



The Gloucester Project NEWSLETTER

22 JANUARY 2009

ISSUE 2

KEEPING YOU INFORMED ABOUT THE GLOUCESTER PROJECT

The purpose of The Gloucester Project Newsletter is to keep members and friends up-to-date with what your committee is doing, and to enable you to become more closely engaged with TGP's initiatives.

COAL, GAS & THE GLOUCESTER PROJECT

Position Statement Issued by TGP management committee, 20-1-09.

The recent purchase of properties by coal mining company Gloucester Resources and the Information Meeting called by Gloucester Shire Council has generated a new level of awareness in local residents. Many members will know that we have been warning Gloucester community members of this threat for two or three years. In one way it is frustrating that it has taken so long for people to become concerned. On the other hand it is heartening that there is a surge of activity.

A new organisation has been set up, Gloucester Residents in Partnership [GRIP].

The information provided by GRIP states "*GRIP is made up of ordinary, concerned citizens who support the position taken by Council in relation to the proposed removal of Gloucester Resources Exploration licences. GRIP seeks to be inclusive of the wider community and will work closely with community groups to achieve their desired outcome. It is important to note that GRIP is not necessarily "anti-mining" or "anti-gas". It understands that mining has a role to play in the Gloucester community.*"

"GRIP opposes the activities of Gloucester Resources due to their location and proximity to the town. It firmly believes that some areas in our shire MUST be protected from mining, irrespective of the resource lying under the ground."

Some concerns have been expressed that there are already other organisations opposing mining. We would like to briefly summarise how we see the position of the organisations, and to suggest that it is quite reasonable for concerned citizens to support any or all of the organisations because they all have the same essential goal.

The Barrington Gloucester Stroud Preservation Alliance was formed to bring together a number of independent groups which opposed various forms of mining because of the damage to the land, waterways, etc. The Alliance emphasised the idea of "preservation" of our area. It joined together to support the affiliated independent groups in their particular battles for the Barrington Tops and against the coal mining in the Stratford area. Members of the Alliance drew attention to the multiple threats, including the threat of Gloucester Resources being so close to the town, by addressing a number of community organisations and by approaching all State and Federal

politicians and downstream Councils. The idea of The Gloucester Project was born during this period.

The Gloucester Project added a new dimension to the situation. We said that protesting was essential and legitimate, but we also needed to have a view of what we wanted to preserve and why this area was needed by the nation. To change the decisions of the powerful mining industry and the governments which were prepared to sacrifice communities, we had to become part of a more powerful movement and to be needed by the nation. Climate change adjustment and adjusting to the associated crises in water supply, food, fuel etc provided that powerful movement and Gloucester region has more going for it in these areas than almost any other community. The threat to food producing land by mining is a paramount issue because the coal is underneath food producing land and the two activities cannot co-exist.

So The Gloucester Project, with its Food Bowl Initiative, not only serves the climate change etc issues, it also provides a powerful reason for avoiding the destruction of farming land. The more we develop the production of food, the stronger will be our argument for preserving the land.

(.....cont p2)

COAL, GAS AND THE POSITION OF THE GLOUCESTER PROJECT (cont from p1)

Mayor Julie Lyford has promoted the Food Bowl Initiative at both State and Federal levels, and Council has indicated in principle support for The Gloucester Project.

GRIP, as with the other independent organisations (e.g. those which have joined the Alliance), has declared its interest in a particular aspect of mining, the proposals of Gloucester Resources. Their main concern is for the area adjacent to our town. In our view, this is perfectly reasonable, and in fact is essential because if the mining goes ahead, (see map) the town of Gloucester and its character will be changed drastically. Adjacent land suitable for food production will be destroyed and our two main rivers will be jeopardised.

It is heartening that all three organisations emphasise the value of working with other groups.

