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O/N H-966149

**INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MEETING WITH GUNNEDAH SHIRE COUNCIL**

**RE: VICKERY EXTENSION PROJECT**

**PANEL:**

**JOHN HANN  
PROF CHRIS FELL  
PROF GARRY WILLGOOSE**

**ASSISTING PANEL:**

**DAVID WAY  
MATTHEW TODD-JONES**

**GUNNEDAH SHIRE COUNCIL:**

**OWEN HASLER  
ERIC GROTH  
ANDREW JOHNS  
JEREMY BARTLETT  
DANIEL NOBLE  
ROB HOOKE  
WADE HUDSON**

**LOCATION:**

**GUNNEDAH TOWN HALL  
SMITHURST THREATRE  
152 CONADILLY STREET  
GUNNEDAH, NEW SOUTH WALES**

**DATE:**

**8.37 AM, WEDNESDAY,  
19 DECEMBER 2018**

MR J. HANN: Thanks very much. Good morning and welcome. Look, before we begin I would just like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay respects to their elders past and present. We – as you – I don't know whether you have been involved with the Independent Planning Commission's cases previously but it's only a recent protocol that we have started to record all the key meetings that we have so please don't be intimidated. It's just a standard process and it helps us in terms of being able to have a good record of the information that we're presented with. So look, before – I have got, if you like, some formalities that I will just go through, if you wouldn't mind, and then we will take it from there.

So welcome today with the Whitehaven Coal Limited, the applicant, is proposing to develop the Vickery Extension Project, an open cut coal mine near Boggabri in New South Wales. My name is John Hann. I'm the chair of this IPC panel and joining me are Chris Fell and Professor Garry Willgoose – sorry. The other attendees of the meeting are David Way and Matthew Todd-Jones and they're from the IPC secretariat. And what I will get you to do is if you could introduce yourselves and that just helps us with the recording process. So perhaps starting with you.

MR O. HASLER: I'm Councillor Owen Hasler. I'm obviously a councillor, in Gunnedah Shire Council.

MR E. GROTH: Eric Groth, General Manager, Gunnedah Shire Council.

MR J. BARTLETT: Jeremy Bartlett, director of Infrastructure Services, Gunnedah Shire Council.

MR D. NOBLE: Daniel Noble, chief engineer with Gunnedah Shire Council, responsible for development engineering.

MR R. HOOKE: Rob Hooke, councillor, Gunnedah Shire Council, and also Deputy Mayor.

MR W. HUDSON: Wade Hudson, Town Planning, Gunnedah Shire Council.

MR A. JOHNS: Andrew Johns, director of Planning and Environmental Services, Gunnedah Shire Council.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, gentlemen. So in the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of our information, today's meeting is being recorded, as I mentioned earlier, and we will have a full transcript of the meeting, which goes on for an hour, on our website shortly. The meeting is part of, or one part of a commission – in this case, it's a multi-stage hearing process so this is the first one of a new process that we have introduced, or the government has introduced and it's taking place at the preliminary stage of the process and it will form one of many sources of information on which we will base our report. So what we will produce as part of the multi-stage process is an issues report. So what we're

really interested in today is to understand from yourselves what the key issues you see are. It's important for us to ask questions from time to time, just to clarify certain things but, look, if you're not able, or you're not in a position to answer it, you can take it on notice and if you could just provide a response in writing to us that would be appreciated and then we will put that up on the website. So having gone through the formalities, I know you have put in obviously a well thought out submission to the commission and probably the best thing would be if you could just take us through the key issues that you feel are important for us to understand in the timeframe that we have got.

10 MR HUDSON: Well, obviously, like you said, council has prepared the submission that they have made to the proposal. Within the preliminary issues report, most of the matters that council has raised in that submission have been adequately addressed. There are a couple of areas, but they are very minor, that don't appear in table C2 of that report. Some of those things just include – in the exhibition and the EIS there didn't seem to be a lot of detail to the lot and DPs and property addresses for the development, just to make it a lot more transparent of what actual properties are involved in the development so that it's clearly aware of what properties are involved.

20 There are probably comments regarding habitat and biodiversity assessments. Council felt that it was probably best if there was some sort of offset available on site if it is possible, just to address the danger to ecological communities that are present on the site. That just wasn't listed as a key issue within table C2 of that preliminary issue report. With the visual screening, council just recommended that there be temporary screening via the tree – any vegetation screening is planted and reaches maturity and - - -

25 MR HANN: So this is early planting, if you like, in the early stages; is that what you're - - -

30 MR HUDSON: Yes. Correct.

35 MR HANN: Yes.

MR HUDSON: So obviously, when vegetation is planted it doesn't reach maturity straightaway so just in that interim, until it becomes an effective visual screen. And then just – a main concern for council for the visual impact was the impact from the rail spur and the actual operation of the mine. It just didn't comment on that in those key issues.

40 MR HANN: Did you say that's primarily visual from a – in relation to the rail spur or other aspects?

45 MR HUDSON: For the missing information out of those key issues, it is regarding visual.

MR HANN: Okay.

MR HUDSON: It does already have in there notes there that council had issues with the lack of information regarding the actual construction of the rail spur.

5 MR HANN: Yes.

MR HUDSON: But, yes, that was only for the visual that seemed to be missing out of those key issues.

10 MR HANN: Okay. So in terms of the material that you have provided to us, you have gone into some depth in relation to noise, for example, the socio-economic impacts and so on. Would you like to take us through those that you feel are the most critical, most important, from Gunnedah Shire Council's point of view.

15 MR HUDSON: Yes. The noise impacts that occur to the adjoining private owned residences are obviously the biggest concern.

MR HANN: Yes.

20 MR HUDSON: There – I think it was, yes, three – there was – there was a few residences that were - - -

MR JOHNS: .....

25 MR HUDSON: I think it was five in total - - -

MR JOHNS: Okay.

