

**SUBMISSION RE APPLICATION FOR MINING EXPLORATION LICENCE – APPLICATION
NUMBER: EL- 5394
FROM LATROBE VALLEY SUSTAINABILITY GROUP**

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Exploration Licence Response Coordinator: Dan Caffrey



The Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group is a grass roots community organization, which aims to involve and inform the wider public of issues of short and long term sustainability. We have a growing mailing list, which at the moment stands at about 100.

The LVSG strongly opposes the application for the following reasons.

- Any burning of fossil fuels increases the level of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. An excess of greenhouses gases (40 % over natural levels) is causing climate change and ocean acidification, which is leading to dramatic changes in ocean chemistry and endangering coral reefs and shell-fish in particular. The trace amounts of heavy metal such as lead and mercury and even uranium that are released to the atmosphere when the coal is burnt is slowly leading to an accumulation of these toxic compounds in the food web and has already impacted the human food supply in various parts of the world. For instance fishermen who catch sharks bigger than 1.5 m long off the Victorian coast are advised not to eat it, because of the high levels of mercury in the flesh. This problem is world-wide.
- The land that is covered by the proposed exploration is prime food producing agricultural land. With a growing world population, all fertile land in relatively reliable rainfall areas need to be quarantined from possible mining developments
- Much of the land to be explored is irrigated and much valuable irrigation infrastructure will be lost.
- The wealth created from mining coal is delivered once and then the land is rendered useless. We object to the loss of wealth creation opportunity for existing farming families and their descendents forever. To rehabilitate the land so that it can be used again for even low-grade pursuits will take an enormous effort and needs to also be included in the pre-development cost-benefit analysis. Taken over the longer term, the wealth generated from coal mining will be less than that generated from agriculture and this differential will increase as the years progress.
- Many people have chosen to live in the communities of Tyers, Glengarry, Toongabbie and Cowarr because of the lifestyle. No one wants to live anywhere near a mining operation on the scale that a brown coal open cut pit would be, so it is conceivable that mining here will lead to a de-population of the area and will adversely affect businesses in the larger towns of the Latrobe Valley as well.
- Open cuts interfere with the water table and also use a lot of water that would otherwise be destined for agricultural use or would otherwise flow to the Gippsland Lakes, providing a natural ecological flow that has always been the case. Any further reduction of inflows into the Lakes will further stress an already stressed system, especially in dry years.
- Tourism in the area, in particular, the Gippsland Rail Trail will be ruined. This is an increasingly popular trail and many local businesses will be adversely affected if not obliterated by open cuts in the area.

- Health issues are always a relevant consideration near coal mining operations because of the release of fine particles, which various scientific studies and anecdotal evidence indicate contain carcinogens and other disease causing chemicals.
- Coal developments will threaten Gippsland's ability to brand itself as a producer of Clean Green Food.
- Today there is no need for coal to be an energy source with new emerging renewable energy technologies coming onto the scene. In particular base load solar from concentrating solar thermal technologies are proving to be a reliable and cheap way of producing electricity in Spain and other countries are installing this technology. It requires only a small back-up from gas generation or another renewable source such as wind, ocean wave or biogas and has zero greenhouse gas emissions. This is the type of technology which Australia with its massive solar resources must be investing in to safeguard our future.
- The only option for using this coal that we can see is that it will be exported. This community will not stand idly by and allow the transport infrastructure associated with this effort to disrupt our lives and further taint the landscape.
- Expanding coal development is going against the world-wide trend for cleaner energy production. With the Federal Government carbon tax law enacted, the emissions from burning coal will attract a financial penalty, the aim of which is to encourage the phasing out of coal use as an energy source. Why open up more open cuts?
- Countries with high emissions will eventually be penalised with border taxes for their products, if greenhouse gas mitigation is not seriously pursued. Marius Kloppers – BHP CEO has stated as much, a number of times, as have other experts. So why risk tariffs on Australian exports to Europe and other places by opening more coal mines?

Please accept our humble submission on behalf of the members of the Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group.

Yours Sincerely

Dan Caffrey