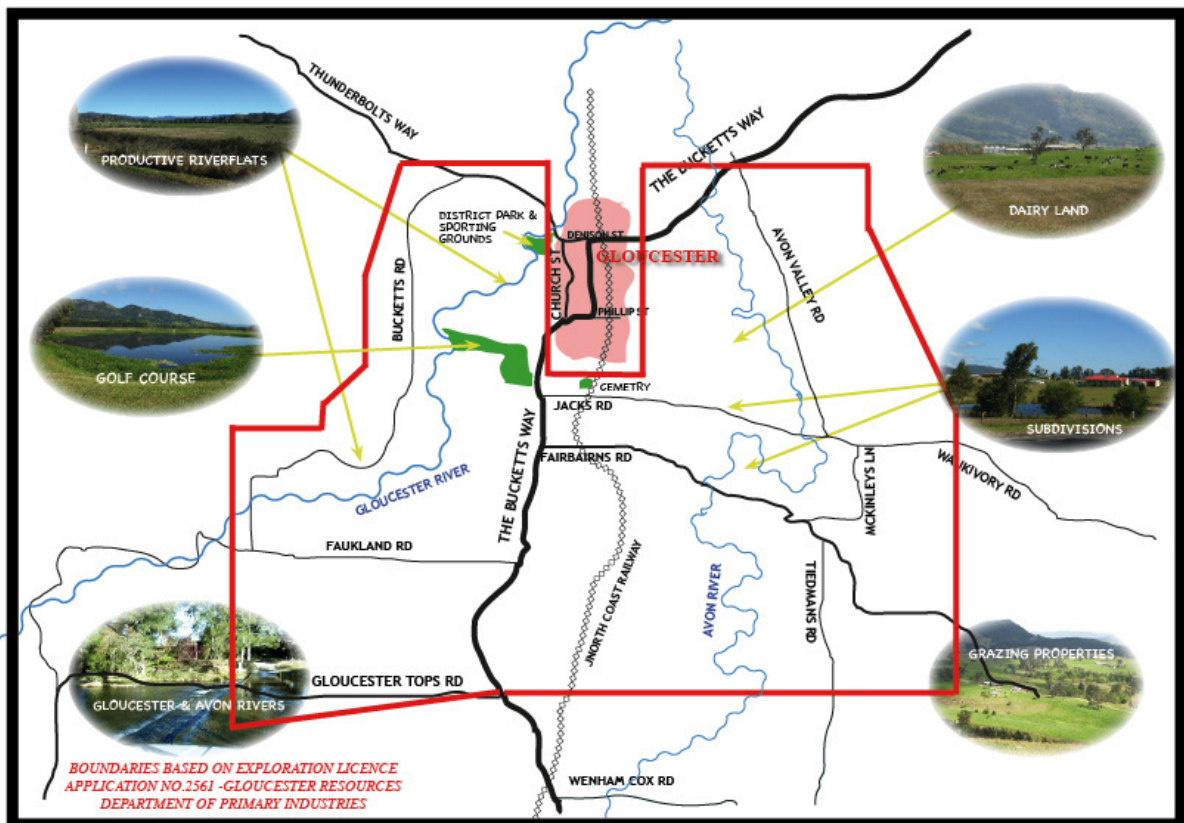
The Gas Issue.

Whereas The Alliance has maintained its opposition to gas extraction, The Gloucester Project has been involved in negotiation with Lucas Energy (and now AGL) to see whether our policies for food production, water quality maintenance etc can be respected by the gas company. Prior to the recent sale, we had negotiated water quality purification provisions, and food production support. We have been assured that the new owners, AGL, value the involvement with TGP and will continue to support our goals. Formal discussions will take place next month.

It is a fact that AGL and the coal miner (Gloucester Resources) have exploration licences over the same areas. It is not clear whether both companies can operate on the same land. From our point of view, gas extraction only

occupies small plots of land and doesn't displace farms or small holdings. If our negotiations are successful, we would see many of the well heads supporting horticultural plots, thus increasing the potential for food production. The gas alternative also offers the advantage of getting access to the energy in the coal without having to destroy the land in the process. Given that it is likely that the State Government will not agree to abandoning the energy source under our area, the gas option is by far the lesser of the impacts and may represent a compromise position if anti-mining pressure is effective.

So while we are not advocates for the gas industry, we see that, should the Gloucester Methane Project go ahead, there could be opportunities for co-operation with AGL which would support the Gloucester Food Bowl Initiative.



LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS' MARKETS

This article is reproduced in full from the January 2009 issue of Growers News 09 with kind permission of Marianne Johnson.

A bit of a setback but hopefully, if we all stay calm, it will be sorted out. Hillview proprietors Karen and Michael O'Brien have always felt that the proposed growers markets would be just an extension of their current operation. The Gloucester Project has seen their three stage marketing strategy as ideal to encourage new growers because it allows growers of small quantities to feed their produce into local markets, nearby towns and the Newcastle Regional Fruit and Vegetable markets. It can also handle commercial quantity production, so it is an ideal setup for local producers.

The other major advantage of the Hillview location is that it is an established business which can support the growers market in a number of ways. Most growers' markets are supported financially by their Council. The Hastings Council supports markets each month in three separate locations. It pays for a co-ordinator, pays for signage and photocopying etc. Gloucester Council's budget is fully committed and we are told that there is no provision for financial support for a market.

Our proposal for the market to operate under the Hillview umbrella makes it a self-funding operation. All our plans have been based on Hillview being able to support the markets and the management of the on-selling of produce.

When Karen approached Council administration about a couple of

matters to do with fencing their pool and access to the proposed market areas, she was advised that the terms under which she had been given Development Approval for their business would not allow a growers' market to operate there. This matter is still being negotiated, so it is important that all our supporters, both growers and prospective buyers, do nothing to complicate matters at this stage.

Council administration may have been a bit premature in their response. There has been no opportunity to present the wider picture to them. Obviously they cannot bend the rules but Hillview's current Development Approval seems to allow much of what is needed.

Council administrators have stated that they are interested in allowing a growers' market, and have suggested two other sites, the park and the showground. If they had waited until all the information was presented, then they would have found that these are not very satisfactory places for what is needed. By attaching the market to Hillview we meet the needs for:

- management by an organisation with an established marketing system
- Hillview's approved kitchen, facilities for refreshments and sale of stock which they sell to tourists gives them the opportunity to earn something to subsidise the costs associated with running the market, organising on-selling, storing materials, cold-storing produce, organising transport etc.

It becomes a bit peculiar when rules allow a local business to sell to tourists but not to local

people, and a business is not allowed to expand along such similar lines to their original approval.

It is necessary for the rulemakers to do everything they can to assist our community to cope with climate changes, food costs and the economic impact of the global and local economic crisis. Nothing could be more important than putting food on the tables of the citizens the rulemakers represent.

So we need to talk to council administration to see if there is a way we can proceed within the rules and regulations that they are obliged to apply. We also need to talk to our elected representatives, the councillors, to encourage them to find ways to get our market system operating.

We are looking at the alternative sites to see whether we can adapt their use to the needs of our marketing system. As soon as we have a feasible proposal, we will call everyone together to make decisions.

In the meantime, keep planting and growing. You will be delighted with the results and there is certain to be an outlet for the produce left after you have enjoyed your own vegies and fruit.

NO INTERNET ACCESS?

This publication has some references to material available on internet websites. If you do not have an internet connection and require a copy of this material, please contact Gerald McCalden to discuss this. Phone: 6558 8273, or write to him at PO Box 224 Gloucester.

FIRST TGP GENERAL MEETING

The first general meeting of TGP held at Billabong Park on 9 November 2008 was well attended. A number of apologies were received due to prior commitments. After a casual lunch, Ken Johnson gave an interesting update on the status of TGP projects. Members participated actively in the discussion that followed. It was also a good opportunity for members to renew old acquaintances and to meet other members and friends of TGP.



ABOVE: TGP PRESIDENT KEN JOHNSON ADDRESSING MEMBERS & FRIENDS.

UPDATE ON EXPERIMENTAL FARM NETWORK

The idea of establishing an experimental farm network was discussed at a Committee meeting as our negotiations with Lucas Energy progressed in the desired direction and the potential of using some part of Lucas' property increased significantly. However Lucas Energy is no longer a potential partner but the Experimental Farm Network (EFN) remains an important project for TGP and is one of the initiatives of the R&D program nominated under "Land use and Landscape mapping".

The EFN is set up to assist farmers (i.e. anyone producing a crop in excess of personal consumption) in investigating crops and farm produce diversification opportunities.

