

GRIP Newsletter

February 2010.

Has GRIP folded?

I was asked recently if GRIP had decided to cease its operations. The answer is definitely "NO". We still have a vibrant, active, committee who will fight against any suggestion of mining in the three exploration licences held by Gloucester Resources Ltd. (GRL). Over the Christmas – New Year period, GRL have been active but have presented a very low profile. When GRL are quiet, it is assumed by many that they are not doing anything. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Rumours or Fact?

Committee members are constantly being told stories about GRL. People only create stories when the true facts are not being told. GRL do not tell the community about any of their important actions, particularly about their mining plans and their continuing property purchases. This should happen through the Community consultative Committee but little information is being gained from that resource.

Land Acquisitions by GRL

It is common knowledge that some properties in Fairbairns Lane have been sold to GRL, you may not know that most of the properties in Fairbairns Lane have been either sold or are under agreement for sale to GRL. Several properties in Jacks Road are also 'under agreement'. 'Under agreement' means that GRL have the option to purchase the property when they have the money. The property owners have to wait until that happens. One property has been purchased by GRL presumably so they can plant trees as a buffer zone from the town. The number could be as high as 8 sold and 16 under agreement.

Commercial in Confidence or 'Not Telling'

The money for the properties under agreement was due several weeks ago but has still not arrived. Is the \$40,000,000???? from China, India, USA or Australia? Is the reason why the money didn't arrive because the Foreign Investment Review Board is investigating the land purchases? We don't know the answers to this. GRL does.

Sellers who didn't want to sell and only one buyer. Is this fair?

GRIP is constantly being told that the 'property holders are getting good money so they should be happy.' It's all about choice.

Are they choosing to move because they want to? GRIP knows that a large number of the property owners believe they have no choice. Uncertainty day in and day out. Seeing your next door neighbour sell. Not knowing if there will be a mine or not. Knowing there is only one buyer, GRL. No one else wants your property with the threat of a mine. Knowing that, if you hold out, you could be next door to, across the road from, or looking at, a coal mine. Eventually you give in because the stress is too high a price to pay. Yes you get your money but at what cost? This is your home you are giving up, your dream.

DISTRIBUTE THIS NEWSLETTER WIDELY

Force in numbers – Are you willing to stick your neck out for our town and our neighbours and friends?

Unfortunately, it is a fact that numbers help in any fight against government and big companies. It is also a fact that GRIP and our supporters have created a lot of interest in the Gloucester area and its fight for justice. However, it is a reality that, although GRIP has a lot of support, people seem reticent to publicly declare this support. Without the backing of the residents in force our protest does not have the impact that it could.

CAN WE AFFORD TO WAIT AND THEN HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE TRUTH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES?

Waiting and doing nothing guarantees more power to GRL. GRIP is aware of most of the arguments, assumptions and SPECULATIONS.

- ❑ GRL will never mine in the area near town because there is no coal there.
- ❑ No one would ever mine so close to a town.
- ❑ It's inevitable that the mine will go ahead.
- ❑ There's nothing we can do about it.
- ❑ GRIP is made up of "Blow Ins", people from the city who have no idea about our town.
- ❑ It's not near us so we don't have to worry about it.
- ❑ The Stratford mine saved the town when the forestry and dairies closed.
- ❑ Mining is good for the town, it brings prosperity and jobs.
- ❑ There's never going to be a mine. GRL will sell the land to someone else.
- ❑ GRL will hold onto the land and subdivide it for housing at a later date.

The list goes on and on.....

Only a few people know the truth but they're not telling anyone – YET.

A LOT OF LAND AND POWER CAN BE GAINED BY SECRETS

Following is a Brief Report from Mr Steve Robinson, one of the community representatives, of the GRL, CCC Meeting on Friday 29th January 2010

Has GRL discussed any of their proposals with Council?

Mr Brian Wingett advised that presentation to councils will occur 'when substantive issues arise'. (What does this mean and when will this be?)

