



**RYLSTONE REGION
COAL FREE
COMMUNITY**



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Rylstone Region Coal Free Community
*Hawkins Rumker PRIA Submission: Infrastructure
constraints*
Final



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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 Infrastructure Impacts and Constraints Submission

This report is the Rylstone Region Coal Free Community's (RRCFC's) submission to the PRIA process on *infrastructure impacts and constraints*. Separate submissions for a range of other issues are also being submitted by the RRCFC. The RRCFC recognises that coal exploration is a precursor to coal mining, and therefore it is predominantly the mining phase that is considered in this submission. The RRCFC strongly opposes the release of Hawkins and Rumker as coal exploration areas.

Transport Infrastructure

RRCFC's analysis found that the local roads do not have the capacity to handle a development of the scale being considered and that mines generally do not pay their share in relation to the impacts they have on roads. Further, only a small fraction of the revenues generated by coal mining is returned to the region to compensate for the impacts that arise from these damaging developments.

The vistas from the drive through this region are incredibly scenic and one of the drawcards for tourists to our area. A coal mine is in conflict with and would have a detrimental impact on the scenic values of our region, undermining the tourist industry we have developed here.

The Rylstone Aerodrome Park sits just to the south of the proposed Rumker area. A mine is in direct conflict with an important existing local facility into which a significant investment has already been made. In the absence of coal exploration and mining, this facility will continue to be further developed.

To transport directly by rail, a connection would be required to a nearby railway line. This rail connection could either go north via Mudgee whence it would go east to Newcastle; or travel south through Rylstone and Kandos to Lithgow and beyond. Either option would require significant investment in rail infrastructure and would cause significant disruption within the towns through which coal trains would be run.

In 2020, Transport for NSW undertook stakeholder engagement with Mid-Western Regional Council in relation to a proposal to transport a much smaller quantity of coal (four megatonne) than would be extracted from a mine in the Hawkins and Rumker areas. Council was not supportive of the proposal and indicated that it expected considerable public opposition to the reinstatement of railway

operations on the line It was particularly concerned about the impact of coal trains passing through the towns.

In the Hawkins and Rumker areas, it is anticipated that the volume of coal available for extraction could be in the region of 910 megatonne (DPIE, 2021). Given the rapidly diminishing world market for coal, it is reasonable to assume that any company seeking to mine this deposit and receive a commercial return would be exploiting the resource as rapidly as possible. On this basis, it is assumed that 20 million tonnes per annum would be extracted.

Due to the Wallerawang to Gwabegar line being a lightly laid branch line, the use of 100-tonne, rather than the heavier Hunter Valley 120 tonne coal hoppers has been contemplated. One full 100-tonne coal hopper carries approximately 77 tonnes, a 70-car coal train would be able to transport 5,390 tonnes per trip. If 20MTPA is being extracted from Hawkins and Rumker areas, 3,710 train trips will be required per annum. This is 10 trips per day outbound – and another 10 trips per day inbound will be needed to bring those trains back again assuming the line runs 365 days per year.

Running 1.2km coal trains through the heart of these towns at least 20 times per day would be devastating for the community, as it would effectively cut the community in half. Anyone living east of the railway line would face substantial delays simply getting into Rylstone to run routine errands. It would likely kill off the existing tourism industry.

The RRCFC believes that the response Mid-Western Regional Council gave to Transport for NSW is significantly understating the level of opposition the towns of Rylstone and Kandos would have to the extraction of coal for the Hawkins and Rumker area.

Water Supply

The Rumker area sits over, or would interrupt flows from, 21 percent of the Rylstone Dam catchment area. Downstream of Rylstone Dam is Windamere Dam, owned by WaterNSW, which supplies Mudgee's town water. There are many properties downstream of both Rylstone and Windamere Dam that are dependent on the Cudgegong for their water supply and business viability. A mine in the Hawkins and Rumker areas would greatly reduce the water available for all other land uses within the catchment and cause extreme water stress to other water users and sensitive receiving environments. Furthermore, given its location in the three upper catchments of the landscape, it is not feasible for a mine to source the water it would require from elsewhere. It is not acceptable to take what little water that already exists from the surrounding land and communities.

Health And Education Services

The health and education services in this region are not of a high quality, therefore the families of mine workers are highly unlikely to live within these towns. However, while the people in this area realise there are limitations to their services and of course would welcome any improvements to these, what is of concern is that any mine in the area would only displace and destroy the existing sustainable economy that the Rylstone Kandos region currently has. Further, should exploration be recommended for this region, it will perpetuate the period of uncertainty. This will only further erode the services within this region over the next decade or so, brought on by divestment within Rylstone and Kandos, as people either stop investing in their properties and businesses or simply sell up and move away altogether. This has been observed in Bylong during the long, drawn-out period of exploration and project development by Kepco.

