

MR HANN: Good morning, everybody. Can you hear me okay? We will get started now if you're all settled and I'm assuming you can hear in the back rows. Good morning. And, before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet. I would also like to pay my respects to their
5 elders past and present and to the elders from other communities who may be here today.

Welcome to the initial hearing – the second day of the hearing – initial hearing on State Significant Development application SSD 7480 from the applicant, Whitehaven
10 Coal, who is seeking to expand the Vickery Coal Mine. My name is John Hann. I'm the chair of this Commission panel, which has been appointed to carry out a public hearing into the project. Joining me are my fellow Commissioners, Professor Garry Willgoose and Professor Chris Fell. We are supported by David Way and Troy Deighton of the Commission's Secretariat, just up here, assisting to get some of the
15 presentations sorted in time.

All appointed Commissioners must make an annual declaration of interest, identifying potential conflicts with their appointed role. For the record, we are unaware of any conflicts in relation to carrying out of this public hearing. You can
20 find additional information on the way we manage potential conflicts in our policy paper which is available on our website.

So the hearing purpose and effect. We're here today because on 6 September last year, the Minister for Planning requested that the Commission hold a public hearing
25 into the carrying out of the Vickery Extension Project. This request was made under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and, specifically, the Minister requested that the Commission conduct a public hearing into the carrying out of the Vickery Extension Project as soon as practicable after the public exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, a that the Commission is to consider the
30 following information: the EIS for the project, submissions on the project, any relevant expert advice and any other relevant information.

The Commission is to publish a report to the Department of Planning and Environment within 12 weeks of the submissions being published on the
35 Department's website unless otherwise agreed by the Planning Secretary that sets out the actions taken by the Commission in conducting this initial stage of the public hearing, summarises the submissions made during the public exhibition of the EIS and any other relevant information provided to the Commission during this stage of the public hearing and identifies the key issues requiring detailed consideration by
40 the Department of Planning and Environment in evaluating the merits of the project under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

So in accordance with the Minister's request, today's hearing will serve as the initial hearing – yesterday and today's. This hearing is a vital input for the Commission in
45 identifying the key issues in relation to the application. Public hearings of this nature provide you, the community, and interested parties with a valuable opportunity to

address us directly in relation to the proposed development. This will be of great assistance to us in our consideration and we thank you for being here today. In the interests of openness and transparency, the hearing today is being recorded and a full transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website.

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Now, a little bit about the guidelines for this review. This project is for the first time, the Commission has been requested to hold a public hearing in multiple stages. The Commission has published new, multiple stage public hearing guidelines on its website and we invite you to review them. The process is set out in the guidelines and we will review it towards the end of this year – 2019. Now, in regard to appeal rights, in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, holding this public hearing means that no merit appeal may be brought under the Act in respect of a future decision made by the Commission as consent authority in relation to the carrying out of the development consent.

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So what is the IPC? The Independent Planning Commission of New South Wales was established by the New South Wales Government on 1 March last year – 2018 – as an independent statutory body, operating separately to the Department of Planning and Environment. The Commission plays an important role in strengthening transparency and independence in the decision-making process for major development and land use planning in New South Wales. The key functions of the Commission include to determine State Significant Development applications, conduct public hearings for development applications and other matters and provide independent expert advice on any other planning and development matter when requested by the Minister for Planning or the Planning Secretary. The Commission is the designated consent authority for State Significant Development applications where there are more than 25 public objections, reportable political donations by the applicant, objections by the relevant local council or councils.

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So this brings us to today, and where are we in the process? The initial hearing today is one part of the Commission's processes. On 30 November last year, the Commission received the Department's Preliminary Issues Report. This report is available on the Department's website. The Commission is not involved in the preparation of the Department's report. On 6 December last year, the Commission met with the Department of Planning and Environment and later on the same day, the Commission met with the applicant. On 19 December last year, the Commission met with Gunnedah Shire Council and Narrabri Shire Council, and a site inspection and locality tour were conducted on that day. Transcripts of these meetings and a record of the site inspection are available on our website.

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So, as you may be aware, this initial hearing was scheduled to be conducted on 18 December last year but in response to such a high level of community interest in the project, the initial hearing was postponed to these last day – yesterday and today, here in Gunnedah – to ensure adequate time was afforded to those requesting to speak and to be heard by the Commission panel. After the initial hearings yesterday and today, we may convene with relevant stakeholders if clarification or additional information is required on matters raised. Transcripts of all meetings will be

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published on our website. I must emphasise that no decision or determination on this application has been made.

5 Written submissions. The Department received a number of written submissions in relation to the Vickery Extension Project during public exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement, which the Commissioners have reviewed. These submissions are available on the Department's website. The Commission will accept written comments and submissions about the project until 5 pm on 13 February 2019. And anyone can send written submissions or comments to the Commission before
10 that time. And you can do that simply by sending your submissions or comments to the Commission by email or by post. So the next steps. Following the initial hearings yesterday and today, we will endeavour to publish an issues report as soon as possible, however, there may be delays if we need additional information. The issues report will be published on our website when it is complete.

15 So, look, a little bit around the ground rules for today. As you would be aware, we've got a lot of speakers. We had close to 50 yesterday and we've got, I think, in excess of 50 today. And before we hear from our first registered speaker, I would like to lay some ground rules down that we expect everyone to take part and to
20 follow. The hearing today is not a debate. We will not take questions from the floor and we will not permit interjections. Our aim is to provide the maximum opportunity for people to speak and be heard by the Commission.

25 Many people find public speaking very difficult and we understand that. Though you may not agree with everything you hear today, each speaker has the right to be treated with respect and heard in silence. Today's focus is to hear your views. We're here to listen and not to comment. However, we may ask some questions just for clarification. This is usually unnecessary but it will be most beneficial for your presentation if you just focus on issues of concern to you.

30 It is important that everyone registered to speak receives a fair share of time. A warning bell from the Secretariat behind me there before the speaker's allotted time – that will be sounded, again, one minute before and then again when it runs out. Please respect these time limits. As chair, while I do reserve the right to allow
35 additional time if I consider it appropriate, however, look, we've got a full schedule as I mentioned a moment ago and so we respectfully seek your help in keeping to the timetable, and particularly keeping to your time.

40 We acknowledge that there is a significant public interest regarding the Vickery Extension Project and while the Commission has attempted to accommodate the time and location request made by each speaker, in order to ensure that everyone who wished to speak at this public hearing could be heard, not every request for speaking time allocation could be fully accommodated but we've tried hard. We've done our best on that.

45 If there are issues you're unable to address or you feel you could not completely address in the allocated time, we would encourage you please provide written

submission to the Commission. Though we will strive to stick to our schedule today, speakers sometimes don't attend or decide not to speak. If you know someone who's registered to speak but will not be attending or speaking, could you please advise David and Troy behind me.

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If you would like to project something onto the screen, please give to Tony or – David or Troy before your presentation. And if you have a copy of your presentation, it would be appreciated if you could provide a copy to David or Troy after you speak. Please note any information given to us may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement governs our approach to your information. And if you would like a copy of our privacy statement, you can obtain it from the Secretariat or from our website. And, finally, I would ask everyone present here if you could please put your mobile phone on silent – that would be much appreciated. So may I please ask the first speaker, Gae Swain.

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MS G. SWAIN: Good morning, IPC members and gallery. My name is Gae Swain. I'm a long-term resident of the Gunnedah Shire, living here for almost 55 years, having married a local farmer. I thank the IPC for the opportunity to present my personal thoughts and I'm here to speak in favour of the Vickery Expansion. I understand my presentation will be recorded and will be on the panel's website. I would like to declare I have several family members working in the mining industry and I'm also the independent chair of the Werris Creek Coal Community Consultative Committee which I must add is a voluntary position. I have registered to speak today because I feel I can provide the panel with a unique understanding of the history and experiences the town and district has gone through over the last almost 30 years.

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I have served on the Gunnedah Shire Council since 1991, having held the position of Mayor for nine years, served as Deputy Mayor for eight years and currently serve as a councillor in my twilight years. As I said, my husband and I have two sons, a grandson and a son-in-law – all young farmers, who are working in different mines here in different roles, underground as well as open cut. Their mines employment supplements an income which allows them to continue to maintain and operate their farms, never more so than at this present very distressing time of drought. I'm aware of many others, male and female, who do likewise, functioning as farmers, as well as miners. The two industries are not naturally exclusive.

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Gunnedah has a proud history of mining and agriculture, working side by side for over 100 years. In our area, as you would be aware, at the present time, drought is having a devastating effect, not only on the farming community but also to some extent the small businesses. However, when I look around at your town, I'm aware that the mining sector is the one positive influence on the business activity at the moment. The main street is busy, the shopfronts are practically full and there's a sense of business everywhere.

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We are a strong agricultural area, but I am keenly aware that farming has the naturally occurring cycles of drought, wet weather and even floods, never more

evident than back in the late 1990s and early 2000s. During that time, I was Mayor. Our abattoir closed. Two small niche mines closed. We suffered drought followed closely by an extremely wet summer just at harvest time when the very small crop which was able to be harvested was so badly damaged by weather and so severely
5 downgraded as to be almost worthless. The crop went rotten in the paddock. That was an extremely distressing time for Gunnedah. We were all reminded of the vagaries of our weather.

10 And following the many meetings held across our shire, attempting to determine how to survive, our community clearly identified that for Gunnedah to remain strong and active, we could no longer rely on one industry. We had to have diversity of economic activity if we were to survive and, indeed, grow. That scenario is being played out at the moment but minus the flood where the farming community is
15 struggling with not many farms being productive such that there is not the economic flow-on to businesses with the purchase of chemicals, tyres, tractor parts, fuel etcetera during this extremely dry time. Several business owners have commented to me that if not for the mines, they would be stretched to the utmost financially. And that was exactly the scenario during the late 1990s and 2000s when we didn't have the mines to fill in the gaps for our businesses and employment.

20 Today I'm excited for the many and varied job opportunities for our young people, both men and women, new and greater opportunities to work either on farms or industries that service that or in the mines and the many and varied industries which service the mining sector. I have long been concerned that many of our younger
25 generation had to leave Gunnedah for further training or employment opportunities but now they have a choice, either to stay and settle down and make their lives in their own home town or move away for further education but at least they have that choice. Many of them are now choosing to move back to settle near family and friends following tertiary studies because of the extra and varied employment
30 avenues available.

There's also the added bonus of new and exciting opportunities for employment for their spouses and partners, both male and female. There's great opportunity for
35 apprenticeships also for those choosing to study a trade and not move on to university but, as I said, they now have that choice. We're also experiencing a real growth in the many and varied jobs that service the town – child care, retail, cafés etcetera – which attract more people for the lifestyle which is now on offer. There are not only the economic but also the social benefits of the extra opportunities
40 flowing at the moment.

It's as simple as people walking away with a takeaway coffee. I can't believe how many people now have to start their day with a coffee from the many coffee shops here, in keeping with big city-siders. I can well remember the alarm here when
45 McDonald's first put in the DA for their business and residents thought we couldn't survive, all the cafés would close. But now we have lots of cafés, with the lifestyle that that offers.

Our many new residents attracted by the mining and associated jobs bring the benefits of active lifestyles. We now have fitness clubs, with the need for walking and cycleways and lots of sport being enjoyed. They're actively participating in the many teams which can be seen around at the sporting fields during the week, as well
5 as at weekends and which do much to generate and support the social wellbeing of our community. New professionals coming in are contributing also to the community service, as well as the economic cycle of our shire, joining service organisations, such as Rotary, Apex and Lions, and these younger members will ensure that clubs can continue to work for our residents now and into the future.

10 Environmental guidelines are important and being the independent chairperson of the Werris Creek Coal Community Consultative Committee, I'm well aware of the rigorous environmental guidelines within which the mining companies have to operate and I know these are strictly enforced. These are far more strict than for any
15 other industry I know. I'm comfortable that the processes put in place do address the concerns of the community and requirements of the relevant authorities.

The issues of the late nineties and early 2000s demonstrated to us that rural
20 communities, such as ours, can no longer depend for their livelihood on one primary industry. Our community clearly expressed that opinion and urged that council work at attracting industries, whatever industries we could, to shore up the economic activity for our town and district. During that time, we had many media outlets seeking comments on, "How bad is it, really?" and, "Give us a comment about how
25 your town is dying," etcetera. There were so many vacant shopfronts in the main street and anyone could have bagged a park anywhere. There was such little turnover for our business. That was an awful time for Gunnedah.

Times are tough for some people now through this drought and we will go through
30 them again, but Gunnedah is reinventing itself. As Sir William Deane said in 1996, "The past is never fully gone. It is absorbed into the present and the future. It stays to shape what we are and what we do". And Gunnedah has always been a doing community. During our bleakest times, as I mentioned, we didn't ever complain. We always said we didn't need a handout, we needed a hand up to help us be the best
35 community we possibly can be for our families. I've had the opportunity to speak to many other council representatives at various local government forums and they all say their communities would give their eye teeth to be in our position. We the envy of others because of our economic diversity and the flow-on effect it's having for our residents and district. I know that we have a strong future but we have to be allowed the opportunity to grow. I'm proud of what our residents are achieving and I look
40 forward to seeing what the future brings for our town and shire. Thank you for the opportunity to present here today.

MR HANN: Thank you, Gae. Our next speaker is Trent Hall.

45 MR T. HALL: Good morning, panel. Good morning, audience. My name is Trent Hall. I'm a local farmer. I run my family's farming operation near the Ranges approximately 15 kilometres east of the Tarrawonga Coal Mine which we have no

impact from. We have been there since 1982, which is 37 years. In 2006, my wife and I purchased a property near the Canyon Coal Mine, 15 kilometres east of Boggabri, and another one near the Wean Racecourse in 2010, where we currently live. In 2012, Whitehaven Coal approached us to see whether we would be
5 interested in selling our property near the Canyon Coal Mine as part of their Vickery project.

At this time, we were doing it tough through dry times and financial stress so yes, we accepted their offer. At the same time, they agreed to also buy our other farm in the
10 preceding years with a lease back period of 10 years. And also another two neighbouring properties as well. In this time, I found the Whitehaven guys very easy to work with, honest and upfront with all of our dealings. These leases for a 10 year period allowed my family and I to grow our livestock enterprise to be much larger in size, making us more efficient and a lot more viable, even in touch climatic and
15 economic times, a bit like what we're facing at the moment.

It also allowed us to employ more staff, use more contractors, so everyone in the local area got some kind of benefit. Being a young farming family, our future feels a lot more stable now thanks to our association with Whitehaven Coal. I'm also a
20 member of the Wean Amateur Picnic Race Committee and in 2012 Whitehaven Coal purchased a property where the racecourse was situation. They fenced off the course from the property and allowed us, the committee, to keep running our race day.

They also are major sponsors on the day and without their support, this community
25 event would struggle to run. Our race day raises money for a lot of local organisations and charities, like the Westpac Helicopter, Lions Club, the Good Ride Pony Club, etcetera. In conclusion, I would like to put my family's support behind Whitehaven's Vickery Coal project as hopefully it gives other young families the opportunities to grow their futures as it has for us. Thank you.

30 MR HANN: Thank you, Trent. Our next speaker is Don Ewing.

MR D. EWING: Mr Chairman, panel, welcome to Gunnedah. I am here to support
35 the district coal and extraction industries and in particular the Vickery expansion project. My name is Don Ewing. I have lived all my life in Gunnedah, as did my father, my grandfather and my great grandfather. My great grandfather came to Gunnedah as the first sergeant of police in 1884, only seven years after the discovery of coal in our district. Our family has been in the stock and station agency, auctioneering and real estate business since 1894 and can boast having four
40 generations of knowledge and history in business in this wonderful community which has been so kind to us.

There would be few residents more qualified than us in Gunnedah that have been
45 fortunate to have had stories passed on to us from the early years of Gunnedah's development. We have experienced the highs and lows of the community more than most. The 1890, 1900 drought, the incredible toll on our residents from World War I, the Great Depressions of the '30s, drought in '46, World War II plus other

conflicts like Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, and of course now the drought over the past two to three years. We are, by and large, a rural community and always will be as it is one of our greatest strengths. Fortunately, we also have another strength with mining, co-existing with agriculture since 1877, 149 years.

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All through those hard times many in the community were able to enjoy the income from mining activities and much of the district relied on the local produced energy to heat our homes. Today, mining activities generate enormous local employment opportunities within our town and provide sources of additional income to both local and district business. If you have travelled around Australia, as I have been fortunate to do so, you will witness what mining has achieved for those communities that are located near mineral reserves and those that have not. Gunnedah has been the beneficiary of increased local mining activity since 2005 and has generated over 1500 on-site mining jobs with many more subsidiary industries establishing businesses within the surrounding communities.

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This has meant even more local employment opportunities. Millions of dollars have been invested into Gunnedah since 2005 by the mining companies, more than any government of either persuasion has done in a century. Mr Chair, panel, you only have to drive around Gunnedah while you were here to witness first hand this wonderful, vibrant country town and what it has to offer, that is, if you can find a parking space. Before 2005, we had 37 empty shops, mostly in the main street, and little industry. Look at us now. Look at us now. Boasting three major supermarkets, a fantastic hospital that has had hundreds and thousands of dollars injected into it by the mining companies, a rural health medical centre, aged care facilities that are the envy of any regional centre in New South Wales.

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There are six early childhood centres, four primary schools and soon to be three high schools. Our sporting and recreation facilities are second to none. There are new homes being built and other older ones being renovated, an expanding population and a CBD that has all the choices of cafes and restaurants, retail businesses, theatres, museum, clubs and hotels you would expect in a town twice our size. The expansion of the coal industry has increased our population from 9000 residents to 12,000, which brings a vibrancy that is attracting younger generations to start and grow their families here. Gunnedah is alive. Why? Because mining is providing our town and everyone in it the opportunity to ensure this town continues to have a future. Thank you.

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MR HANN: Thank you, Don. Our next speaker is Robert Monteath.

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MR R. MONTEATH: Thank you for the opportunity of speaking at the hearing today. My name is Robert Monteath and – maybe I need to turn this on. Yes, I do. I own a land surveying and town planning business in Newcastle with a small branch in Gunnedah. Why should Vickery Mine be allowed to operate? Vickery has about the highest grade coal in the world. Most of it is used to make steel. Do we need steel? Well, we can't live without it. If you like drinking coffee – as has been mentioned – drinking beer and wine, eating with a knife, fork and spoon, driving a

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car, catching a train, we need steel. Ubiquitous espresso machine, 100 per cent stainless steel. Keg of beer, 100 per cent stainless steel. Wine vats, stainless steel. All need steel.

