



**RYLSTONE REGION
COAL FREE
COMMUNITY**



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Rylstone Region Coal Free Community
Hawkins Rumker PRIA Submission: European heritage
Final

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Acknowledgement of Country

The RRCFC acknowledges that we live and work on Wiradjuri Country.

We acknowledge the Wiradjuri peoples as the traditional custodians of the land, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.



Executive Summary

2020 Strategic Statement and the PRIA process

The NSW Government's June 2020 Strategic Statement on Coal Exploration and Mining outlines the NSW Government's approach to transitioning to renewable energy and supporting the economy and aims to improve certainty about where mining should not occur. It identified 14 potential future coal exploration release areas (NSW Government, 2020). The Hawkins and Rumker potential release areas were identified in this Statement; the Ganguddy-Kelgoola area, which sits adjacent to Hawkins and Rumker, is also identified in this statement.

Following the release of the Strategic Statement, the NSW Government Advisory Body for Strategic Release has requested the Hawkins and Rumker areas be put through the Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment (PRIA) process (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), 2021a). Ganguddy-Kelgoola is expected to go through the PRIA process in the near future once further exploration is completed.

The PRIA process, also set out in the Strategic Release Framework (NSW Government, 2020), is an initial assessment of social, environmental and economic matters relating to areas that could be released for exploration. In theory, it involves engaging with interested and potentially impacted stakeholders to identify issues for consideration.

RRCFC's European Heritage Submission

This report is the Rylstone Region Coal Free Community's (RRCFC's) submission to the PRIA process on European Heritage. Separate submissions for a range of other issues are also being submitted by the RRCFC.

Impacts of coal exploration and mining on our region

The collective identity of a community is more than the physical structures that remind us of our past, and the festivals, art shows and agricultural events that gently push us forward, towards our future. While the tangible and intangible cultural assets of a place inform and express the identity of those that live within its boundaries, it is in the very interaction of people with these objects and events that community is both formed and preserved.

A new coal mine in the region would grossly disrupt this interaction, with its overlay of heavy industry, drive-in drive-out, fly-in fly-out workers and shift arrangements, pollution such as noise and dust, the creation of a two-speed economy and other social impacts. People in the Rylstone region are also acutely aware that even just the threat of a mine being developed can decimate the cultural assets of a small town. This community has watched the slow death of what was once a thriving community in Bylong. Our community does not want what is special about our towns, our cultural heritage, lost.

It is the RRCFC's strongly held view that the PRIA should find that the proposed exploration areas should not be opened for exploration under the Strategic Framework that it recommends against release of the proposed areas, and the Advisory Board should rule that coal exploration should not proceed in the Hawkins and Rumker areas.

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1 | Introduction

1.1 Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment (PRIA) Process

The NSW Government's Advisory Body for Strategic Release has asked the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) to prepare a Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment (PRIA) (DPIE, 2021) to consider the benefits, opportunities, risks and constraints of releasing two adjacent areas located near Rylstone in the Mid-Western Regional local government area.

These areas are shown in Figure 1 and include:

- Hawkins - an area of 14,900 ha located directly north of Rylstone, and
- Rumker - an area of 17,800 ha located directly north east of Rylstone.

An initial assessment of resource potential undertaken by the Division of Mining, Exploration and Geoscience within the Department of Regional NSW has identified coal resources within the Hawkins and Rumker areas that could be mined by underground mining methods (DPIE, 2021). It is noted that these areas could just as well be mined using aboveground methods.

In June 2020, the NSW Government released the Strategic Statement on Coal Exploration and Mining (NSW Government, 2020). The Strategic Statement "outlines the NSW Government's approach to transitioning to renewable energy and supporting the economy and aims to improve certainty about where mining should not occur." It identified 14 potential future coal exploration release areas (NSW Government, 2020).

Adjacent to Hawkins and Rumker is the area of Ganguddy – Kelgoola, which is slated to go through the PRIA process once further exploration is completed (NSW Government, 2020).