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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, 2021a) 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 northeast 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, 2021a). 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 self-funded group of 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 *infrastructure impacts and constraints*. Separate submissions for a range of other issues are also being submitted by the RRCFC. The RRCFC recognises that coal exploration is a precursor to coal mining, and therefore it is predominantly the mining phase that is considered in this submission.

This submission considers the transportation, water and local services of the Rylstone and Kandos region and the potential impacts of the development of the Hawkins and Rumker potential coal release areas (the Hawkins and Rumker areas). It considers the constraints and opportunities that could arise from such a development, as is the bailiwick of the PRIA.

It has found that the constraints and disadvantages that would flow from any coal mining development would far outweigh any benefits and that any benefits would not be felt by the Rylstone Kandos community. This community would only see a degradation of its current living standards, a loss of its existing services and a decimation of its existing economic activity.

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.



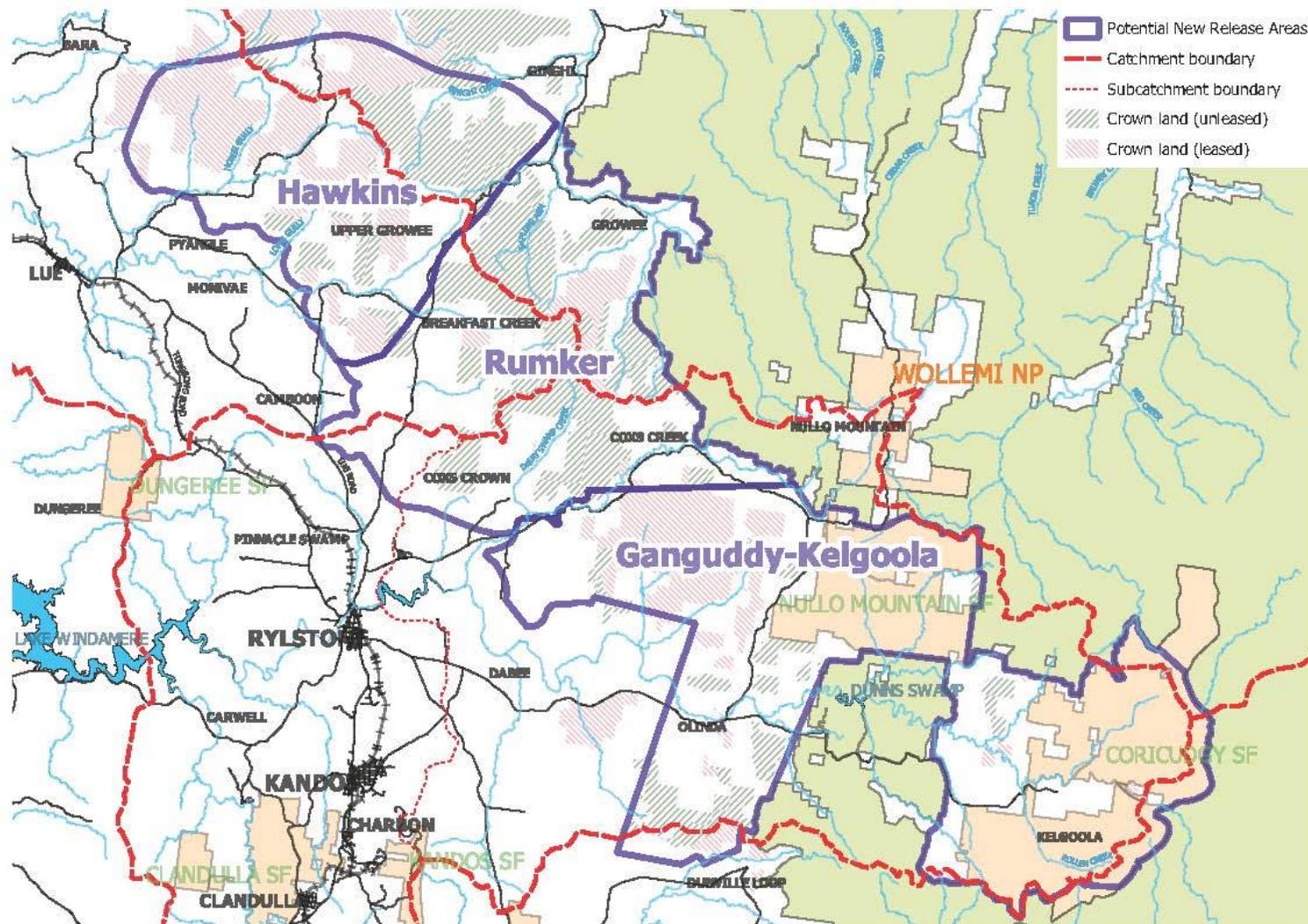


Figure 1 The proposed exploration areas (note only Hawkins and Rumker being considered in this PRIA)

2 | Roads and traffic

2.1 Nature of the local roads

The majority of roads that would be affected by coal exploration and mining are predominantly small, unsealed country roads and lanes. Traffic on these roads is infrequent, with the majority being light vehicles and the occasional stock truck or similar. A few roads, such as Bylong Valley Way, Lue Road and a section of Cox's Creek Road are sealed roads capable of carrying larger vehicles and higher volumes of traffic. However, none of these roads have been designed to service the high volumes of traffic, and high proportion of heavy vehicles that would come with coal exploration and particularly coal mining activities. It is also of particular note that many of the roads in question are also school bus routes.