New GRL Website

The GRL website will be organised by Mr Ian Kortlang (Director of External Relations for GRL) – (see article below re Kortlang, Bengalla mines and Muswellbrook)

Drilling Program:-

- ❑ 6 rigs are on order and the first is due to arrive in 2 weeks.
- ❑ The various drilling, geologist, engineering and chemical analyst teams have been asked to be ready to go on 1st March.
- ❑ Mr Brian Wingett however seemed to indicate uncertainty as to the precise date drilling will commence due to the complexity etc.
- ❑ The drilling will mainly be to 250 metres though the Department of Primary Industries obliges him to drill some holes to 550 metres to fully explore the potential.
- ❑ Drilling will occur on the land owned by GRL in the foreseeable future.

Noise, Dust and Water baseline measurements

Noise Dust and water baseline measurements will be made during this next phase to provide data for an Environmental Assessment. Councillor Jim Henderson raised the issue of what size dust particle will be monitored since Stratford Mine have only been monitoring PM10 whilst there is much evidence PM2.5 is a critical size to measure for health. Mr Steve Robinson elaborated on this and the issue of Cumulative Impacts. It is possible that harmful particles could be emitted by Gloucester Coal, AGL and GRL on the same property at the same time yet consent provisions do not take this into account. (Letter re cumulative impacts has been sent to Hon Tony Kelly, Minister for Planning – letter and reply in next update)

Who is responsible for monitoring cumulative impacts of dust particles?

As there was no significant response from either the DPI Representative Ms Julie Maloney or Mr Brian Wingett, GRL it seems necessary to clarify who is responsible for monitoring these Cumulative Impact Issues. (See article below re millions of dollars spent to prevent coal dust harming horses)

Property Acquisition by GRL

Ms Julie Maloney asked about the status of GRL's property acquisition program and Mr Brian Wingett said this was 'commercial in confidence' at the moment but he would report at the next meeting.

Question about large land holding

Mr Steve Robinson raised the issue that some community members feared that if one company acquired a very large land holding that company would hold an unhealthily large influence on the council etc. e.g Newcastle has blossomed since the demise of BHP who had a stultifying influence. This comment triggered an avalanche of protest and the statements that you can't run a financially viable farming enterprise now without about 15,000 acres plus money to spend.

GRL. A saviour for the community?

Mr John Hannaford said it was wonderful for him to see someone spending the requisite amount of money on pasture improvement, fencing, stock etc and that GRL was generally a saviour for our community. When asked his opinion Mr Glen Wilcox, representing Gloucester Council, said he supported the line that such a company would be good for Gloucester.

(GRIP states strongly that GRL are only large landholders because there is a perception and fear that there will be a coal mine in the valley. Without that perception people would not be selling their homes and farms to GRL. These people did not suddenly and collectively decide to sell their homes and futures in Gloucester.)

GRL wants positive publicity

Mr Brian Wingett informed Mr Steve Robinson that it was Steve's duty as a community representative to inform the community of the positive comments above. Mr Steve Robinson replied that he believed it was the chairman's responsibility as the chairman would give an unbiased account. (GRIP is informing the community of Mr John Hannaford's beliefs because we believe that the community needs to know that they have a saviour in their midst.)

Covered in dust? Which direction does the wind blow?

Gloucester Coal reported in one of their Environmental Impact Studies that the winds came from the North, meaning there would be no impact on the town from dust. It is interesting that in the Environmental Impact Statement from AGL it states "Wind roses in the Gloucester Region indicate the prevailing winds are generally NW during the morning hours, and SE during the afternoon hours (BOM,2004)" If a mine was to be built by GRL it would be South/East of the town and therefore the winds would be coming from that direction.

Thoroughbred horses, Dubai and Bengalla Mine – what is the connection to Gloucester?

Who is the consultant for external relations for GRL, and what experience does he have in this field? Research reveals that in the 1990's Mr Ian Kortlang was hired by Rosemount Wines in the hunter valley to prevent a coal mine application by Bengalla mines from succeeding. According to the Australian newspaper, Mr Ian Kortlang "helped Rosemount Wines block a proposed Hunter Valley mining development by Bengalla". Issues related to dust generation, water contamination, degradation of prime agricultural land etc. Sound familiar? Mr Kortlang then switched sides, and engaged in "helping Bengalla in its second, successful, attempt." With this second planning application Bengalla Mine was successful and the mine was approved.