30 MR HUDSON: - - - after 20 – over the course of the development but - - -

MR HANN: There's something like three I think on one property, if my - - -

MR HUDSON: Yes.

35 MR HANN: And several others - - -

MR JOHNS: Yes. I think - - -

40 MR HANN: - - - in that – on the western side – on the south-western side of the - - -

MR JOHNS: I think it's up to five that will experience noise exceedance. Yes.

MR HANN: Right.

45 MR HUDSON: Yes. So obviously, the impacts on those residences are obviously being felt quite early in the proposal and that's obviously a large concern for council,

from the community – representation of the community because that impact on those residences is going to have a lot of impact on their life and their ability to stay in those homes.

5 MR HANN: Okay. You talked about flooding and the implications of that. Are there any particular aspects that you want to raise with us?

MR HUDSON: There's just not a lot of detail with regards to the rail spur. So they have made comments that there is an impact on the flooding and there is variations  
10 across the flood plain.

MR HANN: Yes.

MR HUDSON: Council would really like to see that if there is any changes to the  
15 extent of the one in 100 event level, so that that should be changed to reflect on council's LEP mapping so that the full extent of the one in 100 event is noted on those maps.

MR HANN: Do you want to just explain that for us a little bit more so we  
20 understand. Correct me if I'm wrong, what you're saying is subject to detailed design or more information on the design, even if it's at a conceptual stage, if you like, that possibly would change the one in 100 year flood configuration and that would need to be – you would need to redraft your LEP to reflect that; is that right?

25 MR HUDSON: Correct. Yes.

MR HANN: Okay.

PROF G. WILLGOOSE: Are there differences between what they have indicated to  
30 be the one in 100 year and what you believe to be the one in 100 year?

MR HUDSON: They have – the plans that they have provided don't indicate the extent the one in 100 event level will change but without the full detail of the rail spur, it's a bit hard to understand if that will be - - -  
35

PROF WILLGOOSE: No, I get - - -

MR HUDSON: Impact the final design.

40 PROF WILLGOOSE: I guess, coming back a step. They have got one in 100 year estimate without the development. Are they the same as your one in 100 year estimates?

MR HUDSON: I'm not aware. Sorry.

45 PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay. So just as a baseline, when you start to look at incremental change as a result of the development - - -

MR HUDSON: They have modelled the changes of expected flood heights but – yes – sorry, I’m not aware of if the information is - - -

PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay. So - - -

5

MR HOOKE: You would assume though, .....Wade, that they would be using the models that we use in our LEP.

MR HUDSON: Correct, but that’s an assumption.

10

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes. But some - - -

MR HOOKE: Yes. Yes. I don’t know where else they get figures from if they didn’t use ours, that’s the point.

15

PROF WILLGOOSE: Well – well, I mean, there’s a variety of sources you can get for one in 100 year flood levels, different models. You know, they have used TUFLOW. There’s MIKE 11, which was used for a previous study and then there’s the flood plain mapping from the ’55 flood in the first place. So I mean, there – I’m just asking whether there’s discrepancies, even within the existing one in 100 year, before we even talk about their incremental changes on that one in 100 year. So – I mean, my assessment is that to come to that conclusion, there’s not enough information in what they have got and I certainly don’t know what’s in your LEP.

20

MR HUDSON: Yes. Our LEP mapping just shows the extent of the mapping. It was only really if there was to be a change to that flood area, so if that one in 100 event extends out past the current mapped area, that should be changed to reflect that.

25

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

30

MR HANN: Okay.

MR JOHNS: And I guess, just for clarity, if we don’t know exactly how the rail spurs are going to be built - - -

35

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

MR JOHNS: - - - there’s obviously going to be urban embankments in certain parts, so I understand – well, we suspect or think that there’s going to be pylons built in certain locations. I guess our concern is that even a – you know, a 10 millimetre impact on flooding downstream could be the difference between a house being inundated and a house not being inundated. So houses built to 2018 standards are built 500 above the flood level, whereas, there would be dwellings out in that area that are built prior to that and would be potentially on ground level.

40

45

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

MR JOHNS: And it could be the difference between inundation and not being inundated.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes. Yes.

5

MR HUDSON: And that I suppose - - -

MR HANN: Yes. Okay. Thanks.

10 MR HUDSON: - - - goes into the other comments from council about the flood planning level that if whether a consent has been issued or historical houses are there with the expectation that they're at an acceptable level, then mitigation measures should really be in place from either the operation of the mine or the construction of the rail spur that ensures that that flood height isn't going to increase in height with  
15 an expectation that it was already – the houses were at an acceptable level.

MR HANN: Thank you. Anything else on flooding?

MR HUDSON: No. I don't believe so.

20

MR HANN: All right. Because what I will do is just go through your submission if that's okay because I think you've raised some really good points throughout this and we just want to have – make sure we're clear on the key emphasis on the - - -

25 MR GROTH: I guess, John, just building on the flooding, you have picked up the theme there. There's a general theme. We're concerned that there's just insufficient information over detail there for us to be able to make comment on some of those issues - - -

30 MR HANN: Yes.

MR GROTH: - - - and obviously, as a local government authority, we don't believe it's our place on behalf of the developer to undertake those works and garner that information, so that we can make comments. We – you know, we're simply  
35 imploring the developer to make sure they provide all relevant detail to the Commission and to ourselves, so we can make comment.

MR HANN: Yes. No. Thank you.

40 MR GROTH: That's really what we're concerned about with the flooding because we don't have that information.

MR HANN: Right. Okay. Shall we talk about road infrastructure? I know that they're dear to your heart in terms of the issues, so perhaps you could pull the key  
45 ones out for us on those.

