

Group C response by [Nawal Maharaj](#) to Groundswell Gloucester question posed by its President, Julie Lyford, in the letter dated 17 August 2017.

I have been asked by the leader of our Group, [John Rosenbaum](#), to respond to the letter from Groundswell Gloucester which asked us to, “advise whether you and your team oppose or support the Rocky Hill Coal Project”. Therefore I will give my response to this question first and then our Group response. However before I do that I will make a general background comment on why [Robyn Jenkins](#), former Greater Taree City Councillor, and I have decided to team up with John Rosenbaum, in our candidacy for the MidCoast Council election 2017.

Background comment

As Julie Lyford’s letter acknowledges, Gloucester Shire Council and the newly created MidCoast Council have both opposed the development in question. Both Robyn Jenkins and I have been well aware of the efforts of the former Gloucester Shire Council including its Mayor, John Rosenbaum, and many members in the community who have suffered much duress regarding various mining projects initiated or proposed in the Gloucester Basin. While the Gloucester community has largely stood alone to face these threats, it did have a local council voice prior to the forced amalgamation that occurred in May 2016. It would be a pity if Gloucester were to no longer have a voice in the newly created MidCoast Council regarding issues of this nature. With a voter number of 75,000 in this new council area which would probably result in about 60,000 formal votes (taking into account a percentage of people who won’t vote and a percentage of people who cast informal votes), there would be a quota of at least five thousand for a candidate to be elected. There are not so many votes to be had in Gloucester and it would not be possible, even if all the formal votes in Gloucester were for one candidate, for it to ever have a voice in the current arrangements relying on Gloucester votes alone. This is why both Robyn Jenkins and I had approached various potential candidates in Gloucester a number of months ago to offer our lower Manning support for a prospective team for this upcoming election. By May this year, the former Mayor of Gloucester, John Rosenbaum showed a sincerity and willingness to work with us and accepted our offer that he be the number one candidate in our Team.

Nawal Maharaj - personal statement

Speaking for myself I am opposed to the development in question for all the reasons set out in the [Groundswell Gloucester submission](#) to the Department of Planning last year and for all the reasons that [Manning Clean Water Action](#)

[Group Inc](#), the lower Manning sister organisation to Groundswell Gloucester, also set out in its submission to the Department of Planning last year.

Readers may be aware that I have been the President of Manning Clean Water Action Group [MCWAG] for nearly two years now - a period that has seen the departure of the AGL coal seam gas project, a project which [I and many others in this community](#) fought against for many years prior in solidarity with the people in the Gloucester Basin. My Group C fellow candidate Robyn Jenkins is an active member of MCWAG as is Claire Pontin, who is a candidate in the Country Labor ticket for this election. Claire Pontin is actually a member of the MCWAG committee that I lead and has made critical input to the work of our committee. Both Robyn and Claire have been part of MCWAG's effort in obtaining public support for Groundswell Gloucester's petition against the Rocky Hill Coal Project.

Collective Group C stance

Our Group C is fully committed to our objective which was lodged with the Electoral Commission as an attachment to NSW Electoral Commission form FD271: "Protecting our communities and water catchment from invasive mining - Advocating for the community and our precious water catchment against the possible threats posed by invasive mining, such as those identified by MidCoast Water (September 2016)."

The [issues identified by MidCoast Water](#) may be summarised by this quote from its submission: "We have concerns with the water management strategy developed for the amended Rocky Hill mine project. The adopted strategy relies too heavily on discharges into local waterways."

In relation to this MidCoast Water noted that the water will be released to the Avon River during periods of high flows and when irrigation is not possible and that there is no provision proposed for the water management alternative in case the water in the sediment dams do not comply with proposed water quality criteria. This scenario of threats to our major drinking water catchment should be a matter of disturbing concern to all prospective Councillors.

As Councillors we would embrace objective science-based vigilance about these issues. We are committed to opposing any downsizing of scientific assessment and reporting capacity that might occur if the water science function is marginalised in the new arrangements following on from the dissolution of MidCoast Water as a distinct County Council and the establishment of its functions as a business unit in MidCoast Council.

(Last December the MidCoast Water paper, that informed the Administrator's recommendation to dissolve MidCoast Water as a county council, had noted that: "Science functions might not be considered 'core business' " if the operations and functions of MidCoast Water were to be merged with local council - see PDF numbered page 35 at

http://www.midcoastwater.com.au/client_images/1871485.pdf)

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*The MidCoast Council election features GROUP C comprising former Gloucester Shire Mayor, [John Rosenbaum](#), former Greater Taree City Councillor [Robyn Jenkins](#) and community activist [Nawal Maharaj](#). Group C can only be voted for **BELOW THE LINE**.*