It also aims to assist in improving production methods in order to make their business more sustainable and profitable from an economic and ecological perspective.

These methods include:

- production techniques or management procedures
- changing what is produced
- identifying new markets or applying new business or management structures.

The EFN, once fully established, would carry out a range of activities including:

- enterprise diversification and sustainable practices
- EFN members meetings and planning
- demonstrations and training

workshops.

Besides the potential site mentioned above, a number of potential members have been identified and some are well advanced in their planning. It is anticipated that one of the first crops coming out of the EFN project would be trees as we have identified a need and a potential client.

The Experimental Farm Network is a key project and its outcomes are likely to include:

- economic aspects (regional growth)
- environmental improvements (Catchment CAP contribution), and
- social benefits (education and well-being).

.... Pierre Louys

INSURANCE MATTERS

TGP has now secured public liability insurance. This includes product liability cover to \$10M, as required by the Catchment Management Authority.

A separate policy provides accident and other benefits for volunteer workers.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is growing as more people become aware of the aims of TGP and the benefits it will deliver to the community of Gloucester. Pass the word along to your friends who support our objects. Membership Forms can be downloaded from our website, or phone Gerald McCalden.

CONSTITUTION REVIEW

The Constitution Review is progressing. On its completion, a report will be considered by the Management Committee.

It is expected that recommendations for amendments will then be put to a General Meeting .

SMALL ANIMAL ABATTOIR

A Feasibility Study concerning the establishment of a small animal abattoir was prepared by Lawler Partners of Newcastle in July 2005. The Study stated that *'The proposed operation has a good local fit' but 'the capacity of the proposed abattoir was limited by Council regulations to all forms of poultry and rabbits.'* It also stated that a Kempsey business is *'a significant grower and processor of rabbits' with 'pickup of live rabbits arranged from the Gloucester area.'*

The suggested cost of building the abattoir then was \$135,000. The study conclusion was that *'unless the building cost is significantly reduced, the proposal was not viable at that time'*.

I was only able to give a cursory overview of this document but my belief is that the \$135,000 was extremely conservative and a qualified guess would be more like \$500,000 to complete the building and appropriate support equipment. Without confirmed financial backing to complete an abattoir complex and livestock suppliers sufficient to guarantee a high percentage of processing volume in a reasonably short time, say six months, this proposal would not be economically viable.

.... Norm Sage

SOLAR SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Despite a good reception by local school principals, the Solar Schools initiative has been stalled. This is due to the Department's requirement that all contracts be placed with their approved suppliers, and that works be carried out only with the consent of the Assets Management Branch. However, we are maintaining contact with The Bucketts Way Community of Schools, and have offered assistance should an occasion arise.



ORGANIC GROWING WORKSHOP

Ken and Marnie Johnson hosted a very well-attended Organic Growing Workshop on 15 November 2008. One of the aims was to encourage Gloucester residents to grow vegetables and then hopefully sell their excess at the proposed Farmers Markets. During a tour of the garden, the large group discussed developing a food-producing garden, keeping chooks and worms, building

TGP received a \$2000 grant last year through Landcare as part of a larger regional grant. TGP is liaising with the Visitors Information Centre concerning the appropriate application of this grant. We have received a second grant, again of \$2,000, from the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA). This is to assist us in networking with other community groups, and in general promotion of the objectives of TGP. An application to the FRRR (Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal) for an equipment grant was unsuccessful, as also was an application under the Federal Government's Volunteer Grants Program. Suggestions of possible funding sources are welcome - contact Pierre or Gerald.

raised garden beds, setting up a propagation area and there was a hands-on demonstration of starting a no-dig garden. After lunch, the group was able to make up some of Marnie's special seed-raising mix to take home to try for themselves. This was an enjoyable community event and many thanks go to Ken and Marnie for making it possible.