- MR BARTLETT: Yes. So I guess the key is that there's – that the intent of the construction of the rail spur is to reduce the number of haulage vehicles on the public road network. So, essentially, what we're looking at is that the haulage along the council's local road network doesn't exceed the pre-existing approval - - -
- 5 MR HANN: Yes.
- MR BARTLETT: - - - which has the – I guess, the two trigger points not exceeding four and a half million tons per year and if it exceeds three and a half million tons per
- 10 year, then the construction of the overpass over the top of the Oxford Highway for the haulage to the current CHPP.
- MR HANN: Right.
- 15 MR BARTLETT: The other primary issue surrounds the re-alignment of sections of Blue Vale Road that they are and ensuring that where they are located within the project disturbance area that the realignment occurs adjacent to the western and southern boundaries of the Vickery State Forest and around the east of the development to ensure that the continued public access is available within the area.
- 20 We also need all the realignments and adjustments to be designed and constructed in accordance with the Australian Design Standards.
- MR HANN: Yes. Yes.
- 25 MR BARTLETT: And that they happen as part of the construction phase of the project to – so, essentially, before they begin operation.
- MR HANN: Yes. Okay. Any question on - - -
- 30 PROF WILLGOOSE: So, yes, I was going to say the part of Blue Vale Road that's south of the proposal, so it's currently approved, you say, to three and a half million tons and four and a half of that overpass. So what – I mean, do you have a view of that three and a half million tons, whether it continues or whether it doesn't
- 35 continue?
- MR BARTLETT: Once the – the expectation is that once the rail spur is constructed and the new handling processing plant is operational, that road haulage would, essentially, cease.
- 40 MR HANN: Okay. Okay. So you would – your view is that you would expect that all road haulage south of the proposal will cease completely.
- MR BARTLETT: Correct.
- 45 MR HANN: Yes.



MR NOBLE: So I guess just on that if I could make the comment. I know we've raised it in our submissions, the staging and construction - - -

MR HANN: Yes.

5

MR NOBLE: - - - is a concern for council. Not so much the stage that they've proposed, but the lack of detail in the submission as far as the staging of the construction goes. We have met with representatives of the developer and they've given us an indicative timeline about when the rail spur and things like that will occur. But those details aren't documented or set in stone in the EIS, if I could say that. So I guess, hence, our concern around the 3.5 million tons per annum and the overpass ensuring that that condition is included so that, I guess, to give ourselves an assurance that we won't exceed that four and a half million tons per annum on Blue Vale Road without adequate controls and mitigating measures in place.

15

PROF WILLGOOSE: So you're saying that the three and a half million tons continuing beyond the - you know, project - during the project. Now, there's a couple of years at the start where they say there will be a transition period and then, sort of, are you saying that three and a half million tons beyond that two years, let's call it two years, is acceptable - - -

20

MR NOBLE: Correct.

PROF WILLGOOSE: - - - or would you - or are you saying that you would like to see it's cease at that point?

25

MR NOBLE: Well, I guess, we're at a point where there's already an approval for that three and a half tons to continue on Blue Vale Road and we do have a maintenance agreement with the developer for the maintenance of Blue Vale Road. So I guess we can see that that's probably something we can't change at this point in time.

30

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

MR NOBLE: However, we would like to see that exceed - - -

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PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes. Okay. You would like to see - if it's going to be - if there's going to be road haulage continue, that three and a half million tons is the level that you're - you wouldn't want to see it exceeded.

40

MR NOBLE: Correct.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes. Okay.

MR HANN: And given that there are other - there are other coalmine operations that are - that have to be factored in - in terms of road usage.

45

- MR NOBLE: Correct. Yes. And I suppose that's why the developers tried to leave some of those details out because it then gives them some flexibility around which operation they keep active at the time because I know there's plans for Tarrawonga Mine to use the CHPP to be relocated out at Blue Vale Road, but there's not a great deal of detail around what volumes will be coming from that resource as opposed to the Vickery resource. So I guess our way of controlling that is by setting those limits on the haulage routes and ensuring that conditions are in place that once those are exceeded, certain mitigating measures have to be met.
- 5
- MR HANN: Okay. Yes. All right. Okay. Chris, any – anything you want - - -
- 10
- PROF C. FELL: Not on this particular - - -
- MR HANN: All right. Okay. We've talked about noise and I think – was it – well, we've talked about residences and flooding. You put quite a lot of detail into the noise issues. Is there any more – anything further that you would want to - - -
- 15
- MR HUDSON: No. I think the - - -
- MR HANN: - - - draw our attention to?
- 20
- MR HUDSON: - - - detail in the submissions should be – should clearly address council's concerns with regards to the noise, but unless there was - - -
- MR HANN: Okay.
- 25
- MR HUDSON: - - - some clarification that you required.
- MR HANN: No. I think what you provided is adequate for the time being and we will come back to it if we want to understand that further. Let's talk about – or if you could give us, if you like, a summary – the social economic impacts are obviously, you know, are very important part of this. Could you give us, you know, the key aspects of this would be much appreciated.
- 30
- MR JOHNS: So I guess – I guess there's potential for an increase in population which for regional centres are – it's quite a good problem to have. But I guess with that increase in population comes issues. You know, towns of our size are set up for certain populations and increasing that population can put strain on council infrastructure, social infrastructure and also things like state government services like health, emergency services, that type of thing. So I guess we just want to make sure that there's adequate consideration of those impacts on the town. And I guess it's worth considering this project is one of a number of the state's significant projects that are occurring here. In our region, we've had – we only had the IPC here a week or two ago for a solar farm. We've got quite a few other large mining operations already in operation and another one that's expected to commence in the coming years.
- 35
- 40
- 45

MR HANN: Yes.

MR JOHNS: So I guess the cumulative impact of those things will have a – put a strain on our community. There was also comment in our submission in relation to  
5 the need to set up some sort of consultation protocol with the local Aboriginal community.

MR HANN: Yes.