2.2 Funding and maintenance

It is the experience of this region that coal mines do not put sufficient funding into funding upgrades and maintenance of the roads that they use and will fight hard to avoid paying their fair share towards this infrastructure. The three large coal mines in the north of the Mid-Western Regional local government area were happy to use Ulan Road to access their facilities but did not see it as the responsibility of their developments to upgrade it. This was despite the traffic on this road having increased very significantly due to these developments such that traffic numbers were higher than those on the Newell Highway out of Gilgandra (S Baguley, pers comm.). However, as the road was in a very poor state and unfit for purpose, the mining companies and their workers were also regularly complaining about the state of the road as it was dangerous.

Even in the stages of early works, such as coal exploration, the roads in this region are not fit. This was highlighted to DPIE by Mid-Western Regional Council (Council) during its submission on the Crudine Wind Farm (DPIE, 2018), in which Council advised "the pre-construction and site assembly works which have occurred in recent months have demonstrated the potential risks and safety issues arising due to the current condition of Aarons Pass Road. A number of incidents and near misses have been reported to Council."

The small country lanes and dirt roads are narrow, windy and typically corrugated except for the short time after they have just been graded which is usually no more than annually and is even then dependent upon climatic conditions. For the most part, the dirt roads in this area are only just 5m in width, with a number having a trafficable area of less than this. A selection of photographs is included in Appendix A.

Further, even in regional NSW communities with a high level of coal exploitation, the roads are still not well funded or maintained. The primary concern raised by the community during a meet the candidates meeting held in Merriwa during the Upper Hunter byelection was the poor state of services, including roads (S Baguley, pers comm.). The revenues from coal do not remain in the regions.

2.3 Scenic drives

Whilst these roads may not be high quality pieces of infrastructure, what is noteworthy about the local roads is that they are scenic drives. They are part of what tourists come to see – as noted in number three of the "Top Ten" things to do in the region (Appendix B). Additionally, the drives around and between Rylstone and Kandos all take in these same vistas.



In 2012 the Bylong Valley Way was recognised as one of Australia’s ‘Top Ten Drives’ (Snyder, D. 2012). This 140km stretch of road between Sandy Hollow and Ilford is part of the Inland Adventure Trail and incredibly scenic (Battle for Bylong, 2015). Kandos and Rylstone are the main towns along the Bylong Valley Way and have benefited from the increase in visitor numbers as many people have discovered the region and are stopping in these towns to enjoy this picturesque part of the world and what it has to offer.

Coal mines with their dominating infrastructure would be anathema to this drive and would undermine the tourism value of this area. This would inevitably lead to a drop in the tourist numbers and significantly damage the tourism industry the Rylstone and Kandos community has been working hard to cultivate.

3 | Rylstone Aerodrome Park

3.1 The Facility

The Rylstone Aerodrome Park (the Park) is located at 213 Coxs Creek Rd, Rylstone (Figure 2). This facility has been developed over the last 15 years approximately. Many millions of dollars have been invested in the Park. Its facilities include:

- a fully approved and functioning airfield;
- a flight training centre;
- an aircraft maintenance centre; and
- fuel and a refuelling depot.

There are also 63 privately owned lots within the Park.

The flight training centre services student pilots from both the local area and a much more widespread area.

The fuel depot is a service that is available to any aircraft. It has been highly used by helicopters for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and firefighting services– which included support during the fight against the Gospers Mountain fire that severely impacted this region – NSW Police and emergency services as well as electricity utilities during aerial transmission line checks.

There are also future plans to develop ecotourism-based business from the Park.

3.2 Impacts and constraints

The south-western border of the proposed Rumker area is approximately 1500m from the Rylstone Aerodrome Park.

Any future coal mine would have blasting ongoing as part of its operations.

An area where mine blasting operations are occurring is classified as a dangerous area (CASA, 2021), and aircraft operations are incompatible with this activity. The mine is in direct conflict with an existing and important local facility into which a significant investment has already been made and would continue to be. The Park would effectively be rendered useless.