1.2 PRIA Preparation

The PRIA process is also set out in the Strategic Release Framework (NSW Government, 2020). It is an initial assessment of social, environmental and economic matters relating to areas that could be released for exploration. In theory, it involves engaging with interested and potentially impacted stakeholders to identify issues for consideration.

DPIE has engaged Resource Strategies to undertake 'preparation of a Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment document in relation to a defined area that could be released for coal exploration' for a sum of \$167,156 (NSW Government eTendering, 2021).

On its website Resource Strategies (2021) says it facilitates development approvals for major mining and associated infrastructure projects and prepares comprehensive and timely environmental assessment documentation with the assistance of recognised experts across all environmental fields.

The DPIE undertakes the PRIA and submits this to the Advisory Body for Strategic Release, which considers potential release areas, reviews reports and recommends assessment of the release of an area for resource exploration. The Advisory Body for Strategic Release makes recommendations to the Minister for Regional NSW and these are considered by Cabinet and, if approved, the Minister for Regional NSW releases an area for exploration and invites companies to apply for a prospecting title.

1.3 Rylstone Region Coal Free Community

1.3.1 RRCFC

The Rylstone Region Coal Free Community (RRCFC) is a group of self-funded, like-minded local residents, and supporters, of the Rylstone Region committed to stopping further exploration of coal and approval of mines in our region. Our aim is to protect the land, heritage, culture and community for now and future generations.

1.3.2 Purpose of this report

This report is the RRCFC's submission to the PRIA process on European Heritage. Separate submissions for a range of other issues are also being submitted by the RRCFC.

This submission considers the European heritage within the towns of Rylstone and Kandos and their tangible and intangible cultural assets and how these would be grossly disrupted by coal exploration and coal mining in our region.

It is the RRCFC's strongly held view that the PRIA should find that the proposed exploration areas should not be opened for exploration under the Strategic Framework that it recommends against release of the proposed areas, and the Advisory Board should rule that coal exploration should not proceed in the Hawkins and Rumker areas.