10 MR JOHNS: We feel that there certainly has been engagement done with the Aboriginal community, but we don't feel that it is extensive as it should have been and it's just important, we feel, for the proponent to make sure that they have those conversations and have some sort of protocol in place. There will be some issues with access to land not being available as it has been in the past ongoing.

15

MR HANN: Yes.

MR JOHNS: It has potential to impact on local Aboriginal communities. I covered the Aboriginal issues. I guess on the – while we're on the Aboriginal issues, it's  
20 important that – we feel that it's important that the mine continues to aim for that 10 per cent of their employment – the minimum of 10 per cent of their employment, so we – I guess we applaud Whitehaven for their endeavours in that area already.

MR HANN: Yes.  
25

MR JOHNS: But we would like to see that continue in this new proposal.

MR HANN: In your view, is 10 per cent a good number?

30 MR JOHNS: I think it is. Yes. You know, it's a hard one to sort of put an arbitrary figure on.

MR HANN: Yes. Yes.

35 MR JOHNS: But, you know, I think 10 per cent should be a good goal for them to start - - -

MR HANN: Okay.

40 MR JOHNS: - - - you know, for the company to start at.

MR HUDSON: I think in the EIS they actually identified that their Aboriginal employment rate was actually higher than 10 per cent. I think we just would like to see a commitment to ensuring that there is that at least 10 per cent staff employment.  
45

MR HANN: All right. So you're satisfied that's a reasonable goal.

MR JOHNS: Yes. I guess, at the end of the day, it's not – you know, we don't – it's not our jurisdiction, I guess, but - - -

MR HANN: No.

5

MR JOHNS: - - - as the local government authority in this area, we think it's a great thing for them to aim for.

MR HANN: Yes. Right.

10

MR HOOKE: I think another area that we could possibly touch on is the skill shortage in this region. It's a big one. We find that local – local business and industry are actually having their employees poached. So I know that we've got a couple of major industries here that are struggling to expand because they can't just get the employees.

15

MR HANN: Which industries would that – as an example, Rob, what - - -

MR HOOKE: AC Silos are one, in particular.

20

MR HANN: Yes.

MR HOOKE: Stripes Industries is another one. They've had approximately 100 employees and they're sort of down around the 75 employee mark now, because they just can't - - -

25

MR HANN: They're competing with - - -

MR HOOKE: They're competing.

30

MR HANN: Yes. Okay.

MR HOOKE: And it goes right across the board. Namoi Valley Bricks, which is quite a big business here, they're struggling.

35

MR HUDSON: Agricultural precinct as well.

MR HOOKE: Yes.

40

MR HUDSON: Yes.

MR HOOKE: Yes. Well, Agriculture has got a – it's a two-edge sword there. On the one hand, because of the drought, they are struggling, but on the other hand they've got an opportunity to get a job at the mine, so they will be able to offset the drought impact. So, you know, there's a two-edge sword there.

45

PROF WILLGOOSE: Is it both the agricultural employees and the agricultural service industry or just the - - -

5 MR HUDSON: I think a bit of both. So the provision of services to the mine obviously takes it away from the ability to service the agriculture sector plus, also, staffing availability for the agriculture. Obviously, the agriculture industry can't match the wages that the mines are able to offer, so you see a lot of skilled labour move away from those areas.

10 MR JOHNS: I guess it has had an impact right across the – you know, every sector. I mean, even our council struggles to retain staff. You know, positions that might traditionally pay 50 or 60 thousand dollars a year for somebody with a university degree, you will find they're on double that working at the mine, so we tend to lose staff for that reason. That becomes quite awkward and difficult. I guess it also has  
15 an impact upon housing prices in the town, so. Our house prices here are not high when you compare it to metropolitan areas, but compared to other regional areas we are a fair bit higher, even higher than Tamworth, for example, is a much bigger city.

20 PROF WILLGOOSE: What would a new, newish four bedroom house go for here?

MR HUDSON: 600,000, something like that.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Really?

25 MR HUDSON: Yes. 550, 600. Whereas, if you go to Coonabarabran 100 kilometres to the west you might be looking at \$300,000.

MR HANN: So it's quite significant, in your view.

30 MR HUDSON: It's significant. You know, and it has an impact on – you know, we hear, anecdotally, if people come into town, you know – there's an example I can think of a small motor mechanic who moved to town to keep a business in town up and running. He moved to town and realised he couldn't afford to rent a property so he returned back to the coast where he had come from. So that has an impact on that  
35 business, you know, so it's – it's certainly a broad issue across the whole LDA.

MR GROTH: I guess the other element of our community that's particularly impacted by that is the aging, so anyone who wants to stay in their own home or retain some sort of independent as they age, there's a real pressure on affordability,  
40 we think. Affordable housing would have to be one of the key issues, from my perspective. It's something that we will address in the IPC hearing as an addendum to the submission.

45 MR HANN: Yes. Okay.

MR GROTH: It's causing us some real concern. And I guess what we will be seeking there is for the developer but also the state government to support Gunnedah

Council in this respect, Narrabri Council potentially as well. But any local government authority with this type of ..... is having a real upward pressure on pricing of housing.

5 MR HANN: Is that a capacity issue as well, then, in terms of - - -

MR GROTH: It certainly is for local government. We don't really have a mandate in the housing area, and there's some work being done, I think, out of University of Canberra at the moment, looking at local government's role in respect of housing.  
10 But that's something that's down the track. I think we need some immediate assistance in local government areas to combat the pressures from these types of developments on housing affordability.

PROF WILLGOOSE: So you're having problems already, basically is what you're saying.  
15

MR GROTH: Yes. So the types of examples that Andrew has given, they're – they're rife cross the community.

20 MR HANN: Okay. Look, if there's anything further you want to provide to us, please, that would be appreciated, you know, particularly in relation to our, you know, aged care and affordability. Yes, that – we appreciate that.