How is the Muswellbrook community co-existing with the Bengalla mine now?

Some extracts from ABC's "The World Today" November 20, 2009 shed some light.

Darley Australia's Thoroughbred Horse Stud Managing Director "HENRY PLUMPTRE: Bengalla is a national disgrace in terms of its accountability and where it should actually be situated. It is far too close to the river, it is far too close to the water table and it is far too close to Muswellbrook.

Reporter "GISELLE WAKATAMA: The Mayor of Muswellbrook Martin Rush is not a fan of Bengalla either, saying the company has failed to properly rehabilitate its land and the mine's overburden is too high." MARTIN RUSH: The community would be justified in coming to the view that Bengalla simply misled them about those matters and in hindsight I think it ought never have been approved."

(GRIP: Is Mr Kortlang the man to ask for help when you have a project that needs planning approval that should never be approved?)

References:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/08/21/1029114136127.html>

<http://www.sydneyalternativemedia.com/id146.html>

And more on this story from ABC's "The World today"

The Al Maktoum from the ruling family of Dubai says a shoddy coal mine approval process in NSW (referring to the Bengalla mine above) is threatening

its multi-billion dollar horse breeding enterprise. There is already more than 700 square kilometres of mine affected land in the Upper Hunter Valley, Henry Plumtre, Australia's Managing Director of Darley thoroughbred studs says plans for more growth puts him on edge.

"We spend, as do our neighbours, tens of millions of dollars protecting our horses from dust and we do have serious concerns about the prospect of mines being granted on the edge of, or on top of what is considered to be premium agricultural and equine country."

(GRIP's comment – if it affects horses, it affects people. But we've been told that there is no problem with coal dust. Yet here's an industry that knows different and can't afford unfit horses.)

Arrowfield Stud's Managing Director John Messara says unless the approval and planning process is tightened, mining and horse breeding will no longer be able to coexist.

(GRIP's comment – So where does this put the statement that mining and agriculture can coexist?)

In reply Dr Nikki Williams, CEO of the NSW Minerals Council agrees and thinks that in terms of the thoroughbred breeders integrated land use planning needs much greater focus.

(GRIP's comment – Why is it necessary for thoroughbred breeders and not for the rest of us? Nikki knows very well that the Minister can overrule any objections from any council.)

If talks with the State Planning Minister fail then Darley Australia will be asking for Federal intervention.

RALLY AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE IN CANBERRA

Four of the GRIP committee travelled in the community bus to Canberra on Tuesday 2nd February to join the protest about Farmer's Property Rights organised by the NSW Farmers Association, attracting over 3,000 farmers from NSW and Queensland.

This is what the Farmers Association have to say about Property Rights.

It is essential that policy makers developing laws that affect farmers have a strong grasp of the reality of farming systems. Farm land is the means of

production for a farmer; it is not simply the site for a house, a shop or a factory. If you take away farmers' ability to effectively manage their land, you take away their ability to manage their business. If you take away or inhibit farmers' ability to manage native vegetation, weeds, feral animals and to control fire risk – or render them powerless to stop a mining company entering their property and damaging their land and water – you threaten their physical, emotional and financial security.

Open cut and, potentially, underground mining will permanently alter the fabric of the natural resource system ... Farming is an infinitely sustainable activity and can provide a healthy livelihood for farming communities forever. Coal mining will produce royalty revenue for the government (\$500 million in NSW in 2008) and some jobs for a few decades at best. Any doubt about the destructive impacts of intensive coal mining on a once fine agricultural system is dispelled by a visit to the moonscape that is the Upper Hunter.

The Association is not opposed to mining. We simply want equal treatment under the law, a balanced approach to deciding where and how mining occurs, and just terms compensation to all affected landholders when it does go ahead.

Let's Dance Cancellation

We wish to advise of the cancellation of the dance planned for Saturday 13th February. The committee decided after much agonising that now was not a good time to have the celebration. It was a very difficult decision. We apologise to all the people who were participating or planning to attend. We hope to have it later in the year.

If you wish to contact GRIP or reply to this Newsletter please email support@grip.org.au and we will answer you promptly.

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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, PO Box 440, Gloucester 2422

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