A coal mine in the Hawkins and Rumker area – and potentially also Ganguddy-Kelgoola – is also incompatible with the plans of those people who have bought into and invested in the Park to run tourism-based business. These businesses are built on the local aesthetics, heritage and wilderness of this region. Immediately upon taking off from the Park, the whole Hawkins Rumker area is laid out below you. Any mining operations would be ugly wounds in the wilderness that could not be avoided from the air. Any mine will have an open cut component and be a large, industrial scar in close proximity to the Park. This would be incompatible with the nature of any aerial tourism business.



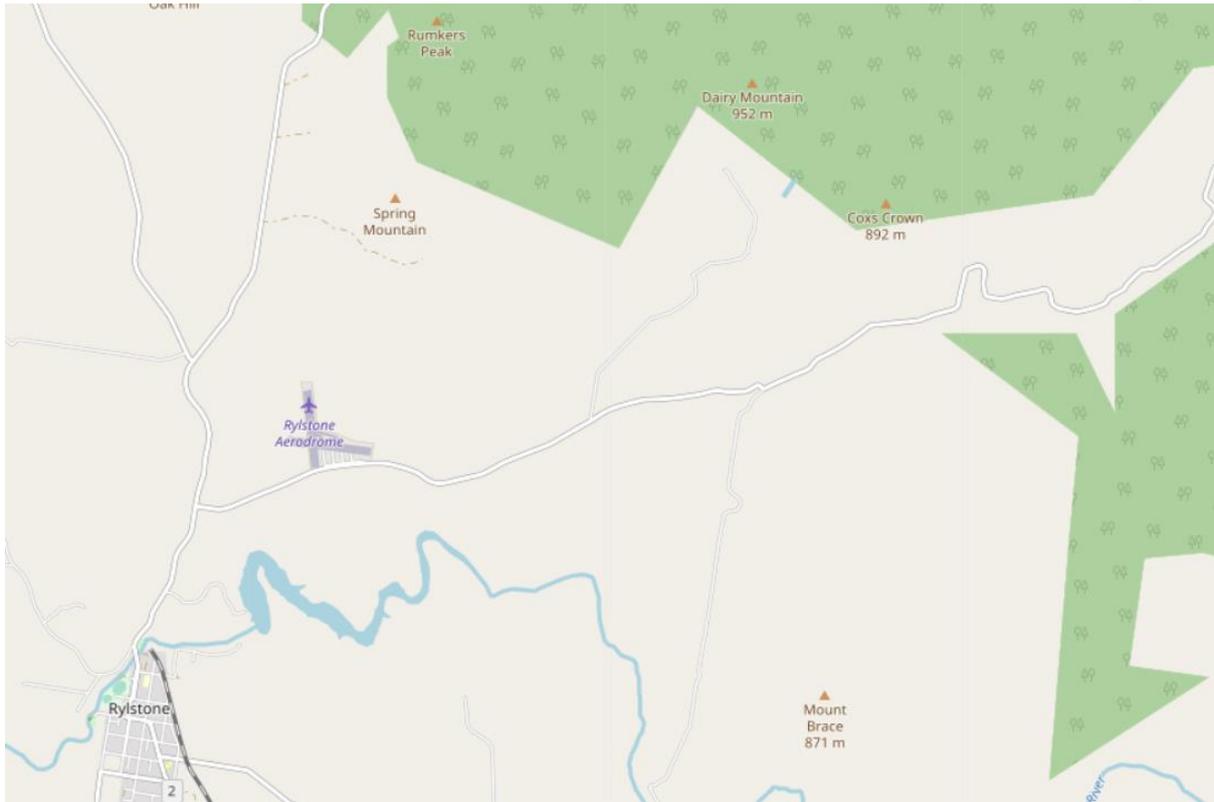


Figure 2 Rylstone Aerodrome Park Location





Figure 3 Aerial image of Hawkins Rumker areas



Figure 4 Aerial image of Wilpinjong mine



4 | Rail

4.1 Hypothetical coal transport options

It is understood from discussions with DPIE that coal from a coal mine could be transported from the mine site by either rail or a conveyor belt system (DPIE, 2021).

Due to the high volumes involved, all coal is transported by rail in order to avoid the sheer volume of trucks that would be required to transport by road. This is also required for safety reasons as well as health impacts from dust. Transport by road would also be far more expensive.

4.1.1 Conveyor belt

DPIE contemplates a small conveyor belt system that would sit on the ground and would run overland to Wilpinjong where coal could be loaded onto rail to be transported to Newcastle. It is acknowledged by DPIE (2021) that such a conveyor belt would be expensive, difficult to get approval for due to the multiplicity of landholders required to provide access and is therefore probably an unrealistic option. Hence, it is not considered further here.

4.1.2 Rail

To transport directly by rail, a connection would be required to a nearby railway line. This rail connection could either go north via Mudgee whence it would go east to Newcastle; or travel south through Rylstone and Kandos to Lithgow and beyond. Either option would require significant investment in rail infrastructure and would cause significant disruption within the towns through which coal trains would be run.