MR GROTH: And that's at a time when the federal government, particularly, is trying to encourage people to stay in their own homes and move away from residential care, so it's really a competing – I won't say policy approach, but it's really a competing strategy, I would guess.  
25

MR HUDSON: Notwithstanding, obviously, the impact on housing prices, we have in our submission that placing the staff members in the Mac Camp in Boggabri is not necessarily the most appropriate alternative to combatting that increase in housing prices and rental accommodation. So putting those staff members, or having them as a fly in fly out operation doesn't necessarily resolve that issue but it also can potentially create other social impact with those people not actually being introduced to the community and not having that interaction from that economic perspective.  
30  
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MR HANN: So it's not an integrated as you would prefer, is that right?

MR HOOKE: Absolutely not.  
40

MR HANN: Okay.

MR HOOKE: And I believe that the Commission is moving on to Narrabri to have a chat with them.  
45

MR HANN: Yes. Indeed, after this - - -

MR HOOKE: You will go through Boggabri on the way through. That – that camp that we’re talking about is only about two and a half kilometres outside Boggabri, and just have a look at Boggabri. It’s really getting no effect from that camp whatsoever.

5 MR HANN: I don’t actually think we’re going to - - -

PROF WILLGOOSE: I don’t think - - -

10 MR D. WAY: I don’t think where we’re going is part of the same .....

MR HANN: Yes. Okay. We will do it later this afternoon. Yes.

MR HOOKE: Yes. Just, it would be worthwhile just having a bit of a look and

15 having a chat to a few of the locals there just to get an idea of what influence that camp is actually having on Boggabri, and I think it’s minimal.

MR HANN: Okay. Thanks for that.

20 PROF WILLGOOSE: So, quite apart from minimal, I mean, some of these camps in WA, for instance, introduce social problems as well.

MR HOOKE: I don’t think that applies in this particular case.

25 PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay.

MR HOOKE: That’s only sort of some anecdotal evidence I have, but they just don’t interact. That’s the main thing.

30 PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

MR HOOKE: Socially and economically they’re not really interacting.

MR JOHNS: I guess we’re blessed to have these resources in an area that’s very

35 liveable as opposed to somewhere like Western Australia or remote Queensland. They necessarily have to do fly in fly out because no one wants to live in the middle of a desert. So we’ve got beautiful landscapes and great towns, so we would love to see those people taking advantage of all the great things that we can offer, but with that caveat that, you know, that does put a strain on things, so we would like to try

40 and find a happy balance there.

MR HUDSON: Yes. And, obviously, having fly in fly out employees, rather than having the incomes available for the local community, it takes those resources back outside of the local community, which is my understanding that’s opposite to what

45 the social impacts are trying to achieve.

- MR GROTH: There's also the social impacts of, you know, those individuals being quite happy, if they're flying in flying out, to participate in activities around the town, but what you lose is that social integration where they're actually contribution to the administration of sporting groups or social groups.
- 5 MR HANN: Yes.
- MR GROTH: The impost falls on the local committee.
- 10 MR HANN: It's not a commitment of any length of time. I think - - -
- PROF WILLGOOSE: They play the football club but they don't help run it.
- MR GROTH: That's right.
- 15 MR .....: Yes, yes.
- MR GROTH: I guess, for context, Gunnedah Shire Council has long held the position that we're adverse or opposed to fly in fly out or drive in drive out operations, so we've long held the view, dated back at least 10 years, to my knowledge, of wanting an integrated community.
- 20 PROF FELL: So, basically, the local community is concerned about provision of services or the - - -
- 25 MR GROTH Exactly right. It essentially comes back to not ..... certainly not an ..... argument in Gunnedah. It's more a case of if – simply recognising the plan and resource the issues that come from it.
- 30 MR HUDSON: And I think the main issue with the environmental impact statement that has been provided is that it doesn't go into that detail, it doesn't address how those social impacts are actually going to be either ..... or integrated into the community. We think it's just a little bit lacking in that area.
- 35 MR HANN: Is one of the areas to address this training?
- MR HOOKE: Yes.
- MR HANN: In other words, assuming there's some additional capacity in terms of bodies - - -
- 40 MR HUDSON: Yes.
- MR HOOKE: Yes.
- 45 MR HANN: - - - you know, people, but it's the skill level so is that an area that – I know you have noted it here but I just - - -



MR HOOKE: It's an area - - -

MR HANN: It would be good to understand.

5 MR HOOKE: - - - that we're looking at very, very closely at this particular point in time. Yesterday, the state member here made an announcement that there's 11 new courses starting which – at TAFE - - -

MR HANN: Yes.

10

MR HOOKE: - - - starting next year. That's an increase of a third on the courses that were available last year.

MR HANN: Okay.

15

MR HOOKE: We have had some engagement with the proponent at this stage and we would like more commitment saying train your people locally, don't send them down to Maitland and Muswellbrook and areas like that because if you could train people locally from the beginning, they're likely to stay in the community.

20

MR HANN: All right. Yes.

PROF FELL: So you make an interesting point about the desirability of this area to live in, you know, that differentiates from other projects around the country ..... - - -

25

MR .....: Yes.

PROF FELL: In other words, you would like to see a growth in population into this area - - -

30

MR HOOKE: Yes.

PROF FELL: - - - that they may well stay past the 25 years; is that how I'm reading - - -

35

MR HOOKE: That's - - -

MR JOHNS: Absolutely. Look, council is looking at – you know, we understand that there won't be coal mining in this region forever so we want to make sure that there's no dip at the end of the 25 years of this project and other projects. We want to make sure that our economy is diverse such that, you know, we can maintain that growth in the population. I think it's essential for, you know, getting government services into the town, you know, health and those types of things, you need the population.

45

PROF WILLGOOSE: And in terms of diversification of the economy post mining, you want to make sure that in fact you're not finding that your diversified economy is actually white-anted by the skill shortages - - -

5 MR JOHNS: Absolutely.

MR HUDSON: Exactly.