....Terry Hardwick

GLOBAL THOUGHTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

International Energy Agency World, Energy Outlook 2008: The world's energy system is at a crossroads. Current global trends in energy supply and consumption are patently unsustainable — environmentally, economically, socially. But that can — and must — be altered; there's still time to change the road we're on. It is not an exaggeration to claim that the future of human prosperity depends on how

successfully we tackle the two central energy challenges facing us today: securing the supply of reliable and affordable energy; and effecting a rapid transformation to a low-carbon efficient and environmentally benign system of energy supply. What is needed is nothing short of an energy revolution., November 12, 2008

Al Gore, July 17, 2008: "Today I challenge our nation to commit to

producing 100 percent of our electricity from renewable energy and truly clean carbon-free sources within 10 years."..

Barack Obama, July 2008: "I strongly agree with Vice President Gore that we cannot drill our way to energy independence, but must fast-track investments in renewable sources of energy like solar power, wind power and advanced biofuels."

CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY - A NEW PROGRAM

Caring for our Country, a vast program to protect our natural and farming assets By Pierre Louys – *The Gloucester Project. (Reprinted from "The Country Leader").*

With the new Rudd Government comes a new way of looking at Australia's natural resources and at the past and future contribution of farmers and community groups towards sustainability. Two key ministers – Peter Garrett and Tony Burke – have been given the responsibility to invest \$2.25 billion over the first five years under the "Caring for our Country" program.

The recent publication of a business plan ensures that these funds are invested in a strategic manner across the highest priorities, and that the Government's "Caring for our Country" program delivers specific outcomes.

The Federal Government acknowledges that past efforts of regional bodies (ie CMAs) and communities (Landcare) in natural resources management have led to improvements in the care and management of our land. However it clearly believes that better targeting to focus future efforts and tighter accountability will make an even greater difference.

The new program combines all the Australian Government's previous natural resource management pro-

grams, including the Natural Heritage Trust, the National Landcare Program, the Environmental Stewardship Program and the Working on Country Indigenous land and sea ranger program.

The vast program aims at supporting the tireless work of volunteers, farmers, Indigenous communities and natural resource management professionals. It seeks the active participation of individuals and groups who are committed to protecting Australia's natural icons and ensuring a sustainable future for our food and fibre production.

All levels of the social fabric must work together to manage our natural assets effectively, because now, any mistakes we make will be amplified by climate change. The Ministers' Foreword in the published business plan says: "*Rapid and far-reaching changes in our environment like species loss, the expansion of pests and weeds, and dramatically altered rainfall patterns must be answered with integrated landscape scale solutions.*"

Regional integration is a key to the successful implementation of complex national initiatives such as "Caring for our Country". By working together, regional natural resource management organisations, non-government and Indigenous organisations, farmer and commu-

nity groups, governments and businesses will deliver action to secure both our farming resource base and our unique environment into the future.

The Ministers' business plan lists a number of National Priority Areas:

- National reserve system
- Biodiversity and natural icons
- Coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats
- Sustainable farm practices
- Community skills, knowledge and engagement
- Natural resource management in northern and remote Australia.

The Australian Government invites interested parties to submit investment proposals for projects that will contribute to the achievement of Caring for our Country targets.

Large and medium-scale projects are a priority for the delivery of Caring for our Country.

Community groups' projects (small projects) are also supported under Caring for our Country. Preference will be given to projects requiring funding of between \$20,000 and \$100,000 that contribute directly to the achievement of the Caring for our Country targets.

The Australian Government is seeking expressions of interest (for large) and submissions for medium and small projects by 6 March 2009.

CONTACT INFORMATION

COMMITTEE

TGP BUSINESS ADDRESS
PO Box 224
Gloucester NSW 2422

TGP EMAIL ADDRESS
thegloucesterproject@ipstarmail.com.au

President	Ken Johnson	6558 3191	thejohnsons@ipstarmail.com.au
Deputy President	Peter Pfister	–	peter.pfister01@yahoo.com.au
Secretary	Marianne Johnson	6558 3191	marianne1@ipstarmail.com.au
Treasurer	Gerald McCalden	6558 8273	mccalden@tpg.com.au
Natural Resources Consultant	Pierre Louys	0410 464 957	pierre.louys@bigpond.com



www.thegloucesterproject.org.au

Newsletter Contact : Lyn Hancock 6558 8181
Email: glenhaven@ipstarmail.com.au