5 The grain that leaves Gunnedah heading for export goes in steel wagons on steel railway tracks down to the Newcastle harbour stored in steel grain silos and is put onto – sorry; put on to – sorry; it’s not working to work – put on to steel ships for export. So Vickery’s coal is high quality and it makes high quality – it can make high-quality steel. Some of Vickery’s coal can be used for energy generation, and so
10 the question that needs to be asked: is Australia and the rest of the world transitioning away from coal for energy generation? And certain media reports would lead to believe so. Renewable energy can power Australia without coal, transition away in a post-coal world. Renewable power is said to replace coal-fired power stations. That’s what some of the media would like to tell us. And then in the
15 2017 AEMO report, which is the Australian Energy Market Operator’s report, you will see that the capacity – generation capacity, 67 per cent is fossil fuels and renewables is only half of that, 33 per cent, so it means that we have got quite a reasonable amount of renewable, being wind and solar capacity.

20 But that’s not the output. To consider our output we need to look at the Australian Energy Update report that the Australian Government does every year. This is last year’s report which shows that over the last 40 years, that has been our energy generation. It has been increasing quite a lot. We all like our computers, air-conditioning, colour TVs, etcetera. And renewables, which is basically wind and
25 solar, along for those first 30-odd years has only increased a little bit and wind and solar only make up eight per cent of our generation, even though the capacity is 33 per cent. And the reason for this is the wind doesn’t always blow and the sun doesn’t always shine, so we need coal to keep the lights on. So, unfortunately, at the moment there’s no such thing as reliable renewable energy and there’s no such thing
30 as totally clean reliable energy.

And the use of coal is a global issue, and Australia is a member of the International Energy Agency, and this agency monitors and researchers the use of coal around the world, and they produce an annual report which shows – and this graph from that
35 report with coal in that light purple. Oil is the orangey colour. Dark purple, gas, etcetera. Going from 2000 to 2040, in 2000 coal was generating 20 per cent of the world’s energy. And this is not just electricity. This is, you know, fuel, diesel, petrol, transport, etcetera. 2018, coal was 21 per cent with wind and solar 3 per cent and the agency predicts that by 2040 coal will be similar at 22, wind and solar will
40 only be 7 per cent, so unfortunately we can’t be relying on renewables for our energy source. So what’s the rest of the world doing about their reliable energy or electricity supply? At the moment, 1600 coal fired power stations are being built in 62 countries, 500 of those in Asia. So where are they going to get their coal from? They’re going to get it from Vickery.

45 And what does a modern coal fired power station look like? Here’s one in Japan. It’s nine years old. It is a lot – it’s far more efficient than anything we have in

Australia. It burns 20 per cent less coal with 30 per cent less emissions. And look where – sorry, go back one. And look where it is. It's in Yokohama Bay, three and a half kilometres from Yokohama CBD and surrounding in the urban area. They're not – they're so clean they're not stuck miles away in the country somewhere.

5 Similar with – a newer plant is in Hamburg, the Moorburg power plant.

75 per cent reduction in carbon emissions, and gypsum is a waste product of that, and that sits on the river just on the outskirts of Hamburg, six and a half kilometres from its CBD. These are the modern coal fired power stations which unfortunately hasn't got, but we need, and we need Vickery coal to supply these power plants. So it's a major issue, and the world needs Vickery coal. So Vickery extension will directly and indirectly benefit my business, your busy way of life, so we can keep on drinking coffee, beer and wine, and keep the lights on. Thank you.

15 MR HANN: Thank you, Robert. Our next speaker is Lloyd Finlay.

MR L. FINLAY: Good morning, Chairperson and panel. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would like to start by declaring that I've been an Narrabri Shire councillor for the past six years; however, today I am speaking to you as a local farmer and resident and a leasee of Whitehaven land and not on behalf of the Narrabri Shire Council. In my capacity as a local resident and local Maules Creek farmer, I am here to speak of the benefits of the Whitehaven Vickery expansion – of the benefits that the Whitehaven Vickery expansion could provide to my community. Background. I have been a resident in the Maules Creek area for 38 years.

I first came to the area as a child with my mother and sister to establish a small farm. After a few years, we were able to expand our farming operations and increase our landholdings through the purchase of surrounding acreage. Since then I have taken over the family farming business and I'm lucky enough to be married with two children, with my young son already made keen to follow in my footsteps. Today my farming operations are focused on beef farming.

I believe I'm in a good position to speak from an informed position on the impact of mining – on the impact mining has had on me and my community through my involvement in the Maules Creek Recreational Trust, the Maules Creek Campdraft Committee and the Narrabri Pony Club. This has provided me with exposure to a broad – a very broad cross-section of views throughout my community. Farming. At the start of 2017, Whitehaven purchased my properties. I was then able to lease my farm back and also had the opportunity to lease additional farming land. This enabled me to expand my beef operations which I would not have been able to do in this current agricultural climate. Two things have now occurred since Whitehaven purchased my land.

45 I have been able to retire from my full-time government job and take my passion for farming from a hobby, which is was for 25 years, to a viable commercial operation. It has enabled to me to realise the full potential of my farming operations and take it

to a level I knew it always could be. It has also enabled me to focus on my wagyu-cross angus beef breeding, and make it viable business, which it wasn't really before. It was too small. So the Maules Creek community. In my opinion, the Maules Creek community has benefited from mining in a few ways. To me, it has meant younger
5 people have moved into the area and their families – with their young families and get involved in the community. Three of my neighbours are young families who I have seen become involved in the community, like when we have the Maules Creek Campdraft they come down to the working bees and help out.

10 And otherwise in the agricultural climate at the moment in the last couple of years, that wouldn't have happened. I've seen the benefits from the VPAs flowing back to the Maules Creek community. Yes. So, in concluding, I believe I am a good example of how farming and mining can coexist within my community and district. Times are tough for all farmers at the moment, and the local towns and residents need
15 all the support they can get. From my personal experience, if local people are employed in the mining industry, the money is then kept within the local economy. Thank you.

MR HOOKE: Thank you, Lloyd. Thanks, Lloyd. Rob Hooke is our next speaker.
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MR R. HOOKE: Thank you very much. Good morning, commissioners, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Rob Hooke. I'm a counsellor of the Gunnedah Shire Council, also Deputy Mayor, and I wish to address this hearing representing council. Council acknowledges the Vickery Extension Project Preliminary Issues Report
25 prepared by the department and that matters raised by council in its submission will be considered as part of the department's detailed assessment of the project and that additional consideration will be provided by the proponent, where appropriate, to form this assessment. Council's submission, consequent to the EIS of the Vickery Expansion Project, did not raise any objections to the development.

30 The matters raised in the submission have regard to further investigation or additional information to be provided by the proponent prior to determining the development. Council looks forward to these matters being satisfactorily addressed and will not waste the commission's or other attendees' time in reiterating these
35 issues. Council welcomes this development as per any other development which complies with state and federal legislative requirements and aligns with council's – the shire council's strategic planning requirements and policies. Council recognises the potential economic and social benefits that the development of this nature would bring to the region.

40 While council recognises the benefit of such a development, it also holds concerns in addition to those notes in its submission with respect to the impact of the project on the availability of affordable housing within the shire and the supply and trading of appropriately skilled labour. Council seeks the commitment of both the state
45 government and Whitehaven in collaboration to find solutions for these issues. We do not wish to see the benefits of this development outweighed by detrimental effects on the community and other existing and future industries. With careful social

planning, this development can build a strong economic region and leave a lasting positive legacy for future generations.

5 Agriculture and the extractive industry have long been the drivers of this region's economy. As we all know, the farming sector is currently experiencing a severe and prolonged drought. The mining sector is playing its significant part in sustaining and upholding the economic viability of this region. Currently, Whitehaven employs approximately 1660 people, including contractors, of which 75 per cent live within this region. Of those, 46 per cent or 568 people of full time equivalent live in the
10 Gunnedah LGA. 11 per cent of these people are also indigenous. Council also recognises the voluntary contributions that Whitehaven makes to this community, with a total donation in 2018 calendar year of some \$420,000, which I find significant.

15 Finally, as referred to in council's submission, council wishes to highlight its request that the determination of this development proposal should not be completed until such time as an agreed voluntary planning agreement between Gunnedah Shire Council and the developer is completed. This is to ensure that both parties are encouraged to generally work towards an appropriate outcome. Thank you,
20 commissioners.

MR HANN: Thank you, Rob. Our next speaker is James Barlow.

25 MR J. BARLOW: Good morning, commissioners. My name is James Barlow. I would like to open with a statement. I'm not anti-mining or anti-coal. I recognise its role in society, past and present. In saying that, moving into the future we must be more sustainable, protecting people, environment and water whilst minimising the very real effects of climate change. In the background I will be playing current
30 footage filmed in December last year to give some real perspective of this location of the project in relation to our home and the river, as the maps used in the EIS are outdated. The flight begins here at one of our homes.

All I ask is for some compassion and understanding. Try to see it as if you own this farm and it has been in the family for generations, understanding the very deep
35 connection we have to the land as farmers. I'm here today to represent my wife and eight month old daughter who cannot speak for her future, which is my greatest concern. We own the property, Mirrabinda, on the left with all the circles. We are the closes neighbours to Whitehaven Coal with only the river separating us. It's 2200 acres, or 880 hectares, which is dwarfed by the proposed footprint, more than
40 double the size. I'm a third generation farmer, taking over the farm at 23 due to the loss of my father prematurely.

This was his legacy. It was his gift to me. I'm extremely lucky and proud of who he was and what he stood for. My family worked extremely hard to survive through
45 many devastating floods to see me into this position today. The floods will come again I'm sure but my greatest fear is a tsunami of toxic dust, toxic blasting, constant noise, night lighting the river and its eco system, its supports, underground water and

last but not least, the concern for all the wonderful people in our community that care and have these same concerns. 14 years of my life has been spent making this farm what it is today, a highly sustainable, modern, water efficient agri-business, irreplaceable, with seven kilometres of river frontage supporting a recognised,
5 unique, biodiverse ecosystem, broadwater, which even right now is harbouring hundreds, possibly thousands of Murray cod, catfish and yellow belly.

Also quality underground water on the fertile Liverpool plains, growing food, fibre and fodder sustainably and efficiently in the midst of one of the worst droughts in
10 recorded history, with no end in sight. Where would we go? There are no properties in this region that have all these attributes that make it our home. We would potentially have to leave this district I love and am proud of. This isn't about money. I do not want to sell my livelihood, beliefs and heritage. No one should be put in a position where they are forced to, yet this government, company and process might
15 leave us no choice. Travelling to my once lived on, once peaceful home for work every day defeats the purpose of life on the land.

I will no longer be minutes away to spend precious time with my daughter. These are the only two options this company and process is forcing us into if approved. As
20 we know, in 2014, Whitehaven Coal were granted approval for a 4.5 million tonne per annum mine, which we were told would make one house unliveable. We accepted it. We didn't even write a submission. In close succession, the extension was announced, potentially displacing all three families which reside here. We felt very deceived by the proponent, Whitehaven, as they assured us back then the main
25 homestead, where we would live, would not be impacted.

For four long years, we're yet to get the truth from Whitehaven Coal. For me, logically, the mine proposal is way too big for this location as it is all uphill from the Namoi river, and at a time when our climate is evidently changing, emphasising the
30 undeniable importance of natural water resources. There is so much misinformation and distortion of the truth and at times no information in this EIS. The impacts are so understated it is insulting. Despite what Whitehaven say, it's primary a green field site. Yes, there was a tiny mine in the '80s and '90s. My family even agreed to let a lot of the coal pass through our property. We are now in 2019 and this proposal
35 is more than 20 times larger.

The vast majority of this mine is on a green field site, on a very historic Australian property on the most southern point of the approximately 70,000 hectare swag of land Whitehaven now own next to the Namoi River with a coal handling facility, not
40 to mention a no design railway crossing across one of the worst spots on this major floodplain. It was the only place Whitehaven could buy their way through. Collectively, we know this area well. We are not being heard. All for coal to be exported to Asia. Not for securing energy for ourselves or powering the region, as Whitehaven ambiguously advertise. All we hear from Whitehaven are jobs, jobs,
45 jobs, yet the local workforce is exhausted.

- Many local businesses are suffering, unable to find employees. Boggabri is suffering. So many farming families have left already as Whitehaven has bought so much agricultural land to the north. We are at a tipping point. This extension is far too large for this location. It puts at risk all our assets, including our water, both
- 5 underground and river. It will impact negatively on our health, livelihood and business. It's already taking its toll on me and my family, as our future has so much uncertainty. This would be the fourth large mine in this area. It would be a shame to see such a highly productive agricultural valley become the next Hunter Valley.
- 10 The cumulative impacts will be significant, leaving our families and the Boggabri community to carry the majority of the burden. What happened to a fair go? It's important to note we have had several meetings with Whitehaven, certainly not negotiations, none of which have eased our angst, fears and distress. If anything, they have made it worse as we have always felt like a box ticking exercise. There
- 15 has been a lack of transparency and honesty. Whitehaven graciously removed the Blue Vale Pit and said they were listening to the public and its concerns, yet recently at a public meeting at Emerald Hill a senior member said it was off the table at this stage.
- 20 How are we supposed to trust? We have experienced trespassing, even from a senior employee, in the early stages and so much more. We can only form judgment from experience and our experience to date has been ordinary and that's being polite. How will my family be protected, given the size of this mine with broken trust? How will my family be protected, given the Department of Planning seems hell bent
- 25 on approving mines no matter the cost? How will my family be protected, given the EPA lacks power and resources to enforce conditions set? They can't, as we're in the acquisition that has been forced upon us.
- Anguish, fear, anger, betrayal, rage, despair, uncertainty, helplessness, sadness.
- 30 These are all depressing words. They live with me on a regular basis and it's downright cruel. I urge Whitehaven strongly to stick with what is approved. It still provides jobs and economic growth for the region whilst maintaining some sort of sustainable balance. If it's not economical, move on away from the river, people and floodplain to show you have a moral compass and to regain back some social licence,
- 35 showing respect to the people and the environment you reside in, because despite what you say the majority of the community doesn't want to see this project approved and the numbers only reflect the amount of money that was spent by Whitehaven to drum up support.
- 40 This is obvious by the sheer lack of substance in the majority of the supporting submissions. Money can be the root of all evil. Realistically, this is what it's all about, from government right through to local councils and individual interests. I ask at what cost? The people want serious change. There must be more balance for the sake of people like ourselves, more balance for the environment which we rely so
- 45 heavily on yet take for granted and balance for the whole world so future generations don't pay for our mistakes. It seems we're living in an age where we have so much

knowledge about the impacts that we are having on this fragile planet, yet domestically we are adding to the problems approving mines in ridiculous areas.

5 And I'm extremely concerned that this will be yet another one as I have no faith in our current politicians and policies and no faith in the process we now found ourselves in. At least, I can look myself in the mirror knowing I've stood up for what I truly believe, not blinded by the fog of short term vision and money. So I ask you, Commissioners, help us if you can. Don't leave us at the mercy of the Department of Planning and current policies. They both favour the proponent and
10 leave us with a huge burden we don't deserve to carry. Do you really believe there is a future for huge coal mines on major rivers? If your gut tells you no, please do what you can in the present to make a positive difference for the future. Thank you.

15 MR HANN: Thank you, James. Our next speaker is Andrew Hack.

MR A. HACK: Mr Chairman and members of the panel, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing today on the Vickery Extension Project. My name is Andrew Hack. I'm regional operations manager for Aurizon. Aurizon is a heavy rail most of our rail haulage services in New South Wales involve
20 carrying coal from mines to the Port of Newcastle. In 2017/2018, our company carried a total of 52 million tonnes of coal in New South Wales. This includes providing coal haulage services for Whitehaven under a contract that provides for Aurizon to carry up to 16 million tonnes per year of high quality export coal. Importantly, this is a contract with a long timeframe of 12 years, allowing Aurizon to
25 plan and invest for the future in the regions where we operate.

Aurizon has 450 employees who live in the Hunter Valley and Gunnedah Basin regions. Our employees in New South Wales are part of the company's wider workforce which numbers more than four and a half thousand across Australia. Over
30 recent years, we've made substantial investments as part of our growing operations in regional New South Wales, including the acquisition of more than 800 new wagons for our coal trains and 11 new locomotives. Similarly, the company has made substantial investments in our maintenance facilities in the Hunter Valley to support this. Our investments are based on a long term commitment to our
35 operations in regional New South Wales.

Aurizon recognises and aims to further build on the vital links we have with regional communities. Aurizon's business is primarily based in regional areas. In fact, in
40 New South Wales, all Aurizon employees who work in operational and maintenance roles in the Hunter Valley and the Gunnedah Basin live and work in these regions. We are working to build further on this presence in regional communities. Over the last two years, Aurizon has given a high priority to having more leadership and support roles located in regional areas, so that they work directly with their colleagues in frontline operations.

45 We have done this for the following reasons – closely connecting people in leadership roles with regional operations helps to drive improved safety and

operational performance from firsthand knowledge and observation; people working in leadership positions are better able to appreciate the issues and priorities of the communities in which our employees are based and to provide an increased focus on community involve and provide effective pathways and opportunities for people
5 from these communities to gain employment or to become suppliers to Aurizon.

There are also important benefits for regional communities that flow from our investments and from procurement. The recent acquisition by Aurizon of 11 new locomotives, which I mentioned earlier, was for locomotives that were built in
10 Newcastle. In addition to these investments, another measure of our contribution to regional communities is our spending with local businesses to buy goods and services related to our operations in the region. In the Hunter Valley region in New South Wales and the Gunnedah Basin, Aurizon spent approximately thirty-four and a half million dollars in the last financial year. This figure does not include the amount
15 spent by our employees and their families who live and work in these areas.

There are a wide range of goods and services that Aurizon purchases from small and medium business in the Gunnedah and Newcastle regions. These include the maintenance and servicing of Aurizon vehicles by local businesses and purchasing of
20 major quantities of diesel through local fuel distributors. Most importantly, our operations and our procurement in regional New South Wales provides skilled and well paid jobs for people who live in these communities. Furthermore, jobs at Aurizon and for our contractors involve the development of skills and capabilities that provide the basis for employees to enjoy long and rewarding careers. The skills
25 and experience gained in the resources sector are valued by many other industries. These benefits are especially important to regional communities where well paid and highly skilled employment opportunities can be very limited compared to the opportunities available in Sydney and other major cities.