10 PROF WILLGOOSE: - - - which are .....

MR HOOKE: That's right.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

15 MR GROTH: Well, I guess the desirability becomes significantly compromised if you can't get doctors. If you can't get the appropriate professionals that you need to support a community, the community is no longer a desirable place to live.

20 PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes. Do you – I mean, when you look at, you know, professionals that are not directly related – you mention doctors – how difficult is it – is it to get people to come here, like, for instance, doctors and those sorts of groups?

25 MR HOOKE: It's a huge problem as far as the medical side of things are concerned. We have struggled now for probably a decade but we're not Robinson Crusoe.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

30 MR HOOKE: I think you will find it in all rural communities.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

MR HOOKE: But it is a major problem for here.

35 PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay.

MR HOOKE: I would have to say – and I stand corrected but our basic services are certainly up to speed as far as water, sewerage - - -

40 PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay.

45 MR HOOKE: - - - electricity, those sorts of things. Land is available so we have got the basis infrastructure to be able to do the job. We have even got the basic infrastructure for increase in medical services and some very, very good infrastructure here to do that, excluding the hospital, which we would like to see renewed. But it's a matter of people able to attract people to come here.

MR GROTH: I guess what I need to – the Deputy Mayor’s comments is we have that capacity for the existing population. For growth, we will be under stress. So servicing residential and servicing industrial land comes at a cost.

5 PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

MR GROTH: And whilst I don’t expect the proponent to pay for all those costs, because there will be other revenues ..... such as such as other residential and industrial development contributions and so forth, rate income, there is a, I guess,  
10 financing cost or a timing cost associated with that development. If it’s sped up, then council then needs to actually roll that out - - -

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

15 MR GROTH: - - - ahead of the timeframe in which it would be reasonably expected for us to receive the revenue to fund that.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

20 MR GROTH: So I think there’s an impost there that needs to be recognised in terms of financing and timing costs.

PROF WILLGOOSE: I know the mayors of Muswellbrook and Singleton have expressed similar concerns about, you know, they’re expected to fund the  
25 infrastructure before the people actually arrive to actually live there so it has been borne by the existing residents.

MR GROTH: At the very least, I would expect a contribution from the proponent in that regard, probably through the VPA - - -  
30

MR HANN: Yes.

MR GROTH: - - - with respect to that financing cost. Not the total cost. I think, you know, to be - - -  
35

MR HANN: It’s contribution is what you’re talking about.

MR GROTH: Exactly.

40 MR HANN: Yes. Okay.

MR GROTH: The other element, in terms of the professionals that we have, medical certainly has always been a struggle and always is in rural regional Australia but a development like this exacerbates that problem.  
45

MR HANN: Yes.

MR GROTH: The other area is policing. So we really struggle to retain a full complement of the local allocated policing numbers so we're at least three people short within the policing members - - -

5 PROF WILLGOOSE: I would have thought - - -

MR HANN: As a – what percentage would that be? You know, just give - - -

10 MR GROTH: I will have to come back to you with the numbers.

MR HANN: Okay.

MR GROTH: Yes.

15 PROF WILLGOOSE: Is that because of state government policy or is it - - -

MR .....: No. Housing is with each - - -

20 MR GROTH: We sat down with the local police – well, we sat down with two members of the Police Association recently. The police force itself is reticent to comment at times on exactly what's happening but the Police Association have certainly indicated affordable housing is one of the issues there.

25 MR HANN: Okay.

MR GROTH: So we have police that are gravelling to Gunnedah to undertake their shifts - - -

30 PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes. Okay.

MR GROTH: - - - and then returning to Tamworth or somewhere else because it's simply not affordable - - -

35 PROF WILLGOOSE: To live here. Okay.

MR GROTH: - - - right now to live here without that development going ahead, which is only going to make the problem worse.

40 PROF WILLGOOSE: All right.

45 MR HUDSON: I think, really, in the social impact, that really should address these areas where servicing is lacking. I know the current social impact assessment is using ABS data from 2011 I believe so we would probably like that to be updated to be using more recent data, such as maybe 2016 that may actually reflect and identify those social issues that we have been discussing as actually being probably more of a concern than what they were previously under previous ABS data.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Thank you. That's a good point.

MR HOOKE: Some information has been passed on to me through the Vickery CCC, at meeting we had some months ago, back in August. They – and Whitehaven  
5 were commenting that they have got 75 per cent of their employees live locally so within the shire.

MR HANN: Yes.

10 MR HOOKE: That equates to about one in seven of the population.

MR HANN: Okay.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay. Significant.

15

MR HOOKE: Which is quite significant and that may sort of - - -

MR HANN: Thanks. Thanks for that. Yes.

20 MR HOOKE: - - - colour your thinking a little bit about how important it really is about services and housing, etcetera.

PROF WILLGOOSE: So that 75 per cent includes the camp at Boggabri, does it?

25 MR HOOKE: No. That's out of our local government area.

MR HANN: This is within the LGA.

PROF WILLGOOSE: You're talking within Gunnedah LGA.

30

MR HOOKE: Within Gunnedah LGA.

MR HANN: Within the Gunnedah LGA.

35 MR HOOKE: Yes.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay.

40 MR HANN: 75 per cent which equates to one in seven of the population of your LGA.

MR HOOKE: That's what was quoted to me and I have asked for more information on that and, hopefully, when the hearings are on I will be able to provide that information on a more accurate basis.

45

MR HANN: All right. No – thank you.

MR HUDSON: The Environmental Impact Statement has stated that they expect at least 56 per cent of the population from the employment to reside in Gunnedah local government area.