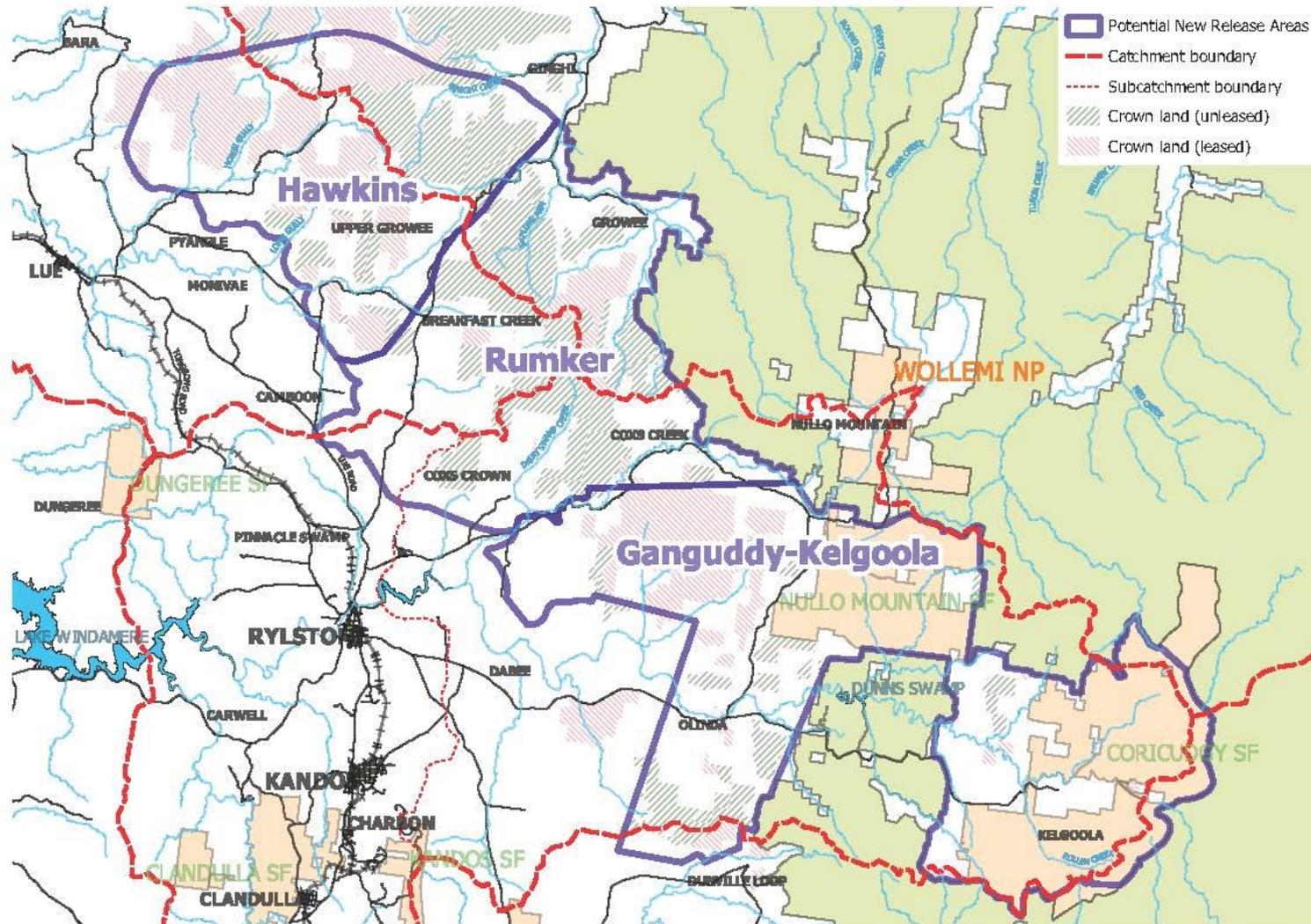


Figure 1 The proposed exploration areas (note only Hawkins and Rumker being considered in this PRIA)



2 | Our towns

2.1 Main settlements

Despite being only seven kilometres apart, the twin towns of Rylstone and Kandos have managed to maintain their idiosyncratic characters, a reflection of their distinctive histories and evident in the extant cultural resources of each town. Fine sandstone buildings of Rylstone provide an interesting juxtaposition to the functional, industrial town of Kandos with its decommissioned cement plant, remnant ropeway and inter-war buildings.

2.2 Rylstone

Rylstone’s European history is firmly grounded in the pastoralist expansion of the early nineteenth century where graziers such as Richard Fitzgerald, Edward Cox, and John Thompson established large pastoral properties in the region. First settled in the 1820’s, many homesteads and related working buildings were constructed as the industry developed. Some of these properties remain intact and are still in use while the names of these early pioneers can still be found amongst families in the community. Two examples of historically significant pastoral sites include:

Dabee: 1,200 hectares granted to Fitzgerald in 1837-8, has an architecturally significant homestead and out-buildings.

Rawdon: 600 hectares a merino stud that Edward Cox inherited from his father. Cox would eventually gain world renown for his work developing the merino breed. Homestead and woolshed of particular significance.



The township of Rylstone, originally established to service the region’s pastoral properties, retains many architecturally significant buildings. Most of these buildings were constructed between 1865 and 1895 from local sandstone and present a striking heritage streetscape. Some examples include:

The Globe Hotel & Sample Room 1880



St. Malachy’s Church 1875



The Bridge Hotel 1872



St James' Church of England 1864



The Police Complex 1875-1885



The Post Office 1850



The Shire Chambers 1906



Cottage Museum



This pastoral history is not merely an historical artefact but a continuing presence in a town whose identity is referenced not only by the cattle and sheep farming that dominate the area, but also by the growing presence of various other agricultural activities including wineries, olive oil, orchards, alpacas and goats.

2.3 Kandos

Established some seventy years after Rylstone, the town of Kandos emerged with the formation of the N.S.W. Cement, Lime and Coal Company on 100 acres purchased from a local farmer. Originally a private village, the cement works at Kandos, and later nearby Charbon, were developed to process the significant deposits of limestone and coal in the Rylstone district. For 90 years “the works” would provide quality cement to many of Australia’s famous landmarks including the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge ‘cementing’ the reputation of Kandos as ‘the town that built Sydney’.