30 An increasing proportion of jobs, including operational roles within Aurizon, are being filled by women. We recognise the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. This has been a key component of a broader commitment to achieving greater understanding. And contributing to reconciliation has been a key priority for Aurizon over the last five years. We've made significant progress with
35 the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in our workforce, increasing from approximately two and half per cent of all employees in 2012 to approximately five per cent today.

Aurizon notes that Whitehaven has achieved substantial progress in employment, with indigenous workers filling 80 of the jobs created at the Maules Creek mine.
40 The Indigenous Employment Program at Maules Creek was recognised by the New South Wales Minerals Council as best in class within the industry. Whitehaven has also set a target of at least 10 per cent indigenous employees working on project Vickery. The company is committed to building on the progress achieved to date,
45 with an objective of replicating the successes with indigenous employment in future mining projects.

Across its entire workforce, Whitehaven, like Aurizon, has a major focus on providing employment and business opportunities within the regional communities of New South Wales. This is demonstrated by Whitehaven's commitment to at least 75 per cent of the company's workforce coming from the local communities where its mining operations are located. Importantly, given their regional presence and the commitment of Whitehaven, a large proportion of the economic benefits from the Vickery Extension Project would be shared with the regional communities, primarily communities in the Gunnedah region. Having worked very closely with Whitehaven, I know that both companies recognise the vital contribution and value our employees make to our businesses every day. We share a deep sense of respect and commitment to the regions in which we operate.

Whitehaven, like Aurizon, values and fosters integrity in the way we conduct our operations, engage with customers and suppliers in our day-to-day interactions with the communities in which we are based. Given the substantial benefits that result from the investment, in particular, the creation of skilled jobs that we fill by people from the Gunnedah and neighbouring regions, Aurizon fully supports the proposed Vickery Extension Project. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Andrew. Our next speaker is Tim Muldoon.

MR T. MULDOON: Right. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners, the Gomeroi people, elders past and present. I also thank the IPC for the opportunity to present at this hearing. My name is Tim Muldoon. As previously stated, I support the Vickery Project. I've lived in Gunnedah for 29 years and I'm currently a Whitehaven Coal employee. Prior to Whitehaven Coal, I worked as a senior manager at Gunnedah Shire Council for 20 years. Whilst at Gunnedah Shire Council, economic development was part of my portfolio during which time several mines closed – Preston, Blackjack and Vickery – along with the Gunnedah Abattoir and other subsidiary businesses associated with all those projects.

The population in Gunnedah Shire Council area reduced from 13,255 in 1991, just after I arrived, to 12,240 as per the 2016 census, with an estimated Gunnedah Shire Council population in 2017 at 12,579, so we're still in a rebuilding mode. Developments such as Vickery would provide a chance for employees from those mines that closed in the future to transfer to Vickery mine and remain in the region. Agriculture, obviously, has always been an important contributor to the regional economy and will remain so forever, however, to maintain economic stability, other industries such as mining are necessary to create sufficient diversity for long-term sustainability, particularly evident in the current climate. All industries must coexist in our regional community and operate with the regulatory requirements governing the various businesses. Mining is one of the heaviest regulated industries I've been associated with.

My daughters didn't have an opportunity for work they were looking for when they finished school, therefore they had to leave the area to do tertiary education and find employment, as no opportunities existed. The regrowth of mining has created

opportunities for employment, allowing more young people to stay in the region near their families, such as my stepson who, of 18 years is old, is a handful but a good guy. He's able to obtain a school-based apprenticeship and remain living in Gunnedah, an opportunity that did not exist for many, many children. Mining has
5 also provided an additional opportunity for some farmers and small business owners to supplement their incomes, particularly during adverse climatic conditions, again such as we are experiencing now.

10 As some mines, as previously mentioned, approaching closure, it is important for new projects such as Vickery to enable the economy and community rebuilding to continue. Part of my current role with Whitehaven Coal incorporates the disbursement of discretionary donations. Many organisations throughout the region over the last 12 months alone, Whitehaven Coal's discretionary donations amounted to 445,000, focusing on health, education and whole of community benefit, along
15 with Indigenous sporting representation at regional level and above. There were over 113 groups assisted during this 12-month period alone. I note "discretionary".

Another function is property acquisitions. It is worthwhile mentioning the approval system caters for those identified affected properties who wish to relocate can trigger
20 an acquisition negotiation process. This option to trigger exists from the day of the approval for the entire project. If agreement cannot be reached between a company and vendor, the vendor has the option to commence a formal process through the Director-General, Department of Planning and Environment. The company also discussed mitigation matters with those that do not wish to move. If property owners
25 want to remain, they can, and our intention is to allow as many as they can to remain and not all choose to – for us to buy their properties.

The properties that Whitehaven now own are licensed back to the agricultural sector, ensuring the productivity of these properties is maintained and providing opportunity
30 for occupation of the houses and some of those families remaining. I conclude by advising not everyone has a job or a business, and the Vickery proposal will enable some of these people to gain employment, increase their quality of life, remain in and contribute more to the community. For the future of the northwest region, I urge people to support the approval of the Vickery project in accordance with appropriate
35 conditions of consent. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Tim. Our next speaker is Grant Mcilveen.

40 MR G. MCILVEEN: Hi, how are you going? Thank you, gentlemen, for coming up. I wish you'd bring some rain with you, but anyway. Look, I just – the pointer. I just – can you pull it up just take it back, please. I just want to show you, this is where their ROM and train line's going to be here, so my presentation will be in two parts, sorry, but - - -

45 MR: Do you want to take them back?

MR MCILVEEN: Yes, I want to take them back, please. I missed where I wanted to be. You just hang there and hit “stop”, please, mate. Right. What we’re looking at here, we’re on the Namoi River. The drone last Friday was flying over the Namoi. We’re looking back, here, at James and Nicki’s property, what a classic place
5 they’ve turned this into. Just down, this is my property just here, one and a-half kilometres from this 13 million-tonne washery. To date, I haven’t had any talk with Whitehaven about mitigation or anything so far. This is my house here, with – where I live with Trace and the boys. Just go on a bit now, please, mate. It’s 2500 metres from the washery. Panning back, this is – just pull him up again, please, mate – this
10 is James and Nicki’s workshop with one of the residents there, 2000 metres from the proposed 13 million-tonne washery here on the banks of the river – keep going, mate – with their main homestead back down here, about 3.5 kilometres away. Just pull it up there, mate, thank you.

15 Just in here is their Nonda House. This is the one that affects them the most. This house is 1500 metres from the washery. With – out the back here, we have Brian Keilor, who is 2100 metres, and Eric Hannan, which is 22 or three hundred metres. They will be impacted by this mine. Keep going, champion. Right. We’re panning back here, now. The famous Kurrumbede Homestead, Dorothea, Andrew “Boy”
20 Charleton. He swum in this river. My grandfather used to go and watch him train for the Olympics. This is Stratford Creek here. This roadway here is basically where the train line’s going to be, but you’ll see it more in a minute.

We’re panning back here, now. This is going to be their infrastructure area, all in
25 here, right back up to the Blue Vale, Braymont Road. Just out here is where their pit will start or pit will finish, out the back here. Panning back over towards the Blue Vale Mine – Blue Vale Road – sorry; the old Vickery mine that they talk about. All right, pull him up, mate, champion, please, thank you. This road here, gentlemen, that’s the road we travelled along. We had lunch up here on the hill. This here is
30 where we were told where the train loop would be coming in, so the train loop’s going to be here, about 220 metres from the river, loop back around here, with all the infrastructure in this area here and back towards the homestead.

It’s only – what I can work out, because their maps are so ill-defined, it’s about 450
35 to 600 metres from the river. 13 million tonne of coal is going to be sitting here and processed, and you gentlemen seen for yourselves on that bus trip that they can’t even control the sludge and that off the highway that was being cleared up. How are they going to control 13 million tonne of coal if there’s a large rain event, because it’s all downhill? The creek’s here – keep going, legend. We were told yesterday, I
40 think Mike Young said it, one of the speakers spoke yesterday about there’d be no timber, koala habitat, affected. There’s koalas all through here, or they were – there was. Back in September, October, I walked through here, and there’s koala droppings, scratchings everywhere. Geez, that was quick.

45 So now – keep going, mate. Better quicken it up. So here, you get a good view. This is where it’s all going to be. Train line back here, back right up to there, and then across the highway to go past Errol and Jen Darley’s, 250 metres from one of

their proposed homes, but they – Whitehaven keep telling us we won't hear anything, we won't say anything. It's far from the truth. We'd better keep going, so if you want to keep watching that. Them trains, there's going to be 3,170 train movements a year going past the Darleys, the Hannans, the Keilors and myself, James and Nicki.

5 Whitehaven keep bashing on they want to take trucks off the road, but when they still bring the trucks from Tarrawonga, there's going to be over 170,000 movements to and from this coal mine, with 87,500 truck movements to get the coal from Tarrawonga to this project. Where the pit will be, over the back, there's going to be 66,000 dump trucks a year come over that hill and down to this washery to bring 10 million tonne of coal there, and we've got to put up with that for the lifetime of the mine.

I'm not against this mine as it's at the moment, with the four and a-half million tonne. I was quite happy when they came to me back in 2012 and said that they would be mining the 4 million tonne in the Vickery valley, and I said that was fine.

15 But then to have this put on us, it's not fair. It's going to make a lot of money for this town, for some people. And it's going to cost James, myself, the Keilors, the Hannans – it will cost us. I went to the bank the other day, talked to them, told them what – this is happening. I said, “Will this affect me?” The bank manager said,

20 “Yes, it will. We can't guarantee that if you come to us in 10 years time to give him a loan to buy something, we will be able to give it to you”. This mine is already affecting me. Tim just raised that people – they will buy them out. I have two uncles spread on this farm with their ashes. Not everyone can sell out the times.

25 Anyway, I would just like to say – I'm sorry, Dave. I would just like to say too that in the last three years with Whitehaven, I've found this – sorry. I would like to say that I'm not against mining. As most of you probably know, I do work in the industry – not for Whitehaven. So I don't have any issue – I have uncles, friends and cousins that work for Whitehaven. They will work in this pit. I have nothing against

30 them. Why should I stop them from having employment? One of the biggest problems I have with Whitehaven Coal is very few of the hierarchy live in this town or Boggabri. They come into this area and they tell – they don't listen to us, they don't care about us, locals. All they care about is their KPIs, the company's bottom line, their bonuses at the end of the year and themselves.

35 At what cost to my family, and James and Nikki, the Keilors, the Hannans, the Darleys, the Watts? These are all good people that live in this town, too. You gentlemen seen those flood photos at Nonda house. Whitehaven keep telling us that it won't – the floods won't affect us. Even with a small rise, if this project gets it

40 wrong, it will be in that house and quite a – and some other houses in that area. But Whitehaven keep telling us, “You have nothing to worry about”. Same with the wind. I will give you some papers in a minute. They tell me that the wind doesn't blow from that direction. In the last two months, there has been 29 occasions that the wind has blown directly from that washery plant or that mine, but if you listen to

45 Whitehaven, I have nothing to worry about. That drone is set at 100 metres. We did that on purpose. That's how high their dumps are going to be. You can quite clearly

see my place back out the back. You can quite clearly see James and Nikki's Nonda house. We will see this for the next 25 years.

MR HANN: Would you be able to wrap it up shortly?

5

MR MCILVEEN: Yes. Sorry. I've got off track a bit.

MR HANN: Yes. Thank you, Grant.

10 MR MCILVEEN: I just want to show you a quick thing here leave it up here for
you all day. This is their noise contours. The black line here is the four and a half
million tonne current mine. This is where the mine ended. This new proposed mine
comes down another kilometre and a half. You would think this black line would
15 move down here, another kilometre and a half down, but it doesn't. It comes back up
to here, another four or 500 metres closer. 1500 metres down here, but they
bring it up. How is this? There was no washery in the past. We've got 13 million
tonne of coal to be washed here. We've got 3000 trains to be coming in here. We've
got 66,000 dump trucks coming over that hill here for the lifetime of this mine but
20 yet none of us besides James and Nikki's Nonda House are going to be affected.
How is this? Anyway, look, thank you for your time. I would just like to thank
James and Nikki, Watty, the Hannans, especially the Darleys and, most of all, my
wife and my two boys. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Grant. And our next speaker is Warwick Giblin.

25

MR W. GIBLIN: Good morning, Commissioners, and ladies and gentlemen. I act
for landholders Mr and Mrs Barlow at Mirrabinda, and Mr and Mrs Mcilveen at
Clinton. Both are located on the west bank of the Namoi River opposite the proposed
mine site on the east bank. I'm agnostic about any project proposal but I am focused
30 on merit assessment and natural justice for my clients. Our overarching
consideration is how best to manage our natural assets to deliver the desired social
and economic wellbeing. You have heard today from Mr Barlow and Mr Mcilveen.
I trust you found their messages persuasive. In a nutshell, they fear being dismissed
as collateral damage in the pursuit of short term jobs and royalties. I will now
35 elaborate on their matters of concern and address four merit issues that warrant
evaluation. Some are technical, Commissioners, some are process-focused.

Merits issue number 1 – the legality of the determination process. My clients seek
confirmation from the IPC that the assessment and determination will be conducted
40 on the full project, not just the additional components above and beyond the existing
approved project. As was flagged yesterday by another speaker, the DPEs
Preliminary Issues Report seems to be suggesting it's just about the modified aspects
that need to be determined as part of this consideration. It needs to be made crystal
clear, Commissioners, that this is not a modification in the usual sense but a brand
45 new project that must be assessed in totality. Could you please confirm that this will
be so in your report.

Merit issue number 2 – is the modelling of the environmental parameters accurate? Commissioners, the EIS is “an advocacy document” – they’re not my words. They’re words of a senior executive of the Department of Planning several years ago that told me this. Hence I think it’s only healthy that one is sceptical of one’s
5 reading of an EIS. I turn to groundwater impacts. There are, of course, can I say, the IESC, the EPA, the DOI Water and others have recommended substantial revisions to the assessment modelling of key parameters. Let’s look at groundwater. Emeritus Professor Ian Acworth, from the University of New South Wales, is a hydrogeologist with 45 years standing. He has conducted extensive research on the groundwater in
10 the Gunnedah region. He has examined the EIS and related reports and identifies the following shortcomings.

Forgive me, the audience. Some of this stuff is a bit technical but I’m sure Professor Willgoose and others will thrive on it. The Vickery EIS uses values of storage rather
15 than specific storage terminology. And although the Vickery EIS notes the Namoi alluvium thickness varies from 0 to 140 metres, the report splits it into just two layers with one value for storage of each layer. This infers a relatively constant storage throughout. These aren’t my words. These are Professor Ian Acworth’s:

20 *The values for storage used are also unrealistically high. As a consequence of these two assumptions, the model significantly understates the likely impacts of the proposed groundwater extraction and impact. In reality, a great deal of water required for the water will have to come from other sources such as greater drawdown, greater laterally extent of drawdown, greater crossflow across boundaries, and losses from the Namoi River in tributaries. We agree with the request from the IESC for more work to be done.*
25

Professor Acworth recommends the following actions be taken:

- 30 (1) the conceptual model be revised using a map of storage changes based upon the known variation in alluvium thickness and the maximum possible values of specific storage;
- (2) that a sensitivity analysis should be run so that statements such as “drawdown will be limited to 0.6 metres” can have error bars established;
- 35 (3) that the water balance arising from the amended model be presented to all interest parties including my clients.

We go further and say to you, can you please defer any substantive assessment on this project until such time as this fundamental revision work – and we note that it’s not only water but changes also have to be made to noise and dust – until such time as those changes are completed, analysed and found to be accurate, then, really,
40 things should be held until that’s properly put to bed. Merits issue number 3. What are the impacts on the social fabric of the local community? My clients note the observations of Narrabri Shire Council as was shared with the IPC on 19 December last.

Again, Narrabri Shire Council noted these things in the transcript: (1) there is “a trust deficit” between the proponent and the community; (2) the proponent “needs to provide nearby agriculture stakeholders with more resources, support and assurance with respect to the actual and perceived impacts of the project,” and; (3) the mayor, Ms Cathy Redding, stated, the community “get the feeling the Whitehaven just dismissed them, and probably because they’re a smaller community, they just don’t feel that a lot of times their concerns are listened to and heard by the community.” She went on to say:

10 *They have this feeling that I’ve been dismissed. They are just not given the respect, if I could put it that way, that they deserve.*

Commissioners, these are not comments from some radical Nimby. These are from one of the highly esteemed local government entities of the region. By any yardstick, these are very powerful comments. I would ask you to heed them. Unfortunately my clients’ experiences are similar to the sentiments by Narrabri Shire Council. With respect to the Barlows, they acknowledge that in August 2017, Whitehaven Coal proposed noise mitigation measures be applied to their three residences and offered a financial sum to cover offsite relocation and disruption. On 14 December last, a revised offer was tabled by the proponent. This will be considered by my client in the fullness of time.

With respect to the Mcilveens, despite the fact that their home is one 2.3 kilometres from the rail spur line, and only 2.6 kilometres from the rail load out facility, no mitigation measures or financial compensation has yet been offered by the company. This appears to suggest the company does not consider the Mcilveens and the other landholders that Grant mentioned will be materially impacted. The Mcilveens ask you, the IPC, Whitehaven Coal and the DPE to address this iniquity. They require attention, respect and compensation. Returning to the Barlows, noting that the proponent and the DPE accept the Barlows are in the pollution affectation zone for the existing approved development, what my clients have been seeking since 2017 has been the capacity to make informed decisions on the likely project impacts. Can they live with the changes or not?

Whitehaven has declined numerous requests over the past two years for the provision of financial wherewithal so my clients can engage advisors who they trust to decipher the modelling to help them make decisions about their future. We thank the DPE that it has kindly stepped up to the plate and agreed to provide access to the government appointed professionals for discussions on impacts. This is a first step. Again, we request that the IPC and DPE await the outcome of such deliberations before any judgment on the project is made. Could you please confirm your report that you will do so. Merits issue 4, and lastly. In the DPEs – is the DPEs assessment reporting credible, open-minded and impartial? Based on decades of EIA experience and close liaison with the DPE, it is my opinion that the DPE suffers a high risk of regulatory capture by the mining industry.

This observation, together with the evidence I'm about to table, questions the integrity, objectivity and fairness of the EIA determination process. Evidence one, in 2017 Ms Lisa Corban, the former head of the IESC, the former head of the EPA and formerly head of the Department of Environment Climate Change and Water in New South Wales, tabled her review on the quality of DPEs assessment reports. Her findings including that industry considered their assessment reports to be impartial and properly positioned, but on the other hand, she said environment and community groups consider the reports were not impartial. Furthermore, that those grounds considered the assessment reports actually facilitate project approvals and potentially bias the decisions of the IPC.

