there would be underground mining or five hundred employed.

What is interesting about this dismissal of Nancy's statement is that, **no one can get answers from Mr Macdonald**. Not Nancy, not GRIP, not GRIP members and now not even an appointed official of the Government, Mr Terrence Healey. *It is easier to say Nancy was creating a 'mischief' than to expose the real truth.*

Nancy if you still have that map Mr Ian Macdonald drew maybe we can get a handwriting specialist to verify its authenticity.

### **No compensation to residents for loss of health or drop in property values**

With the renewal of the licences, GRL are subject to terms being complied with, including notice that bank guarantees had been increased by \$60,000 to \$130,000. This is for the three exploration licences ELs (6563 \$30,000; 6524 \$50,000; 6523 \$50,000). GRL was "encouraged" to co-operate with other licence holders in the area, particularly gas and petroleum. They are doing this with full disclosure (in confidence) of all GRL explorations to AGL. The Security Deposits (bank guarantees) are based on the work program submitted for each licence area and the likely cost to repair and rehabilitate the environment to the state it was before exploration. This applies if the company does not proceed with mining. There is no compensation provided for people's loss, either health-wise or in property values.

Mr Brian Wingett said they are acquiring property not just for exploration but for large scale agricultural work. GRL now owns 2500 acres (8 properties) – some outside the exploration licences and say they will buy more both in and outside EL areas. Mr John Hannaford, Hannaford Stock and Land Real Estate Agents, who also attended the CCC meeting, said they are providing employment for fencers, workers, tradesmen but haven't bought local cattle because they do not have the required Angus genetics. He also asserted that they were employing local people, who are housed at hotels and motels in town. **GRIP asks "if the employees are local why are they housed in hotels and motels?"**

## ★ **A Wonderful Win for the Locals**

Press Release from Gloucester Coal.

*"The application to extend the Duralie Mine will not include the proposal for the controlled release of mine water off-site into Mammy Johnson's River or the irrigation of land located outside of the mining lease to the east of Mammy Johnson's River. These options were considered at one time but are no longer proposed as components of the project".* The Alliance and the Johnson's Creek Conservation Committee along with all the other associated groups and individuals have won a great victory in a protest that has lasted over 18 months.

### **Gloucester Council's Local Environment Plan**

The Community was invited to write submissions regarding the Local Environment Plan. Even though the NSW Government would override any objections, GRIP believed it was necessary to write a submission with regard to the insertion of coal mining into many of the zones. The State Government also sent a terse note to our Council cautioning them about opposition to coal mining via land use zoning.

## **GRIP's Statement**

I represent the members of Gloucester Residents In Partnership Inc. 'GRIP' and I am sure I express the sentiments of the majority of Gloucester Shire residents with regard to the protection of Gloucester and its environment from any extension or establishment of any new coal mining in the Shire of Gloucester.

## **Our OBJECTIONS**

Our objections to coal mining being imposed on this Shire are:

- It is forced upon us when clearly it is not necessary to mine here. There are many areas distant from established townships and population centres where mining could go if needed. The choice to mine here is one of economics, profit and power.
- Our residents' health, amenity, business, peace and aspirations appear to be tradable for some distant persons' profit.
- We have no voice. Our government chooses not even to represent primary industries with an independent minister. Instead he represents, and is driven by, mining and its money.
- Our environment and its natural systems – rivers, wetland, floodplain, aquifers, soil health, habitat and

productive farms are essentially written off by the extension of coal into our Shire. They cannot be replaced or returned to their previous health after prospectively 30 years of destruction. They cannot 'coexist' with mining.

- ❑ We have a vibrant, growing, economy based on industries which are largely dependent on, and supportive of, the existing environment. They 'fit' and have natural business interactions forged by emerging needs and growth.
- ❑ The intrusion/expansion of mining into Gloucester Shire MUST displace these industries by its physical presence and reduce their viability and contribution. In many cases the businesses will have to close with consequent unemployment.
- ❑ We are gateway to an extraordinary natural environment and Heritage Area for passive recreation – not simply to Barrington Tops but throughout the valleys. We cannot afford to have mining mar our image of peace, quiet and beauty
- ❑ Mining has no element which is consistent or supportive of Gloucester's current environment
- ❑ Whether mining is underground or open cut, the result is the same. We object to becoming an industrial centre of continuous operation, continuous noise, heavy machinery, massive conveyors, heavy rolling stock, coal dust and grit in the air.
- ❑ We object to the loss of clear horizons due to dust in the air
- ❑ We object to the Gloucester's magical night sky being dimmed or obliterated by the flare of night lighting for a large mining operation
- ❑ We object to the idea that mining can screen-out ugliness of mining by border plantings of shrubs and trees. From scenic vantage points, the vistas will be 'one holey mess'. Border plantings simply give licence to destruction.
- ❑ We object to coal mining in this Shire because there is a strong correlation between asthma in children and proximity to coal mining
- ❑ We object to the government's argument that we will benefit financially from the intrusion of mining. It is demonstrably wrong in the case of vibrant

townships with diverse industries close to an existing mining centre. The 'study' that the government relies on is entirely inappropriate for townships in this region.

- ❑ We object to the anti-social tactics that unfettered exploration and mining encourages. Is Gloucester or any other township to be gradually bought-up, dispirited, and devalued by cashed-up explorers, investors, and miners who play at disturbing, and dispiriting those with little power and who have everything to lose?

## Our VISION

- ❑ Productive farming land should be prized and protected – especially where it is shown to have reliable rainfall.
- ❑ Communities should be prized and protected for their own worth and should only suffer the intrusion of mining where that is their democratic choice.
- ❑ Our rivers and their surrounding recharge lands should be prized and protected for their own value, for native habitat, and for the peaceful recreation that Gloucester and its thousands of visitors want and need.
- ❑ Our children's and our own health should be prized and protected against the many risks imposed by coal mining.
- ❑ Our amenity and our rights to a peaceful existence of our own choosing should be upheld and defended against the desires of external parties wanting to profit.

We live here with aspirations that need to be defended. We live here with expectations that they will be.

**Dianne Montague**

President

Gloucester Residents in Partnership

# GRIP

**Gloucester Residents in Partnership Inc**

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

**GRIP CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY**

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## JOINING PROCEDURE

- Applicants are asked to complete the application form below.
- The current joining fee is \$2 (or additional donation). Cheques payable to GRIP or payment in postage stamps.
- A current financial member, who knows you, will sign your application form and present it to the committee. Once accepted, you will receive the GRIP newsletter and other GRIP communications. This will be your confirmation of membership.

### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF GLOUCESTER RESIDENTS IN PARTNERSHIP INCORPORATED (GRIP)

I, (full name of applicant) \_\_\_\_\_

of (address) \_\_\_\_\_

(email) \_\_\_\_\_ (phone) \_\_\_\_\_

hereby apply to become a member of the abovenamed incorporated association. In the event of my admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the rules of the association for the time being in force.

(signature) \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be actively involved in GRIP YES / NO

I, a member of the association, nominate the applicant, who is personally known to me, for membership of the association.

(signature of proposer) \_\_\_\_\_

(name of proposer) \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send completed application and joining fee to: Member Liaison, 736 Waukivory Road, Gloucester 2422

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