The township itself emerged during the interwar period, rapidly expanding over two decades to become a commercial hub. Many buildings along the main street, Angus Avenue, date to this era and provide many fine examples of interwar commercial architecture. In addition to these shops and commercial premises, there are many other significant buildings in the town including:

Kandos Museum 1914 (Californian Mission Revival-style church)



Kandos Railway Station 1915



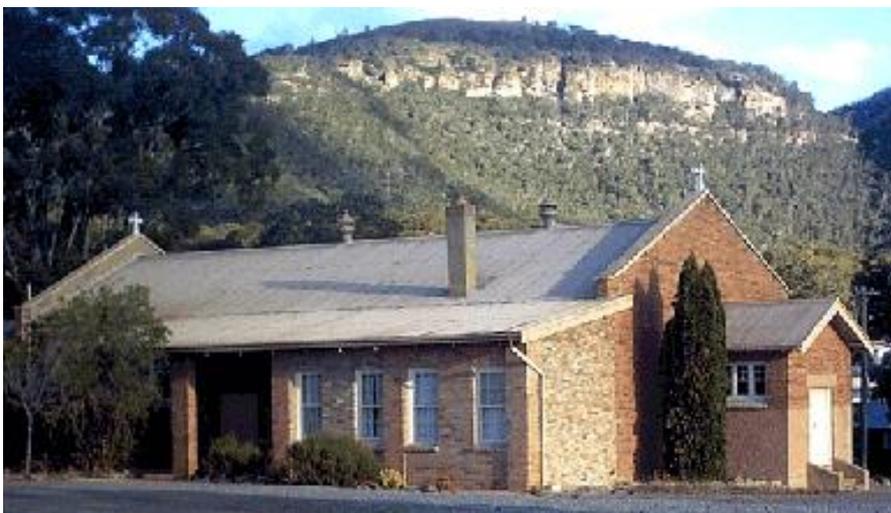
Kandos Post Office 1926



Good Samaritan Convent 1930 (a significant piece of 20th Century architecture in Spanish Mission style)



St. Dominic's Church 1922



Kandos Public School 1929



In addition to the abundance of significant and nationally valuable historical, architectural and heritage resources found in the region, there is also a rich and varied cultural life that reflects the diversity of interests of the people who live in, and visit the region. In addition to wineries, art galleries, museums, cafes and restaurants there are:

Cementa Festival - a biennial festival of contemporary art that brings together over 60 regional and urban artists for a four-day celebration of Australian contemporary art (Kandos)



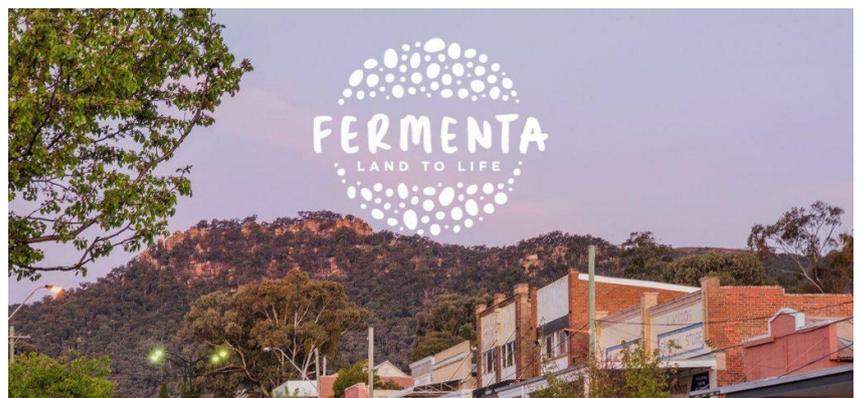
Rylstone Street Feast - Rylstone district's premier annual event allowing guests to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Rylstone-Kandos district and sample the diverse range of regional foods, produce and wines



Kandos Street Machine & Hot Rod Show - a premier event in the annual automotive and car lover calendar. Community Event of the Year 2021 Australia Day Awards.



