

MEDIA RELEASE

GLOUCESTER Residents in Partnership call on the LABOR Government of Premier Kristina Keneally to SUSPEND all new open cut coal mine developments in order to safeguard community health until the following serious concerns are satisfactorily resolved:

1. Inadequate management of the mine approval process

The Camberwell Cumulative Impacts study commissioned to investigate the impacts of open cut coal mining on the village of Camberwell has revealed that “management of the incremental impacts of adjacent mines has to date not been adequate to ensure that health-based air quality goals are met within the village and its surrounds”. Until this management inadequacy that has put the Camberwell community at risk is addressed, how can other communities faced with new open cut coal mines feel safe?

2. Inadequate monitoring of coal mine emissions

A 2004 compliance performance report from the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water reveals that, regarding prevention of air pollution via dust control, there were non-compliances at 11 of the 16 premises audited – a non-compliance rate of 69%. A more recent report has revealed that air-quality levels set by the National Environment Protection Council were exceeded at 62 air pollutant monitors across the region's coalmining sites in the five-year period ending 2009. New South Wales Public Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant has recently said: “**We know dust is bad for health**, what we need to know is the extent of the dust and what we can do about it.” Until these harmful emissions are adequately monitored, how can communities that co-exist with open cut coal mines feel safe?

3. Inadequate air quality controls

Air quality control standards that are currently in use to assess new open cut coal mines are based on the larger and less harmful dust particle size of PM10. There is a robust national standard for the smaller **more dangerous and more mobile** PM2.5 particles which provides a benchmark against which the risk of adverse health effects arising from exposure to these particles can be assessed. **Why is this standard not in use to protect nearby residents?**

A report on the air quality in the Upper Hunter recently released in support of a health review reveals that the only PM2.5 Monitor is situated in Muswellbrook. For 2009 it reflects an annual *average* reading that is **29% above the benchmark**. Doesn't this imply that there will be adverse health consequences?

4. Health review shows increased levels of respiratory disease

The health data review conducted by NSW Health in the Upper Hunter has revealed increased levels of respiratory disease, asthma and cardiovascular disease which may be attributable to emissions from open cut coal mining and coal fired power generation. This link requires further study which is reportedly underway. Until the harmful effects of coal dust emissions are properly understood by further investigation, how can it be prudent to proceed with new developments of this type? Aren't more and more people being placed at risk? We note too that the cost of health care provision for coal-related ailments is funded by the State, not the mining industry.

We call on the NSW LABOR Government to demonstrate its priority to protect regional community health by suspending new coal mining applications and applications to extend existing coal mines until all of the identified control risks are remedied. If the Labor Government does not take immediate action to resolve these concerns, then it is our submission that the inadequate management, inadequate controls and inadequate monitoring of open cut coal mining will increase and exacerbate the risk of adverse health outcomes for ordinary families living in communities in regional Australia that have developments of this type.

Gloucester Residents in Partnership (GRIP) are ordinary concerned residents in the Gloucester region of NSW that support balanced development - responsible mining, tourism and agriculture.

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