Could you please address in your report whether the DPE has changed its approach in preparing these documents since the Corban report. If so, how have they changed them, and if they haven't, why haven't they? And lastly, Commissioners – and thank you for your tolerance – evidence 2, in December 2018, Mr Nick Kaldas, former New South Wales Deputy Police Commissioner, observed – in his review of the integrity of the decision making in the New South Wales Planning System, he observed three key matters: (1) the IPC secretariat is staffed primarily by DPE employee, and therefore, at some stage, can be expected to return to their home agency. This raises questions that impacts on the independence on the IPC because staff may find themselves in positions where the commission is critical of the department's reports. This will put IPC staff in a difficult position as they are unlikely to provide frank and fearless advice that is contrary to the department to which they are tied.

On a related matter, but regarding independence and separate to Kaldas, it is understood that at least until 12 months ago, Commissioners were paid from the Department of Planning payroll. Is this still the case, and could you please address in your report. The IPC has its own resources. This is what Kaldas also found. And instead relies very heavily on the DPEs assessment reports. Thank you. Again, this raises questions as to how truly independent the IPC is. In conclusion, Commissioners, the integrity of the planning system is at stake. You are in the spotlight. We hope by your actions the concerns of Lisa Corban, Nick Kaldas and others are no longer applicable. Thank you for listening, and we look forward to your report addressing the matters raised.

MR HANN: Thank you, Warwick. Since we're doing reasonably well with time, could I ask our next speaker, Joshua McIntosh.

MR J. McINTOSH: Morning. Thank you for taking the time to listen to this public forum regarding the Vickery Expansion Project. After being born and educated in Tamworth, I moved to Newcastle to complete my university there. Once I completed my university, my wife and I moved to Coonabarabran onto one of the local family farms. In 2012, we moved to Gunnedah due to the work opportunities that it brought. I began working with Striped Engineering in 2014. Now, I'm the work health safety and human resource manager for the company. My wife also works as a casual teacher at one of the local schools.

My wife and her family have been using Gunnedah as a main hub for over 40 years. They buy their day-to-day items here and always purchase, where they can, small and large family materials and equipment. Since moving to Gunnedah, I have seen the mining industry have a significant and instrumental impact on our town and the growth to our town. Both my boys have been locally born in the hospital. My older son, Oscar, has just begun year 2 at a local school. This local school, I have seen the numbers growing every single year. The school has currently just completed the construction of the middle school and now it's looking to – further to the high school, which it's going to continue to build.

I believe this is a direct impact and it has resulted positively and that's because of the mining industry that has been brought to town. When picking up my son from school I look around and I see the many families that are affected by the mines and that's in a positive way. You see many hi-vis shirts and also the executives that come with it. Within the street I live there's 11 houses, five of which are supported by mining companies, four of them are made up of retirees, and I think the growth of mining has driven the growth of Gunnedah. My father and mother have also moved to town. My father has gained employment with a contracting company that supplies the mining industry, my mother works as a team leader for activities at the local aged care facilities.

If my father hadn't gained that education – sorry, that employment here with this contracting company, they would have never moved here. Thus, the aged care facility would never have had the opportunity to have my mum working for them. Since moving to town, mum and dad have grown to love Gunnedah and now consider themselves local. The growth of the mining workforce in Gunnedah has not only affected the companies who support the mining sector but also the businesses that support and work within the community in a positive way. In my role as HR manager for Stripes Engineering, I have seen the growth in the size of workforce.

Stripes Engineering was the first contractor on site at the Maules Creek Mine and since then we have been completing various projects and the continuous supply of maintenance and work across multiple sites including Whitehaven ones. The regular work has allowed us, as a contracting company, to transfer all of our employees to permanent work arrangements and employ more employees than I have – than we have in the past and I have seen many of our employees move to town because of this. Now, Stripes Engineering started out as Gunnedah Industries back on 1 September 1971. Gunnedah Industries supported the agricultural sector and built cotton module builders and boll buckets among other things as well.

Due to technology and the evolvement of agriculture, the need for these items was significantly reduced and replaced with round balers. As a company, the local growth in mining provided us with an opportunity to continue working as a company and Stripes Engineering continues to support many of these mining projects locally. As a company, we're still – sorry. Excuse me. Stripes Engineering still supplies these parts to the agricultural equipment as needed. Stripes has grown from a small company of less than 10 people to a company which supports more than 80

employees and their families. As a company, we aim to continue to grow in size and workforce and we see the Vickery Expansion Project as an excellent opportunity to continue to do so.

5 I believe the expansion project will continue to grow our business and support the
growth of local infrastructure and bring more families to our great town. Stipes
Engineering currently employs six apprentices and two more apprentices have just
begun their boiler making trade this year. As a direct result of the mining expansion
10 that has happened during these recent years, Stripes has been able to employ locals
from Gunnedah through apprenticeships and keep them in the town for many years to
come. We currently have six employees who have completed their apprenticeship
with Stripes Engineering and have continued working for our company.

15 As a company, we seek to support the local community, help teenagers and young
adults remain in the town by providing them with work and opportunities. I believe
the expansion project will help us to achieve this goal. Another benefit of the town –
for the town with this expansion project is that those working in the industry will no
longer need to fly to mine sites all across Australia. This allows father and mothers
20 to be at home with their families every night. The expansion would support families
in the town and allow them to be home with their families. As a company, it has
allowed us to look for more work locally with projects and reduce the amount of
project work we complete throughout different states within Australia, keeping our
employees home with their families.

25 Gunnedah TAFE has for many years not been a place where you could complete a
boiler making or fitting apprenticeship. This has caused our apprentices to travel to
Tamworth. But as of the start of this year, this will be the first year in a long time
where boilermakers can be trained locally and we look to see that continue. As a
direct result of this greater need for trained and qualified employees to support the
30 town's work growth. I believe the expansion will continue to grow the number
of apprentices employed in our town.

As an active member of the community, the work health safety and human resource
manager of Stripes Engineering, I believe the expansion of the Vickery Coal Mine
35 will bring positive growth to our town. I believe this expansion will give more
opportunities to teenagers and young adults in Gunnedah to gain employment. I
believe that the Vickery Expansion will allow for more local businesses to grow and
support the town. I also believe that it will allow for more families like my own to
move to Gunnedah. Thank you.

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MR HANN: Thank you, Joshua. Our next speaker is Lee Cousin.

MR L. COUSIN: Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Lee
Cousin. I'm the customer relations manager for the Programmed. I look after the
45 Gunnedah branch here. I currently have five staff that all live locally within the
Gunnedah area. Programmed is a leading provider of staffing and maintenance
service across Australia and New Zealand. We have over 100 branches throughout

Australia and we employ over 20,000 people per day. Our business model is built around our ability to recruit, deploy, manage and maintain directly employment to the workforce. In 2017, we were bought out by a Japanese company called PERSOL.

5

We have been working with Whitehaven for around 15 years now in the Gunnedah region. We have a local branch, we have five full time staff who all live in this area. We supply to various Whitehaven sites. Our core business is mainly for operators. Whitehaven have a real focus that Programmed employ from the local community.

10 We are proud to have achieved this model set by the Whitehaven business. In a high demand for people we have made a conscious effort to maintain a local focus on – but on occasions, due to numbers required, we need to go outside the Gunnedah area to find people. Again, in consultation with Whitehaven, they have requested that we recruit for people that are willing to relocate and move to the Gunnedah Shire.

15

We see this brings value to the Gunnedah area in regards to the Vickery Project. It will continue to give local people employment opportunities, both with Whitehaven and also with Programmed. With the current numbers we have out with Whitehaven, we have successfully placed over 240 people from January 2018 to now. This also doesn't reflect that the other people that we placed to other benefits – that benefit to the mining community also. The majority of these people had no mining skills. They have now had an opportunity to be trained in the mining sector and secured a long term career throughout both Whitehaven and Programmed.

20

25 This gives them stability and the security to stay local and, most importantly, allowing them to be able to look after their families, not just financially but also for their health and wellbeing. This also keeps their daily local spend to support the community. This is why we support the Vickery Project. Whitehaven has a diverse profile with equal opportunity for all. Programmed support this stance and feel that we assist in Whitehaven to achieve this goal. I have personally seen, over the 15 years, that Whitehaven stand for – which it demonstrates throughout their – all their tiers of its management, is their ethics, a genuine commitment and a dedication to support the local community.

30

35 Again, the Vickery Project, we can only see a positive on the economic and employment opportunity for the surrounding areas and regions. With Programmed and Whitehaven and the future generations to come, we see many future career opportunities available for the school leavers. I was fortunate enough this morning to go out to site and speak to 27 young Programmed employees who have just started with Whitehaven; all young male and female. Their career paths are in front of them now. They will be able to support their family, able to support this community and also this will flow into the community and other people. So thanks very much for allowing me to speak today but – it has been great to see a lot of local young people come into the industry and able to support their family and able to go on for a long time future with Whitehaven. So thank you.

45

MR HANN: Thank you, Lee. Our next speaker is Ron Campbell.

MR R. CAMPBELL: I am, as he said, Ron Campbell. I'm a local business owner and I'm a Narrabri Shire councillor. I've lived in Narrabri all of my life. I was born there. My father was born in Pilliga. My grandfather was born in Pilliga. My mother was born in Coonabarabran. Up until a couple of months ago we had five
5 generations alive and well in the Narrabri Shire until the passing of my 101 year old grandmother in Narrabri Hospital. I've been in business in the Narrabri Shire for more than 28 years. I've mowed lawns. I've dug graves. I've had an earth moving and concreting business. I've worked in the agri sector. I've worked in the Local Government sector. I've worked in the business sector. 18 years ago I started a
10 company called Namoi WasteCORP, where we currently employ 17 people in full-time positions, plus provide work for local subcontractors. 10 years ago we started working for the mines, servicing some of their waste needs.

In August 2018 we won a contract across a number of different mines for the
15 provision of waste services. We had to compete against several multinational companies and won the contract on our merits. This was a long process and we're very proud that the money stays local. It didn't leave town. It didn't leave on the coattails of large multinational companies. We shop locally. We invest locally. We employ local people and we contribute to the community. After a day in Boggabri
20 yesterday and a day here in Gunnedah, we're all becoming well aware of the economic benefits mining brings to our communities. I want to talk about a few other significant benefits mining brings to our region.

Firstly, in Narrabri, and I see it in Gunnedah as well, families like mine are able to
25 keep their children in town. Normally they would leave for regional and capital cities to find meaningful work and they probably would never return, but now the kids are staying. There's more opportunity for them. This is rare in country towns these days. Country towns are dying across Australia largely because of the lack of employment and meaningful opportunities, but in Narrabri and Gunnedah, we've
30 reversed that trend.

Not because of the great work of the local councils, not because of some local or state government initiative – it's because mining came to town. But it is local and state government's responsibility to build on the opportunities that mining brings to
35 our shires so that when it's all over, we have built a community that's sustainable and that can stand on its own two feet.

The other point I would like to make, and I've seen it right across our region – drugs are a major problem in our country towns, largely, in my opinion, due to the lack of
40 meaningful employment. It certainly is enforced in our workplace and other businesses across our shires, and that is no drugs and lower your alcohol consumption if you want a job in the mining industry. This is a prerequisite to be working in a company that works for mines or to be working for mines directly.

This is a tangible difference within our community. I see it with my own eyes. I talk
45 about it with other community members, and they all agree. This is the difference that mining has made in our shires and our lives. The other difference has been

work, health and safety. It's often spoken about in the media and on state and national – and on a state and national level that the rural sector has high incidences of work-related injuries.

5 Since mining came to our area 10 years ago, you can hear and see difference within our communities in and around the conversation about work, health and safety. I see it in my workplace and other workplaces. And that has a snowball effect as people come and go from different businesses. The conversation continues about work, health and safety. This then reflects back to the homes and the daily lives of people
10 in our community. A whole industry in work, health and safety has been created locally.

Mining has been the catalyst for a huge improvement within our shires in regard to work, health and safety. Has it saved lives? I'm sure it has. Can it be measured?
15 I'm sure there's a way to do that to. The Vickery Extension Project will be of great economic benefit to the region, but the points I've made in regard to our children staying in our country towns, the fact that many of them are not taking drugs any more, and the awareness of work, health and safety throughout our communities, are a direct benefit of mining in the region and will only be reinforced by the Vickery
20 Extension Project. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Ron. We will have one more speaker, Warren Hargraves, and then we will take a break for 15 minutes. Thank you.

25 MR W. HARGRAVES: Good morning, chair and panel. I thank you for the opportunity to speak at this event. My name is Warren Hargraves, and on behalf of my employer Expressway Spares, I am speaking in favour of the Whitehaven Vickery Expansion. I am also a resident of the Gunnedah area for the past 15 years. Expressway Spares is a national company that employs over 300 dedicated staff
30 across five branches: Queensland, WA, Mount Thorley, and in the Hunter Valley. And as of December 2018 our newest is open here in Gunnedah.

The company was established 1964 and primarily serviced the logging industry in the region at the time. Today we have evolved. We serve communities and
35 multiple industries across Australia. Expressway Spares has a long history with Gunnedah attending over the last 25 years. Since the mid-2000s, Expressway Spares has been observing the increased mining activity in the town and surrounding region.

40 This, coupled with the existing agricultural and civil industries, they decided to expand and establish our fifth branch here. In 2017 we purchased property in the new industrial subdivision. In the past 12 months we've invested over \$1.5 million into Gunnedah through the construction of a new purpose-built warehousing complex. Expressway Spares always makes a point to ensure that local suppliers and
45 contractors are used where possible.

During the establishment period we have now employed four full-time staff including myself, and we're based here in Gunnedah. Once up and running we anticipate the need for further employment and the people will be sourced locally. Wherever we have opened a branch, we always focus on employing staff who are

5 local to the town or area. We believe by employing the locals, the wages will be reinvested back into the community, local staff contribute to the ongoing growth of the – socioeconomic of the community such as the shopping, joining local sporting and social clubs.

10 The company's decision to expand into Gunnedah is based in part on the Vickery Project receiving approval and subsequent economic activity it would generate. We are committed to this investment because we believe the Vickery Expansion is critical to not only local business, like Expressway Spares, but also the ongoing success of Gunnedah and the surrounding communities. We're not a \$1 million

15 company. Our assets are our staff and their families.

The approval of the Vickery Expansion will ensure their future for not only them but also their children. The mining industry now accounts for 90 per cent of Expressway Spares' business and if important projects like the Vickery Expansion are to be

20 abandoned, it will have a dramatic effect, not only for Gunnedah operation, but more importantly, the staff and their families. I thank you all for giving me that opportunity.

MR HANN: Thank you, Warren. And, look, we will take a 15 minute break now.

25

RECORDING SUSPENDED **[10.57 am]**

30 **RECORDING RESUMED** **[11.15 am]**

MR HANN: If we're ready to start again, could I ask Geoff Hood, the next registered speaker, to come to the microphone. Thanks.

35

MR G. HOOD: Thank you to the panel for coming to Gunnedah and seeing – not that I'm – seeing everybody is probably a little bit sleepy, just a bit of history. 64 years ago on 26 February a monsoon trough came down the New South Wales coast and Gunnedah had a major flood and water was lapping at the floor of this building.

40 So I'm mainly going to be speaking on flooding. Thank you for coming to Gunnedah for community inputs on the proposed Vickery Extension Project of Whitehaven Coal. If the New South Wales major projects planning process was being followed correctly, a citizen of Gunnedah, like myself, would not have to make an appearance at a public hearing.

45

I am here to speak specifically in relation to flood plain issues with the proposed project, the extensive rail spur, the rail spur associated with the extension of the

Vickery Coal Mine. Flood plain issues have not been adequately dealt with at this point in time. It appears that Whitehaven Coal area seeing to see what they can get away with before putting forward rail spur design and construction plans. I draw on my experience as a farmer, as an agricultural contractor in Gunnedah Shire,
5 operating three lucerne farms just over the river in close proximity to Gunnedah, and also as a contractor on many farms between Carroll and Boggabri, over several thousand acres extending to Cunnamulla in Queensland.

10 Floodplain Management Committee. In relation to floodplain issues, I have previously been a landholder representative along with several Gunnedah landholders plus local government and New South Wales government departments that oversaw the comprehensive Carroll to Boggabri Floodplain Management Plan. The Floodplain Management Plan notes that the Carroll to Boggabri Floodplain
15 Management Plan used MIKE 11 modelling and airborne ways scanning of the entire valley.

We, as a committee, used the best practice technology at the time: ground truth against numerous flood heights reference marks across the valley for different floods. Those reference points are cross-referenced in this booklet and including on
20 Currabede and properties in close proximity. I note that WMA Water, in their pier review on your behalf of the project flood modelling, have said that:

25 *There is lack of clarity in the rail spur structure design, together with lack of information in the environmental impact statement on rail spur design of embankments, culverts, elevated railway on piers.*

WMA Water have stated that there needs to be further detailed reporting on several reins of aspects. I note the Gunnedah Shire Council, in the interview with yourselves early December, is extremely concerned at the lack of clarity in the environmental
30 impact assessment of the rail spur design and impact. Mr Groth said information – information flooding, Mr John said if we don't know how the rail spur is going to be built. This lack of rail spur clarity would be, in part, a reason for the large number of presenters at this public hearing. Narrabri Shire. Narrabri Shire Council mentioned a trust deficit with the proponent in and around Boggabri and Gunnedah.

35 This has been heightened with rail spur deliberations, which is disappointing. Indeed, a former personal friend, a former Landcare associate, substantial part founder of Whitehaven Coal and Coalworks, the late Mr Chris Burgess, would have ensured more clarity with floodplain consultants I am sure, lessening this trust
40 deficit. He would be – have been disappointed with the Whitehaven performance in this instance. Design change not in the EIS. I note there has been a very recent complete change of design with the proposed rail spur without notification to those that made a submission to the – in the environmental impact statement process.

45 Little design, little hydraulic and floodwater velocity assessments provided or discussion with the community. I have been involved with two other state significant projects which are still current which have been assessed against the Carroll to

Boggabri Floodplain Management Plan; two extensive solar electricity farms on the floodplains to the north-east of Gunnedah. Both of these developments have had design changes and EIS submitters have been kept informed. Are Whitehaven Coal trying to hide something? Whitehaven's Mr Cole commented at the interview:

5

...optimisation of a design and construction – constructability has resulted in a decision being made to elevate the section of the rail spur to the west of the Namoi River all on piers.