The Kandos to Gulgong line is a non-operational railway line around 93-kilometres long that connects the northern extension of the Lithgow to Kandos line with the main east-west line from Newcastle to Gulgong and Dubbo (Transport for NSW, 2020). Rail services on the section from Kandos to Gulgong were suspended in 2007 due to lack of demand. Sections of the line have deteriorated significantly since the line was operational. It is currently in a non-trafficable condition as its age and non-operational status has led to degradation of the assets, including rail quality, sleeper degradation, timber bridge deterioration and discontinuation of rail line at several locations including sites where the rail corridor crosses existing roads (Transport for NSW, 2020).

Transport for NSW (2020) considered the optimal network configuration for a Kandos to Gulgong connection to be:

- Two passing loops to be constructed at locations to be defined as Renkan Loop and Canadian Lead Loop;
- New rail spur to be constructed to bypass Gulgong Junction;
- Retain the current track alignment of the existing non-operational line; and
- Train order working to be re-established as the line signalling system, with six track blocks recommended for the line section.

A significant investment would be required to get the line operational, with Transport for NSW reporting these costs range from \$245.9 million (19 tonne axle load), and \$380.1 million (25 tonne axle load), depending on the tonne axle load. It is expected that the design criteria for a hypothetical coal mine in the Hawkins and Rumker areas would need to be at least 25 tonne axle load to permit a high volume of coal to be shipped as quickly as possible before coal became completely economically



unviable. The Transport for NSW analysis was considering volumes of up to four megatonnes per annum, not upwards of 20 megatonnes per annum.

It is noted that there would be costs in addition to this to:

- connect a hypothetical mine within the Hawkins and Rumker areas to the existing rail corridor alignment. The cost for this is not contemplated here, but would be considered to be significant; and
- upgrade the line between Lithgow and Kandos to the same standard. This was estimated by Transport for NSW (2020) to be between \$18.8 million and \$24.0 million.

With large mines operating in the northern part of the Mid-Western Regional local government area already, there are capacity constraints with going through Mudgee, to Newcastle. Therefore, the more likely scenario is that the coal would be shipped south through to Lithgow. This would mean coal trains travelling through Rylstone and Kandos.

4.2 Constraints

While there would be less line to reinstate between Mudgee and Gulgong, there would still be a similar level of upgrade needed for the shorter length. Given that any upgrade for a hypothetical coal mine would be designed to pull out a much higher volume of coal than Transport for NSW (2020) was considering, there is also likely to be additional upgrades needed between Kandos and Wallerawang. For example, given the much higher numbers of trains needed, and that a 70-car coal train would be 1.2km in length, additional passing loops are likely to be required. It was understood that this was not considered in the 2020 Feasibility Study.

Transport for NSW (2020) undertook some stakeholder engagement. Mid-Western Regional Council was not supportive of the proposal and indicated that it expected considerable public opposition to the reinstatement of railway operations on the line, and it was particularly concerned about the impact of coal trains passing through the towns along the line.

4.3 Community response

The RRCFC believes that the response Mid-Western Regional Council gave to Transport for NSW would be understating the level of opposition to the extraction of coal for the Hawkins and Rumker area development would have within the towns of Rylstone and Kandos.

Running 1.2km coal trains through the heart of these towns would be devastating for the community, and it's anticipated it would be a dramatic change.

In the Hawkins and Rumker areas, it is anticipated that the volume of coal could be 910 megatonne (DPIE, 2021). Given the rapidly diminishing world market for coal, it is reasonable to assume that any company seeking to mine this deposit and receive a commercial return would be exploiting the resource as rapidly as possible. On this basis, it is assumed that 20 million tonnes per annum would be extracted.

One full 100-tonne coal hopper carries approximately 77 tonnes, a 70-car coal train would be able to transport 5,390 tonnes per trip. If 20 megatonnes per annum is being extracted from Hawkins and Rumker areas, 3,710 train trips will be required per annum. This equates to 10 trips per day outbound and another 10 trips per day inbound to bring those trains back again – assuming the line runs 365 days per year.

Running 1.2km coal trains through the heart of the towns of Kandos, Rylstone and possibly Lue and Mudgee as well, at least 20 times per day would be devastating for the communities of these towns.



The RRCFC believes that the response Mid-Western Regional Council gave to Transport for NSW is significantly understating the level of opposition our towns would have to the extraction of coal for the Hawkins and Rumker area.

As well as noise and dust impacts, there is also the disruption to traffic as it would effectively cut the community in half. Anyone living east of the railway line would face substantial delays simply getting into Rylstone for routine errands. Not only is this an inconvenience for the people who live in these communities, this area has worked hard to develop a thriving tourism business. Coal freight trains running through the heart of these towns would be a devastating blow for its tourism industry as visitors would be listening to coal freight trains rumbling through or waiting for them to pass before going to visit what is left of the scenic beauty of the region. It would simply kill the tourist industry.