5 MR HANN: Yes. Yes.

MR GROTH: I guess that's borne out with our experience at Maules Creek so there's a – whilst Maules Creek is far closer to Narrabri than Gunnedah, there's a huge amount of the population actually already residing in Gunnedah in relation to that development so - - -

10 MR HANN: Right.

MR GROTH: Again, that comes back to, I think, as the professor noted earlier, there's a desirability of – to live here - - -

15 MR HANN: Yes.

MR GROTH: - - - but the reality of affordability and availability of jobs, particularly for partners, spouses or whatever of people who are working in mines, is one of the pressures. So we, you know – one of the benefits that come for us is that people who come to work in the mine generally bring other people with them and quite often that's professionals that we may not otherwise be able to source for council employment or other employment.

20  
25 MR HANN: Yes.

MR GROTH: But it is a competing – there's a tail to that, which is that those people can't always get jobs and the affordability of housing. They're – probably the two main issues that we were aiming to touch on at the hearing was housing affordability and what you have actually asked about earlier, John, about one of the solutions to our skill shortage as being training. We would expect some sort of assistance - - -

30  
35 MR HANN: All right.

MR GROTH: - - - as local government area, not only from the proponent but also from the state government in respect to that, whether it's through Resources for Regions or some other funding stream.

40 MR HANN: Thank you. Is there anything else, Chris or Garry, on the social side - - -

PROF WILLGOOSE: Well, your comment about Maules Creek – I mean, I have lived in both Gunnedah and Narrabri so I have a little bit of experience there. Is – so is it just simply that – because Narrabri also has housing problems as well because of the cotton industry. Is it simply that there's more housing available here or is it the

lifestyle? Do you have a sense of what it is that drives the Maules Creek people to live here rather than up closer to the - - -

5 MR GROTH: I was born here, Garry, so I'm probably the wrong person to ask.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay. You know, that - - -

10 MR GROTH: Look, I think – I do have a bias for Gunnedah but the – look, all I can point to is what we experience – that we do experience that people wish to live here and commute in those cases.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay. Thank you.

15 MR GROTH: So I guess we do have – you know, in terms of the assets that each local government area has, there's similar assets. We both have swimming pools, we both have council owned or contracted out cinemas so there's certain lifestyle expectations there that are provided in both communities, but it's probably better to ask some of those people that are actually choosing where they live.

20 MR HANN: Okay. All right.

PROF WILLGOOSE: So – so do ..... 12-hour shifts?

25 MR GROTH: Look, I'm not sure whether it is.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Because I - - -

MR GROTH: I don't think so.

30 PROF WILLGOOSE: I ask that because I live in Scone and we have a lot of people live in Scone that are doing 12 hour shifts down the valley. They live there because the schools are better. They don't have social problems that Muswellbrook and Singleton have. And they make a choice that the family is happier at Scone and so they will do the commute down to wherever they work.

35

MR GROTH: Yes.

PROF WILLGOOSE: You know, because they're only working typically three shifts a week.

40

MR GROTH: Yes.

PROF WILLGOOSE: You know, it's perfectly doable. That's why I asked, you know, because that would be a similar, sort of, thing, I would think - - -

45

MR HANN: Yes.

PROF WILLGOOSE: - - - live in Gunnedah for lifestyle and commute there three or four days a week if it's 12 hour shifts.

5 MR NOBLE: I suppose the other thing worth mentioning if Gunnedah is a bit closer to a regional centre in Tamworth - - -

MR HANN: Yes. Sure. Yes.

10 MR NOBLE: - - - so obviously Tamworth does offer some other provisions and services that aren't quite offered in Gunnedah, so speciality services, accessibility to an airport, so whilst Narrabri do have a RPT service, I don't know whether it's as regular as what can be offered in Tamworth, so - - -

15 MR HOOKE: Being 45 minutes from an airport, if you're in Sydney, you would be very close, wouldn't you?

MR HANN: Yes. Indeed. Indeed. Next door.

20 PROF WILLGOOSE: That's a short commute.

MR HANN: Yes. That's right. Chris, I think you've got a question.

25 PROF FELL: Very quickly. Does council have any concerns about the water question up here? I mean DPI Water has control over this aspect, effectively. Now, I just wonder if you have any long-term attitude towards that? Are they doing a reasonable job in preparing a plan that impacts the mine and the mine has to have water shares, etcetera. It all seems sensible?

30 MR HUDSON: I think apart from the draw down that it's - they've identified in their EIS for the ground water table - - -

PROF FELL: Yes.

35 MR HUDSON: - - - I suppose the other thing that really I don't think has been addressed quite enough within the EIS is the impact on environmental flows within the river. They've identified that they've got adequate water resources - - -

PROF FELL: Yes.

40 MR HUDSON: - - - through water right allocations, but they haven't actually gone into the detail to identify that there is actually a physical volume of water that they require, so - - -

45 MR HANN: What's the impact of that. Yes. Okay.

MR HUDSON: So, currently, Keepit Dam is at .3 per cent.



- PROF FELL: Well, that was the second part of my question that I was - - -
- PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.
- 5 MR HUDSON: So obviously, there's no ability to release water from - - -
- MR JOHNS: Just – just I don't know whether I heard that statement about Keepit - - -
- 10 MR HUDSON: Keepit Dam is currently at 0.3 per cent, so the ability to release water - - -
- PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay. It's empty.
- 15 MR HUDSON: Yes. Is no longer viable. So obviously, the natural flow from – from Keepit Dam is not available there anymore, so that water right allocation despite them having that availability may mean nothing.
- MR HANN: Chris. Any - - -
- 20 PROF FELL: That's okay. And you a little concerned about environmental impact of any discharged water so giving a storm event or – or you're happy about that generally?
- 25 MR HUDSON: I believe that's in our submission and if that's able to be addressed by the proponent, then they may be able to resolve that sort of an issue as part of that.
- PROF FELL: ..... yes. Okay. Thank you.
- 30 MR NOBLE: So if I could comment from a water utility perspective. So we currently supply water to the CHPP Planning in Gunnedah now.
- MR HANN: Yes.
- 35 MR NOBLE: So obviously, out of the new proposal that plan will move out to Blue Vale Road, so we will no longer be supplying that water to Whitehaven. So at the moment, that represents about 10 mega litres per annum, so it's slightly up at the moment, given the climatic conditions and obviously, that will have an effect, I think, given the circumstances with the river and the storage of Lake Keepit at the moment. But I guess for us that that also affects the revenue stream for us, that 10 million – 10 megs per annum represents approximately 150 k per year. Arguably, it's probably a better use for that water to be used for puttable reticulation as opposed to washing coal. But there is an impact there - - -
- 40
- 45 MR HANN: Yes. All right.