10 Well, show us, the community, neighbours, shire counsellors, the new rail spur design parameters, a cross-section of the floodplain, impacts on velocity of flood water and efflux, erosion of – potential – of the piers, modelled, coincident flooding – flooding modelled, flood frequency analysis, adequate – and discussion of impacts against all floodplain management criteria. These are all lacking. Maybe the EIS
15 process should start again. A penalty applied to the developer for inadequate and misleading information to the community.

A decision cannot be made on inadequate environmental assessment for a development that is a 10 kilometre structure directly across a substantial Namoi
20 River and tributaries floodplain. As a comparison, if I went to local government with a photo of a house that I was going to build on the floodplain, no design plans, asking for approval to construct, and I will show you the plans when I'm finished, I would quickly be shown the door. So I hope, as a panel, that you address these items and I think there needs to be a revision and proper plans put to community and to – back to
25 the government departments. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Geoff. Our next speaker is Malcolm Donaldson.

30 MR M. DONALDSON: As a farmer in the Boggabri district I have been privileged to live and work in a tightknit and parochial community prior to coal (BC) and after coal. I have seen the eastern side of our community empty out of farmers and I have seen it drop in agricultural production and community involvement. I have seen local businesses struggle to hold skilled staff that are poached by the mining companies and I have had to pay extra to local businesses so that the businesses can
35 pay the higher wages. Environmental degradation is real and continuing and the drain on our resources, our water resources in particular, whether used or disrupted by coal mining, is mind-boggling.

All of these issues are real and important, whether they be for the economic
40 development of the districts and the pro argument or whether it be for the environmental issues and all the destructive things that come with coal mining on the opposite side. Although they're real and important, they're like deck chairs on the Titanic and the real issue – the major issue is where we are headed, not how comfortable we're seeking to be before we get there. And what is there? Well, most
45 people have heard of the Paris Climate Agreement and targets were mentioned in passing, where the world leaders agreed to limit global warming to one and a half degrees C.

Less well known was the inter-governmental panel on climate change who were a group of scientists put together by the United Nations, 91 eminent scientists from 40 different countries, and they were asked to investigate the effect of the Paris agreement, that one and a half degree increase, and what they had actually let themselves in for. And the IPCC says that one and a half degrees Celsius is looking like our best case scenario if we are quick and that we only have 15 years to make some very drastic actions. These are absolutely mind-boggling information really. The world has so far warmed about one degree Celsius and in that one degree Celsius we see fires in Tasmania, in Greece and California; we see droughts in Australia and Europe; and we see hurricanes and storm events in – like we have seen in Townsville.

And we have still got another 50 per cent that's in the – half a degree still in the pipeline. These scientists are not mucking us around. They really are serious and the stability of the world's climate is at stake. And if you look up the IPCC website and you see the carbon emissions needed to be cut by around 45 per cent by 2030 it really does your head in. And to be brought – to bring back to zero net emissions by 2050. This is the big picture. It's not the local picture. This is the big picture which has to be dealt with. We can get the local stuff perfect but in the end it's the big picture which will affect our children and our grandchildren.

So in – there is also huge economic benefit to be gained if we decide to take that aggressive action on climate change. They're talking over 20 trillion dollars in economic activity but we have to act now and coal is not the answer. Now, as soon as I say that half this – half the audience might want to go out for a smoke but really, if you have children or grandchildren or great grandchildren you must realise that our inaction in our lifetime will drastically affect the way future generations follow us.

My wife and I have been blessed with three daughters, 15, 19 and 21, and they say, “What are our decisions make us thinking, Dad? Why is it that we pay more attention to mining executives, government officials and politicians rather than the 91 of the world's best and brightest scientists? Why can't we see that the ones that are going to clean up this mess and have to live with the consequences of climate change are the young people?”

Right now, us oldies have that opportunity to change direction and ensure our younger generations have a real fighting future, a future that lasts more than 25 years. Expanding a huge coal mine into something that is bigger, even bigger, makes no sense at all, and limiting global warming to one and a-half per cent must be our priority. Falling short will give us a catastrophic world in the future. As a young person in the recent school strike said, and so eloquently wrote on their placard, “There's no Planet B.” There's no Planet B. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Martin. Our next speaker is Chris Lidman.

ASSOC PROF C. LIDMAN: Commission chair, commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. My name is Chris Lidman, and I am the director of

Siding Spring Observatory and the chair of the observatory's Dark Sky Committee. Siding Spring Observatory was established in 1964 and is Australia's premier astronomical observatory. It hosts the Commonwealth-owned Anglo-Australian Telescope, the largest optical telescope in Australia, and telescopes from national and international agencies including the Australian National University, the Japanese Space Agency and the Korean Astronomy and Space Science Institute. The observatory is located about 100 kilometres southeast of the Vickery Extension Project. It borders the Warrumbungle National Park and is part of Australia's first Dark Sky Park. The Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park is recognised internationally.

In addressing you today, I have three main aims: firstly, I wish to increase public awareness of both the Dark Sky Park and the observatory; secondly, I also wish to highlight good lighting practices; lastly, I'd like to restate the observatory's wish that Whitehaven Coal compute the impact of their project on the night sky brightness above Siding Spring Observatory. As you can imagine, external artificial lighting at night, whether it be from towns, businesses or mines, can potentially negatively affect operations at the observatory and the international status of the Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park. The Dark Sky Park has the potential to drive national and international tourism for the local region.

Good lighting means using lights when and where they are needed, shielding lights that are used so they shine light down onto the ground not up into the sky, and using warm colours rather than blue or white light. Good lighting is a win-win situation for everyone. The observatory is happy, because it can continue its work. The local community is happy, because it can continue to develop tourism centred on the Dark Sky Park. Businesses and towns are happy, because less light spilled upward means less money wasted. Conversely, bad lighting threatens the long-term future of the observatory and the status of the Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park, negatively affects the lives of humans and fauna and costs companies and towns more money. A technical glitch. Okay. That's fine. I can continue.

In my hand, I have a copy of the Dark Sky Planning Guidelines, which has been prepared by the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment. In it, you will find examples of good lighting and bad lighting. I have a few copies with me for those who are interested. Today, the main contributors to the artificial brightness of the night sky above Siding Spring Observatory, which I will refer to as light pollution, come from towns such as Dubbo, Gilgandra, Coonabarabran and Gunnedah, and mining operations in the Gunnedah Basin, the central west and the Hunter Valley. Light pollutions from the mines in the Gunnedah Basin is already apparent at the observatory. The observatory is concerned that the Vickery Extension Project may increase the amount of light pollution as seen from the observatory, if good lighting practices are not adopted.

In the observatory's response to the EIS, we requested that Whitehaven Coal compute the impact of their project – and I apologise, this is going to sound technical – the natural moon-free sky glow at 550 nanometres, 30 degrees above the horizon in the direction of the mine from the observatory. This request was noted in page A5 of

the preliminary issues report, however there was no indication if this calculation would be made. I'd like to state that the observatory would still like to see this calculation made. Thank you very much for listening to me today.

5 MR HANN: Thank you, Chris. Our next speaker is Karen Barlow.

MS K. BARLOW: Hello. My name's Karen Barlow. For those of you that don't know me, my brother is James Barlow and showed the video of that beautiful property. I have been working in the mining industry for over 10 years. I have been
10 involved in not only the design of new mines but also mine expansions. I'm currently working in a mining team of around 20 people where I am the only civil lead responsible for civil design. I love my job and I love the fact that I am in an international company. I get to work on projects for mines in developing countries and I set guidelines where often there are none. I'm here today to support my family,
15 and I'm here because I believe there is a need for balance between mining and the agricultural industry. I'm constantly surprised by the lack of courtesy and disrespect given to the smaller of the communities.

When reading the EIS, I understood that the noise levels for one of my family's
20 properties is significant. I believe yesterday we heard enough evidence to suggest, from previous experience, this modelling is under-exaggerated, and without rehashing the same information as my written submission, I am certain that all properties will end up being significant. The Namoi River was not modelled and could add anywhere between .5 to two more decibels, and even then the effects may
25 not be captured. Only someone that lives there would understand the river is the serpent that speaks at night as it reflects sound along its riverbanks.

I would also like to add that I have concerns with mine's promises to keep
30 machinery, essentially dozers, to certain gear levels. That, in practice, we know doesn't happen. Dozers' operations tend to want to use – dozer operators tend to want to use gears that are efficient, and who would blame them? They are renowned to not follow restrictions, especially at night. I do not know if this mine has restricted gear operations for approvals. I would like this to be looked at. I would like sound to be remodelled with the river and machinery operations modelled for
35 efficiency and not for what is needed to keep the levels below significant. I would also like any noisy infrastructure in close proximity to the river to be designed in detail, such as pumps.

Based on the EPA guidelines for significant levels, there must be voluntary
40 acquisition or some kind of commercial agreement with owners. This is because, when levels are high, this high, the mine can no longer adequately mitigate, and those exposed will suffer sleep disturbance. I felt that the mine's EIS purposely misled the government indicating commercial agreement, and everyone keeps talking about "there is always acquisition rights". Please stop dropping "voluntary" from the
45 guidelines. What rights are people given if they are forced out with lack of sleep or dust levels that cause harm? Their rights were just removed. The reality is that, if

you squeeze someone hard enough, they will sell the foundation beneath their feet. That is their sole, s-o-l-e.

5 The panel's purpose is to not approve mining plans unless conditions are reasonable. If conditions are unreasonable, people have forced acquisition, and the intent of the panel has failed. I cannot account for the amount of times that there has been banter around mine tables at work risk shops about complaining farmers when, let's face it, the only birds – there are actually birds that are called noisy miners. If there was better boundaries in place, we would not have these issues, and there would be greater harmony for everyone. On a side note, I have also submitted designs for infrastructure just 10 metres off major rivers, because 40 metres is a guideline and not a hard line. This will happen to the Namoi.

15 The reality of the industry is that we do not account for those around us, and the general attitude is that we – that they can move. If this is not true, then can someone tell me why, in 10 years of design, I have never been asked to consider my neighbour, and I do not know anyone else that has been asked? This is not the country way. I throw together stockpiles, haul roads, conveyor alignments, rail loops, MIAs, ROM pads, you name it, and when I put together designs for approval, it is more obvious where the trees are. It was just on Friday that I was asked to move a million-metre cube stockpile away from a densely populated area that was marked for protection.

25 The comments were, "We can put it near the MIA, next to a village." Strangely, through my family's recent experience, I found myself saying, "You cannot put a stockpile directly near people." The public wouldn't realise that it isn't actually – there isn't actually any basic guidelines for allowances or offsets of these kinds. Mitigation occurs after design and is not built into design. If Boggabri struggles to get dust monitoring, it's hard to think about a small village in a third world country. These attitudes have to change. We have to do better. We have to design better. But it has to come from the top.

35 The reality is my family is the Australian satire called The Castle, but instead of the Barlow Corporation being taken to the High Court of Australia, we are the Barlow Corporation. Some people in this district might remember that we used to live next to the Carrigans. It's difficult for people to believe that someone's Whitehaven is to live next to a noisy mine. I understand it's believed in the mining industry that people just complain because they want a larger payout, however, we just want better boundaries. We don't want forced land acquisition.

40 In industry, there must be equality between two individuals that seek private regard gain regardless of size. Mines used to have precedence over industry because the resources were sought for public use. This idea seems to linger. Even if voluntary drops off acquisition or public drops off resources, the Government and individual parties can be called into account. The rule of law is the law that founds our justice system and ensures that the Government and other parties obey and don't become a law upon themselves. If it's not the feeling of just or cannot be justified, then it will

not be of justice as these three words come from the same origin. The law can be understood by the uneducated. The Castle wasn't entirely a joke because you just have to understand a single emotion.

5 Lastly, Kurrumbede. Please protect our heritage and the land that goes with it. I ask that the same laws that apply to a property be applied to the land heritage and that 500 acres be separated with the homestead. A property without its land is like a house without a window. My family is sixth generation to this local area that is over 100 years of heritage. We seem to not have an equal voice. Just personally I've
10 lived in a lot of mining towns and the reality is – the fact that I call them mining towns is a problem, that along – you know, agriculture has been this – a part of this, like, place for a very long time. And the fact that we can say that 9000 people were here and that 3000 have been boosted by the mining industry is 25 per cent.

15 And I think, you know, we all want to say that the mines do bring benefit to everyone but not when it's over-balanced, you know, not when it's lost. And 25 per cent feels comfortable but, you know, what happens when it becomes 50? I can tell you that there's towns that have mines in them that have the vibe of a country town and there are some that are like ghost towns. There's just – you know, people in transit. I
20 think that people don't care about heritage if they don't have any.

MR HANN: Thank you, Karen. Our next speaker is Stephen King. Does Stephen King – or does anyone know whether Stephen King is present today? Okay. I will take that as a no. So our next speaker following Stephen King would be Kerri
25 Clarke.

MR: She is unable to make it. I'm speaking on her behalf if that's okay?

MR HANN: Okay. We will just get your details and – – –
30

MR: Yes.

MR HANN: - - - that's fine.

35 MR: Yes. There should be an email from Kerri to the panel – yes. Good afternoon, people. This is prepared by Dr Kerri Clarke, the Maules Creek Coal Mine Community Consultative Committee, environmental representative for the community environmental group Sustainable Living Armidale. I wish to elaborate on the Sustainable Living Armidale submission objecting to the Whitehaven Coal
40 application to extend the Vickery Coal Mine. In my time as the environmental representative on the Maules Creek Coal Mine Community Consultative Committee since November 2015, I have found Whitehaven Coal to be uncooperative in providing information in what I believe are attempts to limit community consultation. The Community Consultative Committee meeting minutes since the
45 first meeting in June 2013 are provided on the Whitehaven Coal Maules Creek Mine webpage, as a requirement. From the minutes dated 7 June 2013:

...the purpose for this committee is to provide a forum for the community and Maules Creek to exchange information and to engage in consultation on matters affecting the community ... John Turner, the chairman of the committee, requested that the representatives of the community should liaise with the community to bring topical items to the CCC for discussion –

the CCCG is the only form of community consultation undertaken by Whitehaven Coal. Sometimes we have only three community members attending. Whitehaven gained approval to construct and operate the mine without a community environmental representative in place and none in place until November 2015, more than two years after the first CCC meeting despite the Department of Planning requirement. Appointment of Sustainable Living Armidale as a – as the environmental community group came about after Australia sent an official letter stating their non-involvement in the Maules Creek Coal Community Consultative Committee and that the apologies for not attending meetings on 14 August 2013, 19 November 2013, which was the triple mine meeting, and 6 August 2014 were not made by them.

No explanation was ever received as to how these false apologies occurred. The Biodiversity Management Plan was approved and revised multiple times without adequate community consultation during this time. The general public believes there are no protection measures in place to keep mining companies in check, but I have experienced that these requirements are easily changed or breaches result in an insignificant fine. For example, seed collection of the publically owned Leard State Forest, traditional country of the Gomeri people, was required before being cleared to ensure local genetic material with high genetic variability for rehabilitation purposes. Seed collection did not take place and Whitehaven were fined after land clearing, including critically endangered White Box communities had taken place.

White Box woodland has been cleared to represent only .1 per cent of their original cover Australia-wide as much of this vegetation type covered what is now agricultural land. Leard State Forest contained a high quality remnant of 1100 hectares of White Box woodland listed as a critically endangered ecological community. The Whitehaven Coal fact sheets about Maules Creek mine states that they will be clearing almost one third of this remaining area of White Box woodland. Leard Forest contains 395 plant species that formed vital habitat for fauna, some of which are listed threatened species.

Two-thirds of Leard Forest has been – is being cleared by the three mines, two of which are owned by Whitehaven Coal. Commonwealth offsets are still not finalised despite the approval requirements and extensions have been provided and yet the threatened vegetation community has continued to be cleared. The initial offsets were not correct, some not even close to the community that's being cleared and do not satisfy the like-for-like requirements. The clearing of publicly owned forests continue.

Finding other properties with similar quality and structural qualities as the land being cleared is difficult when such small areas are left intact. Why is forest clearing allowed when the requirements to do so are not in place? I do not believe that the cumulative impact of clearing for the region has been properly considered. I've not
5 even touched on many of the issues I've encountered, including the impacts and mistreatment of farming neighbours and traditional custodians but based on my experience as the Maules Creek Coal Community Consultative Committee environmental representative, I completely understand why members of the community do not have faith in Whitehaven Coal being able to consider the
10 environment or the community in which it operates. And we believe that this project should not be put through as a lot of other, like, presentations have, like, put forth. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you. Thank you. Would you be able to give your details to the secretary, to David? Thank you. Our next registered speaker is Drew Sargeant, but I understand Aaron Johnson is going to speak in his place. Thank you.

MR A. JOHNSON: Thank you very much. Firstly, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today. So my name is Aaron Johnson. I'm the general manager of the off-road load and haul portfolio at Bis, and I'm here today on behalf of Bis to pledge our
20 support for the Whitehaven Vickery Expansion Project. Bis is a mining services company that has been moving resources since 1915. Today, we haul, transport, process, handle millions of tonnes of raw material and commodities for our customers every year. One of those valued customers is Whitehaven Coal, who
25 we've been providing a range of haulage solutions, underground equipment hire and site services to support their operations for the past five years. Our operations at Gunnedah supports in excess of 87 people and their families in the local community.

Recently, Whitehaven showed their commitment to our company and our people through the award of a three-year contract extension. Today, I want to do the same
30 by expressing our commitment to the Vickery project. Whitehaven and Bis share similar values in regards to strong safety culture and proactive community engagement processes, such as the partnership and work we're doing with the Gunnedah Girls Academy here in the local high schools. We believe that the
35 benefits of this project will be felt within the region for many years to come, and we are proud to support Whitehaven in their investment for everybody's future. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Aaron. Russell Stewart is our next speaker.
40

MR R. STEWART: Thank you. Panel and guests, my name's Russell Stewart. I'm here today representing Narrabri Chamber of Commerce. My history is that I'm the
– I'm born and bred in Bellata in Narrabri Shire. I'm the son of a soldier settler out there, and my greatest connection is to agriculture, and our members in Narrabri
45 Chamber of Commerce would like to acknowledge that agriculture is our number 1 industry and will always be, however, the issue that – the last 10 years of my life has been spent on working on how to save and grow regional towns in country Australia,

and it's pretty simple, really, because when we have a look at the exodus out of most country towns that we know, and they're going backwards. Those of us who are born in small towns can go home now and we don't recognise them.