5 | Water supply

5.1 Town water supply

Rylstone Dam is owned by Mid-Western Regional Council and is the water supply for the townships of Rylstone, Kandos, Charbon and Clandulla. Raw water is sourced from the dam and processed at the adjacent water treatment plant before being distributed to the Rylstone, Kandos, Charbon and Clandulla townships (MWRC, 2016 in RRCFC, 2021).

Downstream of Rylstone Dam is Windamere Dam, owned by WaterNSW, which supplies Mudgee's town water. There are many properties downstream of both Rylstone and Windamere Dam that are dependent on the Cudgegong for their water supply and business viability.

The Rumker area sits over, or would interrupt flows from, 21 percent of the Rylstone Dam catchment area (RRCFC, 2021).

5.1 Rural communities

There are farms and small businesses throughout the Hawkins and Rumker areas, undertaking business activities including: grazing, cropping, orchards, vineyards, plantation forests, native forestry, sheep, cattle, horse and alpaca studs, poultry egg production, mineral water supplies, an olive press which presses for many olive growers in NSW, and boutique brewers. Tourism-based businesses include: accommodation (farm stays, bed and breakfast, rural and wilderness retreats), artisanal workshops, arts and crafts, Aboriginal cultural and heritage tours, and many more.

These land uses and business are all sustainable long-term businesses, and all rely on the water resources within these catchments.

There are also a number of other properties between Rylstone Dam and Windamere Dam which rely on the water within the Cudgegong River for their water supply and business viability.

5.2 Impacts

Not only would a mine in the Hawkins and Rumker areas greatly reduce the water available for other land uses within the catchment and cause extreme water stress to other water users and sensitive receiving environments. Given the Hawkins and Rumker areas location in the three upper catchments of the landscape, it is not feasible for a mine to source the water it would require for its operations from elsewhere. It is not acceptable to take what little water that already exists from the surrounding land and communities

Mid-Western Regional Council (2020 in RRCFC, 2021) provided the following advice to DPIE on the SSD 5765 Environmental Impact Assessment for Bowdens Silver Project:

The significant and long-term water usage for the project remains a serious ongoing concern for Council, particularly in light of the recent drought conditions and rural hardship experienced across the Region. **The recent drought has demonstrated water is a highly valuable resource and Council does not support any potential threat to the existing town water supplies or the amount of water available for rural property owners for domestic and agricultural purposes.**



6 | Local services

6.1 The reality of small regional communities

In these small communities, it is a sad fact that health and medical services are not well developed, as is the case with many small regional communities. Similarly, these services are often stretched and it can be difficult to get access to good health care. If higher levels of services, or specialist attention is needed or dental services are needed, this triggers a need to travel to larger centres, such as Mudgee or Bathurst.

Education is serviced by local primary schools and a high school; however, the high school is not able to cater the needs of all students and a number of high school aged students are sent out of area to be educated.

Further, many of the properties within this area are not well serviced by communications services, as would have been observed during the consultation period. While the first Rylstone Hall session had been fully subscribed prior to it being cancelled, due to imposed COVID-19 travel restrictions in Greater Sydney, the Zoom meetings which replaced these local meetings were not well subscribed. Many people are not able to engage in Zoom meetings as their internet service was of insufficient quality. Many properties also do not have mobile coverage.

Mining families are very unlikely to settle in this area. This was observed in Mudgee, when families who had moved into the area either did not stay when they experienced difficulties in accessing health and other allied services, or workers did not relocate their families into the area, and they worked on a drive-in drive-out or fly-in fly-out basis.

6.2 Benefits of Mining in the LGA

REMPPLAN (2021) reports that across the whole of the Mid-Western Regional local government area, there is 1,831 jobs in mining. Analysis of the data shows:

- The Rylstone Kandos and East areas are economically quite different to the northern and western parts of the local government area. There is very little employment in mining in the east (2%); and
- Of those who are employed in this local government area (10,095) there are 1,487 who consider themselves as residing in other local government areas. This includes places like Wollondilly, Wollongong, Mt Isa, Gladstone, Mandurah etc. Within this local government area, there are 1,831 people listed as being employed in the mining sector.

Given that mine rosters for workers engaged in the extraction activities are generally set up to have a block of time 'on', then a block of time 'off', it is probable that most people who are employed in the local government area 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. Over time, with automation, it is anticipated that the number of local mine jobs will decrease. BHP, Fortescue and Rio Tinto already have mines in the Pilbara that are largely automated and run from control centres in Perth.



6.3 Mining will not improve this

While the people in this area realise there are limitations to their services and of course would welcome any improvements to these, we do not believe this would come from an increase in the population from a mining development in Hawkins and Rumker areas.