Fermenta Festival – a one day festival celebrating the fermentation process bringing together science, education and the best of regional produce (inaugural festival held in 2021)



Rylstone-Kandos Show – an annual community event that showcases the regions agricultural produce, cooking, crafts and animal husbandry.



Rylstone Bull-a-rama – an immensely popular rodeo hosted by the Rylstone-Kandos Show Society



3 | Discussion

The collective identity of a community is more than the physical structures that remind us of our past, and the festivals, art shows and agricultural events that gently push us forward, towards our future. While the tangible and intangible cultural assets of a place inform and express the identity of a those that live within its boundaries, it is in the very interaction of people with these objects and events that community is both formed and preserved.

From farmers meeting outside the local café at first light each morning, to the revving of engines and acrid burn of rubber each January long weekend, through to the monthly markets, quaint shops in sandstone buildings, museums and art spaces visited by an increasing number of visitors from outside of the region. The identity of a community is shaped by those heritage resources that surround it, and at the same time, act to shape these cultural spaces in return; a process that is both creative and re-creative.

This collective remembering through an active engagement with its cultural heritage works to inform and shape the future of a community, a process that takes place over time and ideally incrementally and organically.

A new coal mine in the region would grossly disrupt this interaction, with its overlay of heavy industry, drive-in drive-out, fly-in fly-out workers and shift arrangements, pollution such as noise and dust, the creation of a two-speed economy and other social impacts.

Mines, associated infrastructure at the mine, and the development to service them in the region, are incongruent with the existing heritage values. Our towns have a lovely country charm, and generally peaceful roads which currently only have very limited heavy, noisy and polluting traffic. An overlay of a large scale mine bringing heavy industry to this region would destroy the existing cultural values.

The working arrangements commonly adopted in mines mean that those who work within them are often not able to participate in community life, such as coaching sports teams. Rosters are in blocks a certain number of days, and 12 hour shifts each day. Those working these shifts often stay in camps or accommodation close to the mine site, as travelling the longer distances to and from home is not feasible or safe, due to fatigue. This has led to many employees working on a drive-in drive-out, fly-in fly-out basis.

REMPLAN (2021) reports that there are 10,095 people employed in the Mid-Western Regional local government area. There are also 1487 who consider themselves as residing in other local government areas. While some of those are not too far from this local government area, there are places like Wollondilly, Wollongong, Mt Isa, Gladstone, and Mandurah to name a few where these people reside. There are 1,831 people listed as being employed in the mining sector. Given that mines operate on a block of time on, then a block of time off, it is probable that most people who are employed in the LGA but living elsewhere fall into this category. Therefore, it is therefore reasonable to assume that there are only two-thirds of those employed by mines who live in, work in and spend their money locally. These employment patterns are inconsistent with the current community values and cultural heritage of our region.

Even just the threat of a mine being developed can decimate the cultural assets of a small town. The Bylong Valley is a case in point. Approximately 15 years ago, KEPCO, started exploration there. The presence of this company and the threat of mining started to divide the community. Over time, some landholders sold their farmlands, while others stayed to fight for land that they had lived on for generations. The company's application to develop a mine was not approved, and it is continuing to appeal this decision. As at the time of writing the mine is not approved, the community has been decimated, productive farms are idle and the few remaining landholders have not invested in their properties for over a decade because of the uncertainty. Fifteen years ago, this was a thriving

community with strong community bonds, community-based volunteer organisations and it held an annual festival. This has been destroyed simply by the threat of a mine. Rylstone and Kandos should not be put through this slow decline.



4 | Conclusion

The collective identity of a community is more than the physical structures that remind us of our past, and the festivals, art shows and agricultural events that gently push us forward, towards our future. While the tangible and intangible cultural assets of a place inform and express the identity of those that live within its boundaries, it is in the very interaction of people with these objects and events that community is both formed and preserved.

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