5 The push, of course, with our cities that are bulging at the eyes, is to start to try and move people to the regions. It's interesting, isn't it, because we, over the years, haven't even been able to keep the ones we – that are already living and already acclimatised, and we want to move people in. Of course, 10 years has told us that
10 the real trick to growing and sustaining regional communities is to offer young people already in that region the opportunity to work and stay at home and develop their careers.

They tell us that. That comes from them. In towns the size of Narrabri and Gunnedah, every February, we lose two full coach loads of quality young people
15 every year. Why does that happen? They tell us, "Well, where are the opportunities? Where are the work opportunities? We've got nowhere to stay here, we've got nowhere to build our careers or grow a family or contribute to the community."

20 We're the best farmers in the world here, and we've got that good that we could cut down our staff now. We don't have to have the staff we used to when I was a young bloke on my father's farm. We had four workers. My brother and I, my dad, kept the whole lot. There's one man there now, one man with good machinery, and let me
25 tell you, folks, we know that if we don't supply quality opportunities to our young people they aren't going to stay. Clearly, the government knows that. The figures are there, we all know it, and it's opportunity. I was delighted when Whitehaven came into this region because they contacted me, I didn't contact them, and they said,
30 "We want to hire local wherever we can. Obviously, we can't do that everywhere, because there's professional people we need that you don't have, and we're going to have to bring them in."

The Narrabri Chamber has had a great relationship with Whitehaven. They've been model members and model community supporters in the business game in our
35 region, and I could tell you, over the last three years or four years of this drought, and we've all had them, we've all had them. I was on the farm. I can remember them before, riding around on a horse Wilga trees as a kid. Like, we've all had them.

40 We're going to get them again. This is another one. If our business community in Narrabri, and I can only speak for Narrabri, because that's my town, and I'm well attached to Gunnedah as well, but Narrabri's my town, and that's where I'm the – that's who I represent today. If we didn't have extra industry in our region in the last three years, we would have roly-polys blowing up the main street, and it has to be
45 acknowledged. It has to be acknowledged. We have to offer genuine opportunities for our young people.

Agriculture's great, and as I acknowledged, it always will be there. It is our number 1 industry, and we're so proud of it and our farmers, but if we don't offer our young people other opportunities through companies like Whitehaven who have committed to it – examples everywhere. Do you know, the figures are that the resources
5 industry in this region hire in excess of 1800 people? The wages they pay out every year is \$480 million. \$480 million. That's huge. It's huge. It's huge opportunity. It's huge payments into the area for every one of these little shops you see up the main street and the staff they hire, because what you forget when you see these little shops close, it's terrible, we lost a shop, you've probably lost four people out of that
10 shop.

They've all got families, and I can tell you, unless we offer opportunities and diverse opportunities, because the truth is 60 per cent of those students in these high schools, they like agriculture but it's not their chosen career. We have to offer something
15 else. Whitehaven are doing that, and then we'd like to see more other industries come in. It seems like they're dragging a few more, so it's interesting, isn't it, when I travel to Sydney and I'm in meetings in Sydney, they say, "You poor people up there, you know, you're in the drought and everything." I said, "Yeah, it's tough, and you wouldn't want to be a farmer. You'd better be tough to live that game and you'd better be clever", but keep in mind, 60 per cent of the region here do not work
20 in agriculture-related industries. They don't want to. It's not their scene. They need opportunities in other areas.

If we were to say, "Sydney, you've got to concentrate on retail, you can't go into
25 banking, you can't go into transport, you can't do – just concentrate on retail", like we're expected to do here a lot, we're – concentrate on agriculture, you'd die. It'd die. You can't be a one-trick pony. I'm here to speak on my experience and our chamber's experience with Whitehaven. Every time I ring my contacts at Whitehaven, they answer or they're back to me within two minutes, even to the point
30 of ringing the CEO. I can ring the CEO, and I'm only the president of the Narrabri Chamber.

I've got no qualifications, no standing, and yet, if I have an issue, I can ring and I'll get an answer. Like it or not, I'll get an answer. I wish I could say the same for a lot
35 of other organisations, so I'm only speaking from my experience. I'm speaking from the experience of Narrabri Chamber members, and our experience of Whitehaven Coal is they've been fantastic members of our chamber community and our business community, and I can't speak more highly for them, so thank you, folks.

40 MR HANN: Thank you, Russell. Our next registered speaker is Richard Gillham.

MR R. GILLHAM: Right on it. Almost good afternoon, but it's good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm Richard Gillham, speaking as a local
45 farmer, a member of the Boggabri Lions Club and current Rural Fire Service Captain of the Brigade, which encompasses Vickery. I'm passionate about the survival and wellbeing of our local community, being Boggabri. My property falls in the zone of affectation by Boggabri Coal. My family has been in the zone since it was

founded – in the area, sorry, since it was founded, and I'm a fifth generation farmer. I can only speak on our personal experiences with the local mining companies.

5 Mining has been in our area for many years. And one of those many years ago I was speaking to a general manager about the future, and I said that we've been here for a long time and we're not going anywhere, and you've turned up with a lot of money, and you're not going anywhere, so how about we get along? And to this day, that's how we work. Due to the relationship we have formed with the mining companies to ensure farming and mining can coexist, we have managed to maintain a very open
10 line of communication with them which has allowed any issues that may arise to be resolved in a very easy manner.

In our experience we have found them to be approachable and any concerns respectful of our – sorry, in our experience we have found them to be very
15 approachable, and any concerns we have, they've been respectful of our views. Every industry has their fors and against, and we need to work through them. Our family has been fortunate enough to recently lease land off Boggabri Coal and Whitehaven Coal, which has enabled us to expand our farming operation and allow three of our children to come home. Three of our children coming home has put six
20 new members in the Rural Fire Service which was dwindling. Our children can now carry on in the farming industry. They will be the sixth generation.

This was one of our concerns as they wanted to stay in our area and they're very community orientated as well. Another concern of ours is the safety of travellers on
25 the road and there is a much higher volume of traffic on our local roads, and I think every road east of Boggabri should be tarred. This would alleviate 90 per cent of road use dust. I know a lot of farmers who have been able to drought-proof their property by taking work at the mine, supplementing their income. This means they can feed stock and repaid machinery.
30

In my opinion, mining today is under very strict environment and management scrutiny. I'm comfortable that if these guidelines are adhered to, that there is very little impact on my ability to continue farming. The town of Boggabri will see changes as mining continues in the area. I hope families and industries are
35 encouraged to seek residency in Boggabri and local community events. We may be a little town, but we are a lovely little town.

And may I say, our little town would be a lot littler if it wasn't for mining. As Russell just said, we would have roly-polies rolling down the street. With advances
40 in agricultural technology, it has meant a huge reduction in the human workforce. This has been filled by the mining industry. Support from the mining industry is keeping some of our service clubs, such as Lions and Rotary afloat, both being active in the mines, cooking barbecues and such. They would be another thing that would have folded by now. I feel that we have, we are and we will coexists with mining.
45 It's one of those things.

Like I said, we're not going anywhere, and they're not going anywhere. I think people made more aware – could be made more aware and educated of positive aspects of mining. This may only be a simple thing like putting a noticeboard in Boggabri, seeing as though Boggabri is one of the closest towns to the mine, just
5 with their amount of employees they run and all that sort of thing. There's a lot of uneducated people that could be educated, I think, and would alleviate a lot of discussion. Thank you very much. That is my person opinion.

10 MR HANN: Thank you, Richard. Our next speaker is Pip Murray.

MS P. MURRAY: Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Phillipa Murray and I'm speaking on behalf of the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society founded almost 35 years ago to promote children's poetry and to protect the legacy of Australia's best known female poet, Dorothea Mackellar. The
15 society of volunteers is based in Gunnedah where the Mackellar property owned the property Kurrumbede for more than 30 years last century on which it is proposed the new coalmine by Whitehaven Coal.

20 Kurrumbede was a favourite destination of Dorothea and her family, and together with another rural holding, near Gresford, was the place of many happy times which are immortalised in her diaries and her poetry. Dorothea remained unmarried and with no family of her own travelled between Sydney and Gunnedah where she spent time with her two younger brothers Malcolm and Eric who lived on the land.

25 Of course her famous poem My Country was written in 1904 but not published till four years later, and her most productive literary years as a writer coincide with her association with Kurrumbede. Her diaries are now held in the State Library of New South Wales and her poetry is sprinkled with references to her time on the property. And I think you would all know that barely a week goes by in this land of climatic
30 extremes where some her lines from My Country are not quoted.

The Kurrumbede Homestead was completed in 1908 and was designed by Sydney architect John Reid who also designed a number of commercial buildings in Sydney, many of which have been demolished, including the Society Generale building in
35 George Street and Pitt, Son and Badgery No. 1 Woolstore in Pyrmont. Over the last decade the society has been fortunate enough to be able to take visitors to the homestead, but in recent years because the building awaits maintenance, access has been denied. The first question visitors asks of society members – and we host many during our annual poetry presentation awards – is, can we visit Kurrumbede?
40 Kurrumbede is significant because of both its physical and historical evidence. It is a wonderful, albeit deteriorating, set of buildings that represent a bygone era.

45 The house and surrounding buildings, we feel, should be preserved at all costs for future generations. Heritage is all about people, or the state – that is, represented by the government – taking control of significant items that are important to our culture and society so that future generations will understand society is the way it is. It gives us a sense of groundedness, of who we are as people, which is why we, the Dorothea

Mackellar Society, feel strongly that Kurrumbede should be preserved for the community and shared by the community.

5 The heritage statement prepared by consultants on behalf of the mining company confirms the high significance of the property. In its recommendations it states the homestead could be used for community functions and should be preserved. With a rail loop passing within 300 metres of the homestead and the CHPP, which will be the hub for all the mining companies local operations, 830 metres away, it is difficult to envisage how community events might be staged without noise interference. Does it need to be so close?
10

The Kurrumbede Homestead does not appear on the 2012 Gunnedah Local Environment Plan as the Local Council at the time decided to defer consideration. The heritage report also finds there's a strong case for the buildings to be included on the State Heritage Register. With this in mind, the society has taken a step towards ensuring the homestead and outbuildings are preserved and maintained.
15

We have lodged a nomination for Kurrumbede to be included on the State Heritage Register with the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage. A listing on the State Heritage Register would also make the buildings eligible for government grants to assist with maintenance and preservation. This has not been met with enthusiasm by the proponent, which I would have expected had they been serious about the preservation of the property.
20

25 Society representatives have met with the mining company on two occasions so far to discuss plans for Kurrumbede. Until we see the heritage management plan and are permitted to visit the property, it is difficult to discuss specific plans or gauge their commitment. The recommendations made in the company's heritage assessment report will require monitoring to ensure preservation and maintenance measures are implemented.
30

Gunnedah Shire Council would be the logical and legal authority to monitor these things, but I also believe the society could play a role in assisting council with the monitoring of these things. This would require society members having the necessary approvals for access to all the significant buildings and structures identified in the heritage study. In a meeting with the proponent, company representatives mentioned the homestead would most probably be tenanted as a residence rather than used as an office, which was suggested in the heritage report. This could also complicate access arrangements.
35
40

The heritage management plan, which is yet to be presented, should include a detailed description of the structures comprising the homestead complex and outline the heritage significance. It should include a mechanism for review and update. Should the mine go ahead, the homestead needs to be inspected by a structural engineer to mitigate indirect impacts of any blasting and then this person should be guiding the blast design. We would request that immediate steps be taken to ensure the homestead and outbuildings are weatherproofed to prevent further deterioration.
45

While we are aware there are a number of low screen plantings and established trees, the gardens surrounding the homestead should be re-established and maintained to screen out the project rails and dams which will be visible from the front and side of the house.

5

An outbuilding not identified in the mining company's heritage report is a small timber hut near the shearing shed that was once the living quarters of the swimming legend Andrew "Boy" Charleton who worked as a jackaroo on Kurrumbede for seven years. And, as has been mentioned earlier, it has been well documented that he used a permanent water hole in the river on the property as his training pool. Another structure that we believe should be given some attention and was not included in section 7 conclusions and recommendations of the heritage study was the timber racing track barriers identified as site 18. We believe they are significant.

10

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Few rural properties had their own racetrack for either horses or dogs and, again, they are representative of a past era and they should be singled out for preservation. The report mentioned they will be in the middle of the projected rail spur but does not include them as being significant enough to warrant any conservation measures. This needs to be addressed. Since the publication of an article in a Sydney newspaper a couple of months ago about a proposed mine right next to Dorothea Mackellar's old homestead, there has been a public outpouring of both support and disbelief that such development was planned next to the former home of one of our literary icons.

20

25

If the proponent's intention is to maintain and preserve Kurrumbede, I find it hard to reconcile their reluctance to nurture and develop public and community support. Company representatives were critical of a local news story about the future of the homestead and a friendly approach by a prominent women's magazine where the company could have utilised an opportunity for a good news story was rebuffed. The benefits which would flow to the proponent by preserving and maintaining Kurrumbede and sharing it with the public at large are inestimable.

30

35

Keeping Kurrumbede for the nation is critical. Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep inspirational sense of connection to the community and landscape. They are historical records that are important expressions of Australia's identity and experience. Places of cultural significance, such as Kurrumbede, tell us who we are and the past that has informed us.

40

So I would ask the Commission, please, to put a condition on any consent that you might be considering that Whitehaven Coal be required to repair, preserve and enhance the buildings and grounds comprising Kurrumbede by active consultation with relevant stakeholders in recognition of its heritage and value to the Australian people. Thank you.

45

MR HANN: Thank you, Philippa. Our next speaker is Eric Hannan.

MR E. HANNAN: Hello. My name is Eric Hannan and this is my wife, Carol. My wife and I wish to thank the IPC for the opportunity of putting forward the impact on

our family which we're going to face with Vickery Extension if it currently goes ahead in its form. We own Lanreef Horse Agistment and for 24 years we've been building this for our retirement. And they want to bring a railway right across the front of us. It's a disgrace that they're allowed to do this. You should not have a
5 railway come right across a floodplain. I'm not against mines. I think it's great, but as for – on Kurrumbede and coming across floodplains and our river, no. The railway line is going to come on Kurrumbede.

10 It will be about four kilometres along our river then it's going to cross a creek and then it's going to be within 100 metres in some cases of our river, then it's going to turn and come a kilometre across a floodplain, then across our river, then across another floodplain for a kilometre and then up over our road – highway, which is six and a half metres in the air. And they've got the gall to come to our house and tell us we're not going to hear it or see it. Ladies and gentlemen, we can hear and see a car
15 on the main road and that's further away than this railway line.

As for water, we have it in writing that it's going to be no more than three millimetres higher upstream in a flood if they have damage or a blockage. Now, that's a lie because they cannot predict a flood. Every flood is different. And I know
20 for a fact that people upstream will get water that they've never seen before because I've seen islands of debris come down with kangaroos and foxes on them and I've been there for 43 years on this place. I've got a little bit of an idea. They haven't even been there.

25 Now, at Emerald Hill – they come out there and they told us they were going to bring an expert out to talk to us about the floodplains. Well, I've been on the place for 46 years. They never come near me. And Grant Mcilveen – he's the second generation. They never come near him. And you've got James Barlow down the road. He's a second generation. They never come near him neither. Where did the so-called
30 expert go? To the Parkview Hotel? This is the sort of rubbish that they come out and tell us. It's just wrong.

The Kamilaroi Highway near town, where they cross the road – this here is the coal that falls off their covered trucks – their covered trucks. Do they care? Not a bit.
35 Right. I've got photos here of the road. You can see the white lines? Not a bit. The coal bits in here – they're as black as the bitumen. No reflector whatsoever on them. No, they don't – now, ever since I took those photos, which was in the drought before we had any rain, ever since that day, they've had Daracon out there watering the road every – nearly every day. Now when you go past, you're covered in a black
40 sludge. I've even had to put my windscreen wipers on.

Now, they've got about 400 metres where they cross the road. Right. How the – and we can't even trust them to look after that. How the hell are we going to get them to look after six kilometres along our river? It's just wrong. Now, the lady just spoke
45 about Dorothea Mackellar, the poem writer. My God, she would turn in her grave if she knew they were going to turn it into a dirty black hole. You've got Andrew "Boy" Charleton, the world's best swimmer – he was mentioned there, too. Right.

He held the most – the most medals he held of any one person right up to the 1960s – six years he worked on Kurrumbede.

5 There's a cottage there that was in that photo. Inside that cottage, there's a wash
hand basin and a cupboard still on the wall. I've got photos of it. Now, when
Coalworks owned it, they were going to pick this cottage up and take it into town and
give it to the Gunnedah Museum as heritage. This lot will just bulldoze it down.
They don't care. We have to stop them. It's just wrong. And as for Kurrumbede
House, well, I have it in writing that they're going to keep the house in better
10 condition than the last people that occupied it. Right. Well, that's rubbish. I know
for a fact when Coalworks owned it, there was two people looking after this house.
We mowed the lawns, tended the hedges, watered the whole place – the roses, the
fruit trees, the grape vines.

15 Have a look at it now. There's no fruit trees left. There's no hedges. They're higher
than the gutters. That's how high they are. They haven't been touched. And the
house and the grapevines – well, they're all gone. There's no lawns. There's not
even an entrance any more because half the trees are dead. There used to be a trellis
there that was covered with a wisteria that you could park your car under. It was in
20 that photo, too. You could park your car under it all day. It has been demolished.

They haven't even started digging coal and yet they're wrecking the whole show.
They don't care a bit about it. And as for the train line that's supposed to go along
our river, there will be no fish, there will be no birds and there will be no koalas
25 because you cannot run 10 trains – at least 10 trains 24 hours a day and not create a
problem. Of course, you're going to create a problem. We haven't told – we have
told them that if a horse gets out their lights shining across the top of us – and the
noise of the train – if it gets onto the road and happens to kill someone, then what?
It's a bit late then, isn't it? We've asked Whitehaven to be relocated with – the same
30 as we have over here. They don't care a stuff about us.

I heard them here today to say they do relocate. Well, it's quite funny that they've
told us they don't relocate. So let's stand up and fight about it. Kurrumbede is one
of the nicest places you've ever seen and they should not be digging it up. They
35 definitely shouldn't be bringing a railway along our river, across the middle of it.
We have had Whitehaven representatives approach us where we live and ask us to
sign a confidentiality document, right. And that's just a gagging order to proceed,
and it says that, in effect, we will not be affected by any projects, operations.