Further, even in regional NSW communities with a high level of coal exploitation, the roads are still not well funded or maintained. The primary concern raised by the community during a meet the candidates meeting held in Merriwa during the Upper Hunter byelection was the poor state of services, including health and education (S Baguley, pers comm.). The revenues from coal do not remain in the regions and governments have shown great reluctance to return even a fair share of that revenue to mining communities

In fact, any mine in the area would only displace and destroy the existing sustainable economy that the Rylstone region currently has. Further, should exploration be recommended for this region, it will perpetuate the period of uncertainty. This will only further erode the services within this region over the next decade or so, brought on by divestment within Rylstone and Kandos, as people either stop investing in their properties and businesses, or simply sell up and move away altogether. This has been observed in Bylong during the long, drawn-out period of exploration and project development by Kepco. Prominent and substantial landholders in the Bylong have said they have not invested in their agricultural properties beyond basic repairs for more than 11 years (D. Baguley, pers. comm.).

7 | Conclusion

The purpose of the PRIA is to consider the constraints and opportunities in relation to the development of a coal resource. This submission has considered the potential constraints and opportunities in relation to the local infrastructure of the region. The RRCFC opposes the proposal for the following reasons:

- The local roads do not have the capacity to handle a large-scale development, and that any small revenues generated by coal mining is insufficient to compensate the local communities.
- A Coal mine would negatively impact the scenic vistas which are a drawcard to the tourist industry in the industry, and the Rylstone Aerodrome Park.
- Rail transport options would require significant investment in rail infrastructure and would cause significant disruption within the towns through which coal trains would run.
- A mine in the Hawkins and Rumker areas would greatly reduce the water available for all other land uses within the catchment and cause extreme water stress to other water users and sensitive receiving environments.
- Any mine in the area would only displace and destroy the existing sustainable economy that the Rylstone Kandos region currently has.
- Further, should exploration be recommended for this region, it will perpetuate the period of uncertainty. This will only erode the services within this region over the next decade or so, brought on by divestment within Rylstone and Kandos, as has been observed in Bylong during the long, drawn-out period of exploration and project development by Kepco.

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.



8 | References

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Appendix A | Photographs showing the poor state of the local roads