MR NOBLE: - - - and that will certainly affect the raw water source out there at the Namoi River and then the borefields that they're proposing to utilise as well.

5 PROF WILLGOOSE: Do you just supply raw water to the CHPP or is it treated?

MR NOBLE: No. It's treated water.

PROF WILLGOOSE: It's treated water.

10 MR NOBLE: Exactly. Yes.

PROF WILLGOOSE: So, in fact, actually, there's another issue in terms of, for instance, more people in town. You actually have the capacity, at least from the water supply point of view, to actually supply that water.

15 MR NOBLE: We do. Correct.

PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes. Because – yes, even with the existing infrastructure .....

20 MR NOBLE: Yes.

MR HOOKE: And the Commission might also like to know that the Gunnedah township itself, its reticulation system comes from bores, not from the river. So we're not reliant on our river flow.

25 PROF WILLGOOSE: Okay.

MR HANN: Thank you.

30 PROF FELL: Just wanted to be a tiny bit mindful of the time.

MR HANN: Yes. Sure. We will wrap it up shortly. I just wanted to ask in regard to biodiversity and offsets, you make a comment about wanting to have as much of the offsets within the project site. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate a little

35 bit on that for us.

MR HUDSON: So they've identified that there's sugar glider, koala and honeyeater as the three endangered ecological communities that are identified on the site.

40 MR HANN: Yes.

MR HUDSON: So it really isn't appropriate to provide offsets external to the site if those populations there are at risk from loss of habitat. So if they are going to be removing habitat, I – it really should be a provision that some of the offsets should be

45 provided onsite to offset that loss of habitat for those communities, so that either – whether there is an ability for those communities to move from the site or if there

isn't, it should have that ability that they can – a habitat can be provided at least close by.

MR HANN: All right.

5

PROF WILLGOOSE: Now, I think - - -

MR HANN: That probably covers most of the - - -

10 PROF WILLGOOSE: Yes.

MR HANN: - - - points that we wanted to elaborate on with you. Is there anything else you would like to emphasise for us before we wrap up our meeting?

15 MR HUDSON: Probably the only other thing that I really had was the preparation of the reports. So there is a statement in there I – that – the reports that we've listed in our submission, so the water management, the noise management plans, blasting – those sort of plans they've identified that they will prepare once consent has been provided. With regards - - -

20

MR HANN: These are the management plans, aren't they, you're talking - - -

MR HUDSON: Yes. Yes.

25 MR HANN: Yes. Okay. Yes.

MR HUDSON: I do believe that these sort of plans should be at least drafted prior to the determination of the application. With regards to the blasting, there's no consideration for blast rock – for fly rock if that management plan isn't addressed earlier than determination. The same for the noise impacts. There's no listing and mitigation measures or how they're appropriately going to implement those mitigation measures if these sort of documents are not prepared up front. And that's the same with the koala plans management and mine closure for the rehabilitation plans and things like that as well.

35

MR HANN: All right.

PROF WILLGOOSE: So reading between the lines of what you're saying is that you don't feel there's enough assurance that, in fact, these issues can be managed.

40

MR HUDSON: Yes. So the preparation of these plans are normally the detail of actually how they're going to implement all the detail that they've provided in the EIS.

45 MR HANN: Yes.

MR HUDSON: So the EIS makes these statements that they're going to address that whatever the impacts are through the preparation of these plans and operations of the mine. But without the preparation of these plans, there's no real way of saying, "Okay. Well, yes, that that mitigation measure is being addressed in this way and it, effectively, resolves the issue that was identified in the assessment originally.

MR HANN: Yes. Okay. No. Thank you.

MR HUDSON: I guess - - -

MR GROTH: As a state, we spend a lot of energy and resources making sure people comply with our requirements and simply not to have those requirements identified seems nonsensical upfront. And I guess the other document that we're particularly keen to see before approval is granted is – or consent is granted is the voluntary planning agreement - - -

MR HANN: Yes. Okay.

MR GROTH: - - - on a similar basis that we really have no confidence that we're going to get a satisfactory outcome if the pressure to negotiate is removed from the proponent.

MR HANN: And I assume when you say at least in draft form, the management plan, so you've got the opportunity to comment on those and make - - -

MR HUDSON: Exactly the same as the - - -

MR HANN: Yes.

MR HUDSON: - - - Environmental Impact Statement itself.

MR HANN: Yes. All right.

MR JOHNS: I guess just to sum up, I guess we welcome this development, but at the end of the day, we want to make sure it's compliant with all the state and federal legislation ..... to make sure that the negative social and economic impacts are mitigated. At the end of the day, that's all the council can ask for.

MR HANN: Well, thank you very much. Yes. Much appreciated.

MR .....: Gentlemen, thank you very much for your time.

MR HANN: Yes. Okay. Thank you. So we will close the meeting now and, yes, look, thank you for your time. And, Rob, yes, it would have been good if you could join us this afternoon but I totally understand.

MR HOOKE: I would have loved to. Yes.

MR HANN: Okay.

MR HOOKE: So I had to apologise once again.

5 MR HANN: Yes. No. That's all right.

PROF WILLGOOSE: These things happen.

10 MR HOOKE: Yes.

**RECORDING CONCLUDED**

**[9.30 am]**