40 We were willing to sit down and talk – it was an agreement for Whitehaven, and if
they wanted, to put a clause in our little document, but not just bring us a clause and
expect us to sign it and get nothing. Whitehaven own document in regards to noise
and the Vickery Extension which have supplied trust or status for the own receivers
in the west and the south-west – maximum predicted noise level to result in
45 exceedance of evening and no time projects specifically noise triggered levels at two
additional places.

The properties are 131 and 132. Our house, our home and our livelihood, is 132. Given the EPA has monitored the noise, it shows Whitehaven at Maules Creek Coalmine has exceeded the worst case noise prediction anywhere up to 30 per cent higher. It begs the question of Whitehaven – what they’re telling you, IPC. It seems
5 not the truth, otherwise I wouldn’t be here. Thank you very, very much, ladies and gentlemen. I won’t keep going on. I’m only just going to keep going. Look at that, that’s the fills up the trucks. That’s trucks.

10 MR HANN: Our next registered speaker is Darrin Trindall.

MR D. TRINDALL: I would just like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. First of all, I would like to acknowledge that we’re on Gomeri land and acknowledge the elders past and present. For those who don’t know, I’m Darrin Trindall. I’m speaking on behalf as a local, not as a Whitehaven employee. I was
15 born in Narrabri and I moved up to the NT and worked up there as a nurse for 12 years and only due to jobs, I couldn’t come home. Whitehaven presented me with a job to move back into the mining and also to bring my family back home, back to the traditional areas of Narrabri. I took up this opportunity and moved my family and myself back here. I support the project because my experience of working with
20 Whitehaven is – allowed me to provide a better opportunity for my family, a lot more things.

To my kids and all that, I am seen as a role model because of the work ethics I have, and also that it has lifted my self-esteem and confidence in not only myself but also
25 in the family. For the last five years that I’ve worked at Whitehaven, I started off as a trainee and I’ve now moved up into various areas working in the emergency response unit, also as a first aid officer, as a trainer and as a mentor. The reason I fully support the project is a lot of other Indigenous people or fellas or – that are working out there, girls and everything, they’ve been able to support their families,
30 the confidence that it has given them just to have a job to go home every night, to provide for their family. They’re not struggling and it’s just really good to see. Whitehaven has been fully supportive of Indigenous employment.

It should be a lot more better in terms of providing a lot of – more career
35 opportunities in terms of going into engineering, mechanics, fitters, mine design and all that sort of stuff as well. The big thing also is looking at mentors out there, to have that to address the issues of fully understanding the Aboriginal culture, working in full-time employment, also against Aboriginals or fellas working in full-time employment. For them it’s a first big time and all that. The extra money and all that
40 – there’s not that support there for them, and I see that as a need. It’s also an opportunity to create more Aboriginal businesses. A lot of ideas, whether it will be trucking, cleaning, you name it.

The opportunities there are endless to support – for Whitehaven to support the
45 businesses or support training and stuff like that. Whitehaven has also provided a lot of support for organisations around town, around Narrabri, Gunnedah and areas like that in terms of childcare. It helps with medical stuff, supporting and sponsoring

sporting facilities and all that sort of things as well. What else. It's – overall it's a great opportunity. I think it's going to be a great opportunity for a lot of families, and all that sort of stuff, to come forward and say, "Yes, we will put our hands up. We want to work there."

5

It's going to provide a better life – a better quality of life, a lot more self-determination and all that. A lot of people will look up to them and say, "Good, you're working," you know, "It's just great to hear." So just on that, it's – I think it will be a great idea to do that. A lot more people are looking at getting into the mines now because there's a lot more – a lot less opportunities out there, and they see the mining opportunities as to bettering themselves and also even moving on to go to other career paths, and all that, in other states, and all that, but also for a lot of opportunities to bring family home. No worries. Thanks.

15 MR HANN: Thank you, Darrin. Our next speaker is Cyril Baker.

MR C. BAKER: My family has been residents in Australia for almost 190 years and I'm a sixth-generation farmer in Australia. Some housekeeping to start with. I object to how these hearings are being run with no regard to common law, and in particular, on both public hearing notices it says:

20

The public hearing will take away the right to appeal to the court to review the merits of an approval granted for the mine by the IPC.

25 Also, we are threatened with not recording. The only recording is by you, like the Star Chamber kangaroo no jury courts, and are told what we can say and how we can say it. Why aren't we allowed to record this hearing in any way? What are you trying to hide? We are threatened – also, we are threatened with you providing name, address and contact details to other corporate government sections with ABNs and corporation registrations. The unlawful Stalinist corporation UN Lima Declaration Rio Earth Summit Statue Environmental spiel from 1979 tries to dictate our rights after these hearings with furrphies such as "no merit appeal may be made". No notion of a fully informed common law jury. I believe this is a fake consultation and a whitewash hearing.

35

Mainly, I totally object to and oppose this extension project. Firstly, we should not be holding these hearings because the state does not lawfully own the coal resource. It is lawfully owned by the regional farmers who had title to and owned the land prior to Whitehaven Coal – that is, if they own it now. If there was to be a hearing, the only lawful jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Australia and New South Wales to sit in judgment is a fully informed common law jury or a grand jury of the people. The decision and orders of any other jurisdiction is treason and theft against the people.

45 Secondly, I wish to deal with your authority, the Authority of the New South Wales State Corporation Government, and the authority of the Independent Planning Commission to hold these hearings and make decisions and orders affecting the

people of New South Wales. Both the government that created the IPC, ie, the New South Wales State Government, and the Commonwealth Government, have stepped outside their constitutions without the consent of the people and become corporations, and they have registered themselves as corporations on the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, ie, the stock market, and on other corporate registry, notable Dun & Bradstreet, with the New South Wales State legislature having a Dun's number of 756261488.

They are no longer sovereign governments of the people of the Commonwealth. They have done this without the knowledge of or consent of the people of New South Wales by way of referendum. They do not have lawful authority to do anything. They are no longer lawful governments. The New South Wales Government, through the Constitution Amendment Act 1987 changed the New South Wales Constitution without consent by referendum of the people of New South Wales with respect to the Office of Governor, essentially, the appointment of the Governor.

The joke is – the joke, the fraud, is that when Queen Victoria and her successors on 9 July 1900, with the proclamation of an Act to constitute the Commonwealth Of Australia Act (1900) and the Constitution, ceased to have any executive power over the Commonwealth of Australia, and Australia ceased to be the property of the Crown of the United Kingdom on that date. Ceased to be the property of the Crown. Take note. There has been no such thing as Crown land since that date, and land that is not privately owned is Commonwealth land. It is a myth perpetuated by deceitful governments. The joke and the fraud has been perpetrated against the people of the Commonwealth since then.

There should've been a new stand-alone federal Constitution drafted and ratified by referendum on that day, inception day, 1 January 1900, that was not part of a British Act of Parliament and that didn't have Queen Victoria as the head of state. The Commonwealth of Australia government has created a new name, the Australian Government, without the consent by referendum of the people. We no longer have a valid constitution after this name change. Little matter, as it has not been valid since enactment and definitely not since Australia joined the League of Nations in 1919 and the United Nations in 1946. Queen Victoria became the head of state of our Constitution and a foreigner on 9 July 1900, and these treaty organisations, in their articles of association, specify that member states must not have a foreigner as their head of state.

Therefore, we have had an unlawful, invalid Constitution since inception day, and at least since 1919. Prime Minister Billy Hughes acknowledged this in the Parliamentary Hansard on returning from France. This new government is a government of political persuasions, controlled for and by political parties for their benefit. It is no longer our government, our sovereign government. State and Commonwealth governments under Prime Minister Paul Keating – that's not 10 minutes. Hey? Yes, it's not 10 minutes, nine minutes or whatever. Pardon? Yes, what – how many minutes?

Prime Minister Paul Keating have created the unlawful Council of Australian Governments without the consent of the people by referendum. We have the illusion of government, so you, the IPC for whom you work and the New South Wales State Government do not have lawful and, I emphasise “lawful”, authority to be here in
5 your position or to do anything affecting New South Wales residents. The IPC became a corporation on 1 March last year, not – 2018. Why are you not called the IP Corporation instead of Commission?

10 Are you trying to hide your corporate money-making and for-profit model from the people? Why did the IPC become a corporation? The IPC does have a ABN that is 38755709681 and an Australian Company Number, but you don’t advertise it on your website like most business. Are you trying to hide your corporate structure and business from the people? Why do you need a corporate structure if you are not a for-profit business? Do you have to make a profit, and how do you do that? You’re
15 obviously not a sovereign government agency operating under consolidated revenue – under the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The IPC is not a lawful entity. The IPC and the “Department” of Planning and Environment Corporation, ABN 38755709681, both have the same ABN, so how can
20 they be truly independent when you’re both the same business and any committee, tribunal, commission etcetera has no jurisdiction or lawful authority to make decisions, recommendations, orders or forfeitures having effect over the people of the Commonwealth of Australia or New South Wales? The people of the Commonwealth of Australia are not slaves or under any bureaucratic administrations
25 of Parliament or other statutory bodies or unlawful corporations.

The people of the Commonwealth do indeed have the right of consent, the right to property and the right to trial by jury. Common law, the law of juries, overrides statute law and all other law, ie, maritime, admiralty, corporation, computer, canon,
30 commercial, etcetera. The only lawful jurisdiction in Australia is common law in a court also lawful within chapter 3, The Judicature, of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution. None of our courts are like that. The unlawful non-common-law corporation courts with no juries operating throughout the Commonwealth from the local courts, with ABN 68199215208, to the High Court of Australia, ABN – I
35 won’t read out the number – which has only one courtroom with a jury box out of four courtrooms in Sydney and Canberra and that has never had a jury trial. Incredible.

The High Court has never had a jury trial, and including the Land and Environment Court in inverted – well, “Tribunal” of New South Wales, ABN – I won’t read out
40 the number – making unlawful fines and forfeitures against residents of this state in favour of their corporation government and bankster masters or corporation mates in judge-only trials in Star Chamber kangaroo courts. The Habeas Corpus Act (1640) did away, at that time, with the Court of Star Chamber by way of massive fines and
45 disablement, and although this Act is a constitutional enactment in Australia, the judiciary blatantly and criminally disregard it and it is not enforced. Who owns Australia?

MR HANN: Can I ask you to make your conclusion, please, Cyril.

MR BAKER: Another – who owns Australia? Another constitutional enactment in New South Wales and the Commonwealth by virtue of the Imperial Acts Application Act (1969) and section 118 of the Commonwealth Constitutes that states:

Full faith and credit shall be given, throughout the Commonwealth, to the laws, the public Acts and records, and the judicial proceedings of every State –

10 is the rule of law. Magna Carta (1297) and encompassing the common law. The people have the right to trial by jury forever, and if they own land they own to infinity above the surface and to infinity below the surface or, in another way, whoever's is the soil, it is theirs all the way to heaven and all the way to hell. This is a legal maxim, as is "a man's home is his castle."

15

MR HANN: Cyril, I'll get you to wrap it up, please. We need to have the next speaker come through.

MR BAKER: That's not 10 minutes, I don't think, is it?

20

MR HANN: Yes, it is.

MR BAKER: It is a principle of property law that property owners have rights not only to the land itself but also to whatever is above and to an indefinite – infinite height, and whatever is below to an infinite depth, so people should own the land. The Rand government, through the Coal Acquisition Act (1981) took away the landowner rights to own coal beneath their land. One of the biggest or the most Stalinist acts that there's been committed in Australia probably ever. Thank you.

25

MR HANN: I'm sorry. I need to get you to wrap it up because we've got another but thank you very much. Much appreciated, Cyril.

30

MR BAKER: Do you want a copy of this or what?

MR HANN: Our next speaker is Owen Hasler

35

MR O. HASLER: I first of all acknowledge the original inhabitants of the land on which we gather today, the people of the Gamilaroi Nation, both past and present. Good morning, members of the IPC. I'm a 50-year resident of Gunnedah; 30 years as a head teacher of history at the local high school, 22 years as a councillor since 1981 in various terms, and four years as mayor, 2012-16. Gunnedah Shire has had a significant mining activity in our area for well over 100 years and consequently many of our residents are aware of the effects of such activity in the community in terms of economic, environmental and social impacts. Furthermore, I would suggest the majority of our residents are receptive to mining, with a caveat that such support is dependent upon the mining applications having gone through a rigorous, scientifically based approval process.

40

45

This was certainly the position of the council that I had the privilege to lead as mayor when I was required to attend the Murray Darling Association Conference at Barooga to defend the Shenhua's right to progress their development application to develop the Watermark Mine, and later to attend a meeting of our sister city, Lane
5 Cove, when there was a similar motion being proposed opposing that particular project. Therefore, I come to this IPC meeting today, or hearing with a record of supporting mining in our shire but believe that this should not presume that we accept such development at any cost or without the rigorous, scientifically based investigation mentioned earlier.

10 And this project raises some issues for people such as myself and I will now elaborate on a couple of them. I should firstly add that I have read most, if not all of the material on the IPCC website and was particularly interested in the first briefing of the then members of the IPC, and I think there's only one of those still remaining,
15 by Mike Young and Steven O'Donoghue of the department, where the officers appeared to present the mine as merely an extension of the original approved Vickery mine when in fact it is a new application with an extra 44 million tonne of coal to be produced and a production rate of 10 million tonne per year versus the 4.5 originally proposed, with an area nearly double the size, 490 hectares as opposed to 250.

20 To me, there are six key issues and one of the relates to rail spurs and I have just put up some examples of ones we saw when we went on a tour of Inner Mongolia back in 2015 looking at mining activity over there. The proposed new rail spur, looking at the detailed discussion, Mr Young suggests the proponent has chosen the proposed
25 route for three reasons, being, firstly, the company doesn't own the land on the possible northern route. Well, they do appear to be able to buy property elsewhere when they want to. Secondly, the northern route would involve joint venture partners. Yes, that could cause difficulties. And (c) the economic cost of the northern route would be higher in terms of operations.

30 No doubt, running the amount of trains they're going to run over 25 years for an extra 30 or 40 kilometres, it's going to outweigh the cost of building a railway across the floodplain. I'm pleased that Mr Young has suggested – and I quote from the transcript – and I quote:

35 *The northern line needs further consideration in the assessment, further justification from the company.*

40 I would suggest that the northern route is far more politically, locally acceptable than pursuing the present proposal but if that's the company's desire and preference, they should address the issues raised by Ms Erin Askew from WMA and her report on the impact of water on the rail line. I was pleased to see that Professor Willgoose was – highlighted this when he states – and I quote:

45 *Well, it really depends on the structures they use, like these things up here.*

If it's viaducts, then that's true but if they use culverts and she, Ms Askew, comments about not having enough information about where the viaducts are going to be and where the culverts are, with the culverts there are potentially downstream impacts as well. Wholeheartedly agree with that comment. I can't understand how
5 an approval would be given to a project of this nature without all the details of the engineering design work, etcetera, if it's going to go across the floodplain rather than taking the more politically acceptable option of going around the north to the present aqueduct over the line. Now, Mr Young responded:

10 *Sure, sure.*

And went on to say – and I quote:

15 *We need details about the design, exactly along the lines that you –*
Professor Willgoose –

have just indicated.

20 And Professor Willgoose continued:

Yes. I mean, they are engineering details but they have to be sorted out at some stage I think.

25 To which Mr Young agreed:

Yes.

And Professor Willgoose continued:

30 *You know, given this concern, they need to be sorted out now.*

Well, I couldn't agree more, Professor Willgoose. How can an approval be contemplated without the total engineering design for the proposal as this rail spur is
35 proposed to go across floodplains, crossing some kilometres and has the potential effect of both upstream and downstream flood effects, unless we use the sort of multiples that – did you show those other ones or just – so – and that has been highlighted by Janet Watt, Errol Darley and Geoff Hood and others, the lack of clarity in the design. Water impacts. I won't go into further detail on this complex
40 issue apart to say that in times of supreme drought, such as we're experiencing now, with Keepit Dam at virtually zero and many people carting water, etcetera, the issue of water as a precious resource is highlighted and we should have the evidence from the scientific experts to assure us that what is being proposed is, in fact, the likely, if not guaranteed, outcome. In terms of cumulative impacts of mining, on page 54 of
45 the transcript Mr Young states – quote:

Social impacts of the project and mining, in general, there is some level of concern in the community about the cumulative impacts of mining.

5 This is certainly the case, as demonstrated in a number of ways including a two
speed economy with who – those on fixed incomes and benefits competing with
those with significantly lower – sorry, higher incomes. This was demonstrated to the
local community and council in particular recently when we were approached by the
local police association to provide housing at ratepayers expense because the
10 accommodation in Gunnedah is too dear and police officers are travelling from
Tamworth where it is cheaper to live, rather than live in Gunnedah where they work.
That’s an example of the sorts of affordable housing issues.

15 Another issue of pretty much concern to myself and a lot of people in mining
communities is the impartiality of the DPEs assessment report. As the Association
of Mining and Energy Related Council’s appointed delegate to the Resources
Advisory Forum set up by the DPE secretary, Carolyn McNally, in order to provide
advice and feedback on the various reviews of planning policies taking place over the
last three years, I was particularly concerned to read the Lisa Corbyn report, after
20 having pursued it for about nine or 12 months before we got a copy of it. And that
report was very critical of the DPE assessment report progress. and I presume the
members of the panel are aware of that report, and her conclusions demonstrated
clearly different perceptions between the mining industry proponents to that of
community and environmental groups.

25 The former, that is, industry reps, consider the assessment reports to be impartial and
appropriate. But the community and environmental groups consider such
assessments to be far from impartial and often ignore community issues whilst
actively facilitating approvals and possibly biasing IPC decisions. Thirdly, the
government decision makers need to be – more accurately reflect and undertake the
30 research and analysis of both the positive and negative impacts, not just the
economic impacts of mining proposals. And, fourthly, councils and their
communities need to be given far more respect and attention during the approval
process.

35 These were the findings of Lisa Corbyn. Ms Corbyn had some 15 recommendations
of significant change and very little positive to say about the present system for
implementation and RAF members, that’s the Resources Advisory Forum members,
were informed in our last meeting in November by DPE deputy-secretary, Marcus
Ray, that all 15 had been accepted and would be implemented. We haven’t seen too
40 much of that implementation to date but we will wait with interest and with bated
breath. In the meantime, I hope that the commission questions the DPE advice very
carefully and seeks independent analysis, where considered pertinent, and analyses
all community submissions such that our community can have increased confidence
in the process, not less confidence.