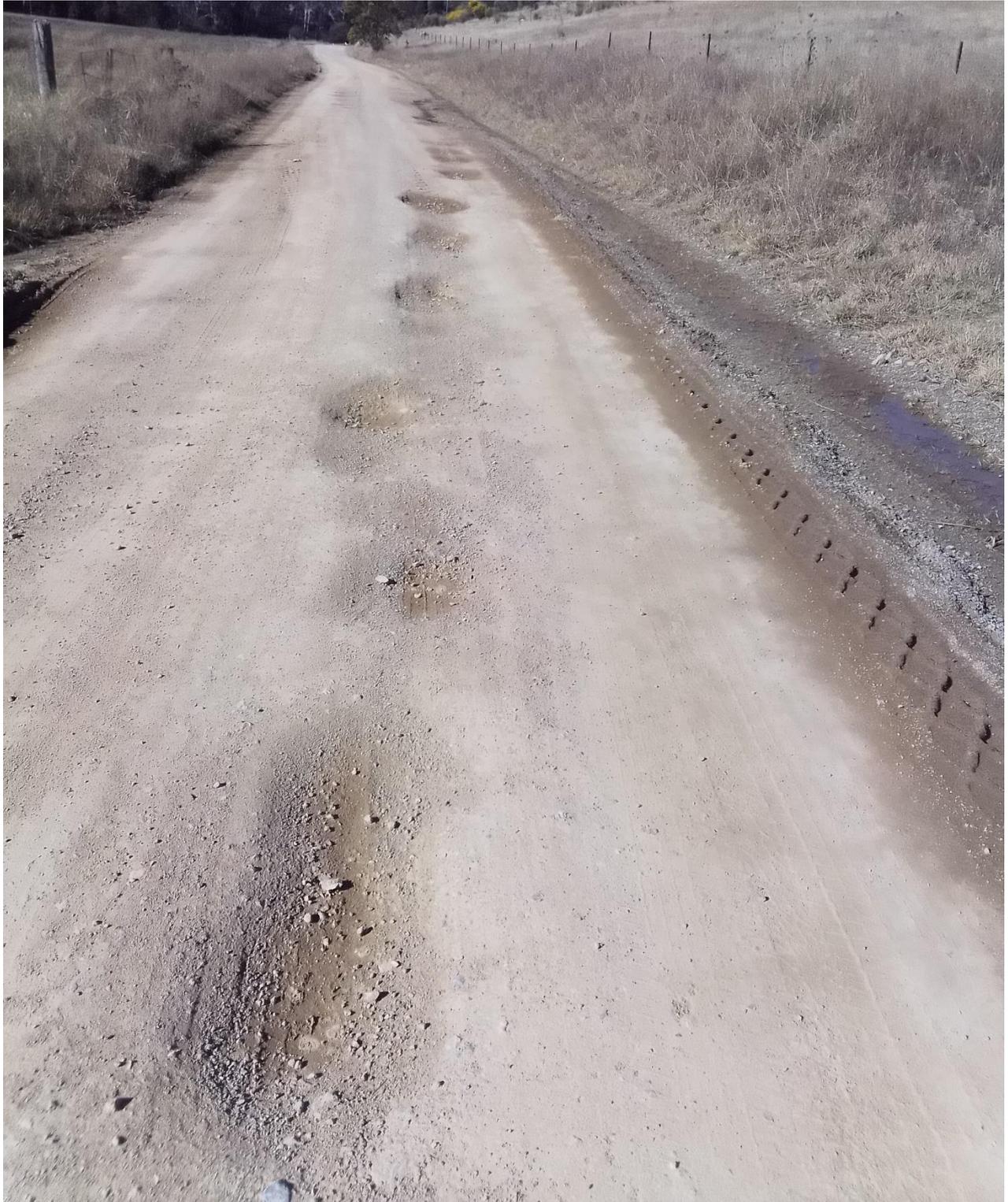












Appendix B | 2021 Tourism Award for the region

MUDGEES NAMED THE 2021 NSW TOP TOURISM TOWN

Mudgee has been named the 2021 NSW Top Tourism Town in the category of towns with a population over 5000.

Mudgee claimed the top gong against 15 other towns in the awards presented by Business NSW. The Awards showcase the value of tourism to the towns and communities across NSW and celebrate their commitment to encouraging tourism and increasing visitation to their destination. Mudgee will now represent NSW at the inaugural Australian Top Tourism Town Awards at Parliament House in Canberra on 25 August.

So what is it that makes Mudgee region so special?

We sat down with repeat visitor, Brett Goulston on his last visit to ask a few questions about what he and his family love best about the area and why they keep coming back.

When did you first "discover" Mudgee?

My wife and I first brought our children here for an "escape-the-city-getaway" back in 2005. The kids rode their scooters along the footpaths of the town while we wandered around and enjoyed the cafes, shops and winter sun. We have such fond memories of that first trip. We fell in love with Mudgee instantly.

How many times have you been back since?

I've lost count but it would be a dozen or so. We've stayed at a few different places over the years but we have two stand-out favourites that are our "go-to" accommodation venues. The gorgeous Mudgee Homestead Guesthouse run by Karen & Sean plus the delightful, beautifully-appointed cottages at Bandalong owned and run by Diana and her sister Catherine. Both of these places are a short drive out of town and they feel like second homes to us. Both are 10/10 for service and comfort from our perspective. On our next trip, they might give us our own set of keys!

What is it most about the region that you like?

Well, there are dozens of reasons. Firstly, we love the fact that it's a 4 hour drive through stunning country side - especially once you are over the Blue Mountains from Sydney. If it were closer, it wouldn't be the same. Then, it's the fact that it is the perfect place to hang out with family and friends for a week or so because there is so much to see and do in the region and so many fabulous vineyards and places to eat.

OK, so what are your personal top ten things to do and see?

I could give you 20, but if I have to limit it to 10, then here goes... **1.** The places we stay at are both highlights - Bandalong Cottages on Hill End Road and The Mudgee Homestead Guesthouse at Buckaroo. They are sensational bases to see the region from. **2.** The degustation lunch at Pipe Clay Restaurant (OMG). It's not cheap, but its good value for money with sensational food and service. **3.** A walk around

Ganguddy (Dunns Swamp) and the drive there.

If I lived nearby I'd walk to the lookout every day! **4.** The dumplings at Rylstone's Tea House are not to be missed. Hit them for lunch on the way back from Ganguddy. Consider their set menus which offer great value. **5.** Grab a bottle or two and a platter from Lowes Family Estate and sit on their grass in the winter sun. **6.** Visit Gulgong and the Holtermann Museum and the very quirky Pioneer's Museum. We've had a few good meals at the Thai restaurant in town too. **7.** Walk "The Drip" along the Goulburn River. It's heavenly and easy for kids. **8.** Take a day trip to Hill End and book a tour with the local expert Jhob. Wonderful history and lots of fun. Then eat in the beer garden of the pub or at the bakery just out of town. **9.** Hit the vineyards to do some wine tasting. Get a dedicated driver and depending on how many there are of you, rent a mini bus. **10.** Visit an Olive grove and learn about the olive pressing process. Our favourite is Gunemoooro run by Mark and Sandy. They also have great wine!

Finally, what is the ideal period of time to visit the region?

Well, a three night stay is really nice but frankly, you need much more time than that to get around and see most that the region has to offer. Ideally a week is perfect, or, two separate 3 or 4 night stays!