45 MR HANN: All right. I will get you to - - -

MR HASLER: I hope that we can say that at the end of this process today.

MR HANN: - - - wrap it up if you could. Thank you.

5 MR HASLER: Thank you very much. I have got two other points but I will leave that here.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Owen. Our next speaker is Andrew Darley.

10 MR A. DARLEY: Good afternoon. My name is Andrew Darley and I'm a cropping farmer between Emerald Hill and Boggabri. My family has been farming here for over 30 years and after completing a degree in agronomy at the University of Queensland, I've decided to come home and begin the next generation of our family farm. I would like to state that I am not 100 per cent against mining of any kind,
15 however, I am opposed to the Vickery Extension Project proposed by Whitehaven Coal. The major concern I have with the extension project is the proposed railway spur. This proposed spur crosses the river and floodplain between Emerald Hill and Boggabri and for me, I see this causing a variety of problems for surrounding farmers throughout the entirety of the floodplain.

20 Whitehaven have said that the railway line will be built above the flood level and will therefore not affect neighbouring properties, however, this information I, and many others, believe is based on modelling from consultants which they employ to give results favouring Whitehaven. There is also a lot of – a lack of detail with the
25 proposed design, including whether pylons are to be used through the entirety of the line, how deep these pylons will be drilled into the ground and if this will impact our underwater – underground water supply. There is also no height of the railway line listed across the entire floodplain. I do not understand how they can tell the
30 community with such confidence that this proposed rail spur will not affect the flooding and water supply of the floodplain when they aren't prepared to share the details of its construction.

As Whitehaven have no other objective other than making as much money in as little
35 possible time, I believe they are going to build the railway line to the lowest possible height due to it being a cheaper option. This is a major concern as the modelling on the projected floods are predominantly based on the Namoi River and seem to ignore other tributaries, such as Kolego and Rangari Creeks. When these other tributaries are flowing at the same time as the Namoi, the railway line is very likely to alter the flow of water across the floodplain where nearby farmers are going to be severely
40 impacted. Other impacts this railway line is going to have other than water issues which Whitehaven are more than happy to ignore include damage to crop quality. My family's farm is less than a stone's throw away from the proposed railway line, just on the other side of the neighbouring boundary. It is expected that throughout my farming career, I'm expecting coal dust to blow off carriages onto adjacent fields
45 contaminating various grains and cotton crops which ultimately is a loss of income for my family.

I also believe that the liveability of the farm and surrounding neighbours will be severely impacted. With our current dwellings being approximately five kilometres from the proposed mine and 450 metres from the railway line, our current standards are set to decline. Noise pollution will be a big issue as the mine will run 24/7 and up to 10 to 12 trains a day passing, that being four at night. That is likely to cause sleep disturbances and ruin the serenity of the area. Dust pollution is another area which I'm particularly worried about as I believe Whitehaven are a rogue mining company due to incidences of blasting at their Maules Creek Mine affecting many residents and even the Fairfax Primary School.

I believe it is possible that coal and coal and blasting dust could land in my house, rainwater tanks, troughs and dams. This could bring a variety of health hazards for myself, my family and future families and a large number of our neighbours, as well. To conclude, if this Vickery Extension Project is approved, I fear not only for my farming future, but the Community Farming Group and I believe this extension project is too high a risk and it has the potential to spoil agriculture for my and future generations. Thank you for your time.

MR HANN: Thank you, Andrew. Thank you, Andrew. If we could have the next speaker, Barry Thomson.

MR B. THOMSON: Good afternoon, panel and ladies and gentlemen. My name is Barry Thomson. I'm a real estate agent the farm for 60 years before that – 55 years. I'm a real estate agent at the moment and have a property in the Maules Creek area. And I take an active role in the community. I've been a past president of the Pony Club and current president now at the moment and on the Maules Creek Hall Committee for a number of years when I was out there, then moving to Boggabri. I'm a president of the Clay Target Club, president – past president of the Boggabri Campdraft Committee and a member of the Rural Fire Service for 28 years and an assistant treasurer of the Boggabri Showground Trust. So I'm pretty heavily involved in the community.

And just regarding the coal mines, they are not all bad news. Just to make a few comments on being in the real estate game. 90 per cent of my sales are related to coal mine workers, whether they be houses or lifestyle blocks someone who works in the coal mine. And the rural properties are a different story – different buyers there. But the hobby farms and the houses are mostly someone who works in the coal mines. So it's good for my job, yes. They purchase the lifestyle blocks or a second home to – for rentals, which is great – or an investment. And Boggabri itself – in the street of a morning or an afternoon, about 5.30 in the afternoon – between 5.30 and 6.30, you cannot get a park in the Boggabri main street for coal mine workers buying alcohol or food or something from the IGA or going over to the hotel for a drink. And you go in the hotel and it's full of fluoro shirts every afternoon. So it's good for the town there – that part of it.

And the food outlets in Boggabri – there's several food outlets – the Grab & Go on the highway there, you all know, on the left-hand side going through Boggabri

towards Narrabri. At about 5.30 to 6 o'clock in the morning – and it's just packed with people getting lunches or buying drinks – something on the way to work. And then there's another one called The Bluebird Café. It's just down the main street – the same way. They start work at about 4.30 in the morning and it's all related to the coal mine workers getting something there to go to work with, so it's good for the town there. And the other one is the service station at the top end of town. It has got – the same way. It sells food, too, and the same thing, every morning people call in and getting there for lunch etcetera.

10 And the Vault accommodation the main street – the Vault accommodation in the main street – the Vault is booked out quite often regularly with coal mine workers coming up there and staying there in town, so it's good for that area. And the local plumber in Boggabri – Peter and Donna – they were there about 12 years ago and there was only – just a two-man show it was. And since the coal mine has been
15 there, now they they employ 15 staff now, so that's good for the area, and the young ones in town. And the – McKechnie's Garage in Boggabri – I was speaking to Jamie the other day. 80 per cent of his work comes from coal mine workers. They drop the vehicle in there for – to get repaired, go to work, pick it up when they come home. So it's good for the town, too, I think it is, yes. And the Boggabri
20 Lions Club – they do barbecues for the mines regularly, every week. And this came from Geoff Eather only last week. They take \$40,000 a year off the mines for the barbecues. Like, that's pretty good money. That's – the Lions Club do that. And that goes back into the town. And all the meat they take to the barbecue is purchased off the local butcher, so it's good for the town again

25 Now, the drought has had a dramatic effect on the rural community for the last two or three years and it's still going on and farm employment has been very short. For a young fellow to get a job on the farm, it's nearly impossible. So that's for the mines – thanks to the mines, again. The young people have been able to stay in their area,
30 secure in jobs. If this wasn't available, they would move to the cities to seek work and they would be gone forever. And that often happens with young ones. They can't get work in the country and they go to the city, whether it be Sydney or Brisbane or Newcastle, and they stay there.

35 Now, the Vickery Coal Extension has caused a bit of a debate either way and I think it will cause more employment and I hope that they will be filled by local workers if it goes ahead, anyway – and I think it will. And where the mine is going to be
40 hill – it's probably a good place for it. It's not that good, the country, but stay away from the river. And I think they will. I'm sure of that, actually. And Whitehaven need to comply with all the following conditions handed down by all the Departments in relation to the guidelines for the Vickery Extension. And stay away from the river, like I said, and I'm sure they will. Thank you.

45 The article in The Land paper there a few weeks back – and it's funny how people comment on things in The Land paper about the crossing at Maules Creek. Where has the water gone? I lived there for 55 – 60 years at Maules Creek and that went dry in 2002, I think it was. It was dry for seven months then, it was. And there

was no mines in the area at that time. Only three year ago, there's one of them. So it had been dry before. And I think they've still got water – that was in December that photo was taken. There's quite a lot of water then. So there was no mines in the area then to blame for that one. So that's how it goes there.

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Now, I feel if the community and the coal mines could work together, it would be very beneficial for everyone. I know it takes but if we all work together, it would be great for the towns and the country areas for sure. It would be so good. And, in finishing, I do feel Whitehaven could do more for Boggabri itself. And Boggabri has been missing out a bit in the community. I think Whitehaven could do more for Boggabri. And I think they will, actually, in the future. I'm sure they will. And if the drought continues this year – I hope it doesn't but if it does, we might be all looking for a job there at the coal mine, including myself. So thank you very much.

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15 MR HANN: Thank you, Barry. We will take a break now for 45 minutes and that would then bring us back at 1.45. Thank you.

RECORDING SUSPENDED

[1.00 pm]

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RECORDING RESUMED

[1.47 pm]

25 MR HANN: We might get started now with our next registered speaker, David Ellis, if you're ready to go. Is David Ellis in the room here now? Or does anyone know where David Ellis is or whether he is ready to speak? Last call for David Ellis. All right. Okay. Righto. So in the absence of David Ellis, who we don't seem to be able to locate, Namoi Water, originally represented by Jon-Maree Baker – I think, Sally Hunter, you're going to speak on their behalf?

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MS S. HUNTER: Yes. Good afternoon, everyone. Jon-Maree Baker was supposed to be doing this, but she's had a family health emergency and she can't come today, unfortunately, to speak on behalf of Namoi Water. I also worked for Namoi Water, part-time, as a policy officer. Unfortunately, I can't bring the breadth of experience and technical knowledge that Jon would have today, but, yes, here I am. Namoi Water represents the water-access licence holders in the Namoi catchment. We're a non-profit, non-political organisation, seeking to achieve sustainable irrigation industry that supports the long-term environmental, economic and social needs of our local communities.

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We have over 800 members, who use both surface water and groundwater for agricultural purposes. Our members generate a revenue in excess of \$800 million per annum; the majority of these, more than 90 per cent, are family farming operations. This production is solely possible due to the secure supply of high-quality water. Our members have experienced over two decades of painful water reforms that, in some cases, have forced people out of agriculture altogether. In the

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last few years, we've seen farmers in this region, on average, lose 50 per cent of the entitlements that they had paid for and planned their farming around.

5 We find it galling to hear that Whitehaven claims repeatedly that they only use one to two per cent of the water in the Namoi Valley. This is untrue, in reality. Whitehaven Coal own 3000 megalitre high-security licence for the Namoi River, plus considerable ground general-security water. After water flows into the river, entitlements are allocated, first and foremost, to essential supplies, such as town water needs, and also to high-security water licence holders. It's then allocated also
10 for transmission losses, where water is absorbed into the river when it's put down and it – in dry conditions. What's left over is divvied up for general-security licence holders.

15 Whitehaven owns 88 per cent of all the high-security licences in the valley. They get their water first. The total entitlements for the river is 248,000 megalitres, but the majority of these are general-security licence holders who rarely get their full allocation. Over the last 10 years, the mining industry use of the Namoi water resources was, on average, eight per cent of the total water take each year. In this year that we're in currently, they're taken 12 per cent of the river resource. This
20 excludes the surface water that is captured on the mine site which no longer flows to the river and no longer recharges groundwater systems. Furthermore, as Whitehaven is limited by the amount of water that they can store on site, they incur increased transmission losses, as they can demand water out of irrigation season when the river system is dry. So if, like in 2015 – and Whitehaven needed 300 megalitres of water
25 out of irrigation season, to get this to them, it cost the system 3000 megalitres of water.

30 The Namoi River is literally life-giving. And this stretch of the river is particularly important. The Vickery infrastructure will be located a mere 400 metres from the Namoi River and some have calculated that it'll be even closer. This stretch of the river is part of the Boggabri demonstration reach. This is a 120-kilometre stretch of the Namoi River, chosen for its rich biodiversity, that has taken part in a multi-million dollar federal government program, where over 20 landholders cooperated to improve the riverine environment. The mining industry practice of releasing
35 contaminated water during high-flow events risks this biodiversity of this reach.

The Vickery Project expects to have discharges into the river twice per year under median climatic conditions. It expects overflows into the river once in every three years. Chronic toxicity to fish was not assessed in the EIS, nor do they propose to
40 monitor the water quality in the dams that will be released into the river, apart from suspended solids. Contaminants such as aluminium, silver, mercury, boron and arsenic are expected to be discharged into this life-giving river without accountability. Maules Creek Mine offers a living eye to the future for Vickery. Our review of the water impacts of Maules Creek Mine has eroded confidence in the
45 proponent to safely operate within its conditions of approval.

At Maules Creek, it has become almost impossible to monitor the true impacts of water due to mining. During the PAC process, there was huge community concern about water. And the PAC registered this and upheld it by setting some conditions of approval. Five years on and our review has found these following things. Firstly,
5 the water management plan, which should have been updated at least nine times, with the – has not been, and the current one that’s still operating was – became redundant in 2016. Number 2, the water model on which all the assumptions about water use is based should have been recalibrated at least twice and an independent review of it undertaken at least four times; it hasn’t.

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Thirdly, despite the critical importance of groundwater for the people of Maules Creek, all but one groundwater baseline-monitoring bore has been destroyed by mining. It is virtually impossible to compare the original baseline data with current levels of groundwater. We now hear that something like 25 private bores around
15 Maules Creek have gone dry, but the burden to prove this falls to the landholder and there’s no monitoring data to use. And, again, we see this pattern in the EIS. The Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Water has stated in its review of the EIS it is unclear from the EIS which bores will be monitored.

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Fourthly, miners are required to buy groundwater licences to offset their impact of cutting through an aquifer when they dig their open-cut pits. At Maules Creek, they have done this. In the very same groundwater zone, we have seen the Minister enact a cease to pump order on irrigators when they thought critical human need was at risk. However, in a mining situation, it is impossible to stop water from running into
25 a pit, so they will never be able to enact a cease to pump. There is a loophole here that the mining industry is exploiting. This, essentially, means their take is more like a high-security take; they get their water no matter what the conditions are, and yet this is supposed to be a general-security licence.

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We’ve outlined in our submission a range of concerns about the EIS, but we’ll just draw your attention to a few things here today, given the time limits. The Namoi region has already developed a cumulative assessment tool to look at the risks of mining at a catchment level; however, the Department of Planning has not taken up this tool. We are now at a tipping point between acceptable and not acceptable
35 impacts in the Namoi, given the cumulative impact of all the mines, along with their continual post-approval expansions and modifications. The Department of Planning has said that they are developing their own cumulative impact tool, but we’ve not yet seen this. And there is no oversight at a catchment level as to the full cumulative impacts due to this piecemeal approach, and Vickery is just another example of this.

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We request that the IPC demand the Department’s cumulative impacts tool to be used in this assessment. Part of the consideration in approving these projects should be what happens if proponents don’t mitigate the impacts? The Department of Planning have said that the IPC conditions often end up being difficult to enforce,
45 and EPA have often discussed their lack of resources to be able to fully police the conditions. If the conditions of approval cannot be enforced, then they are not worth having. And this should be considered during the assessment phase.

It's disappointing to see the heavy reliance in the EIS on averages. The proponent has owned this site for about five years. Monitoring has been occurring here for, probably, more than 15 years and the proponent has been operating in the region for many years, and yet real annual data is not used. This year, in particular, shows us
5 that averages are not reality and the situation in one year can, obviously, be very different to another year. One simple example is the EIS uses an average annual consumptive take in the Namoi of 11,500 megs per year, which would make, interestingly, Whitehaven's take around 26 per cent, by the way, when the actual take – and this is from publically available information – in the last few years have
10 ranged from 8000 megs to 23,000 megs per year.

Using a number that's almost half the actual has big repercussions for the assumptions made. Records have been kept on flooding in the region since 1891, yet modelling is based on 1955 event being the largest, and the rainfall information used
15 is from 1987. Again, this type of data does not account for natural variability in climatic conditions that are set to increase in frequency and severity during the lifespan of the project. It's disappointing in this day and age to see the proposal to leave a final void. Quoting the EIS:

20 *The final void is predicted to have continued inflow of up to 180 megs a year for another 300 years. It will act as a permanent groundwater sink. It will continually evaporate which will lead to progressively increased salinity, and the project will create a permanent reversal in groundwater flow direction.*

25 This is an unnecessary risk for the Namoi catchment to burden into the future. We'd also like to draw the IPC's attention to new information released since submissions and since the original EIS approval was given. The proponent has paid for their own studies that show minimal impact to water and no requirement for further water licences. However, with our much smaller budget, we've had the work reviewed by
30 one expert, Dr Andrea Broughton, who concurred with the findings of the review of the water data by the Independent Expert Scientific Committee.

In particular, we draw your attention to the Independent Expert Scientific Committee's advice, section 1, 1(a), part 3. Forget that. We believe this is critical
35 and refers to a recent report just released in December by Rowe et al. The entire premise of the Vickery extension EIS is, in fact – and the original EIS as well, is that it's based on groundwater modelling that's now being questioned by the IESC. The IESC is based on a model that uses a specific storage coefficient and is thought – this is thought to be underestimated. This equation tells us the volume of water that can
40 be removed from an aquifer for a resultant drop in hydraulic head. I believe other speakers have also mentioned this this morning, Warwick Giblin, and, yesterday, Tony Pickard.

45 Ultimately, the IESC has said that the specific storage parameter has been overestimated in the EIS, which creates an underestimation of the ground water level drawdown in layer 2, which includes our very precious and productive Namoi alluvium. This means the project is not low risk and could result in non-compliance

with the New South Wales Aquifer Interference Policy. The model author said that the model was too big to be able to run different climatic scenarios, but, in this day and age, this is a totally inadequate excuse. This is a highly significant finding by the IESC and puts in jeopardy all of the water assumptions made in the original EIS
5 as well as in the extension. We'd seek the opportunity to further discuss this with the IPC and have our experts speak to this issue in a private session at your earliest convenience. We look forward to that.

10 MR HANN: Thank you, Sally, representing Namoi Water. Our next speaker is Keith Blanch.

MR K. BLANCH: Good afternoon, Chairman and panels. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today in favour of the Whitehaven Vickery Expansion. I am a proud farmer and landholder at Boggabri. We moved to this district in 1988, 30
15 years ago. I was raised on the land in the Manilla area, as were the previous three generations of my family. I enjoy farming and couldn't imagine myself doing anything else. We have raised and educated our three children here in Boggabri and Gunnedah, and have always endeavoured to buy local whenever I could. I support my local town and community. My wife and I are in the Boggabri Lions. I'm a
20 member of the Boggabri RSL, Boggabri Tractor Shed, member of the Wean Race Committee. I'm a member of the Drovers' Campfire Committee, and I'm vice-captain of the Nandewar Bushfire Brigade.

We have lived within six kilometres of the mining for last 18 years, and, before that,
25 Vickery Mine, when it was operating back in the 90s. I have two employees and my son Ambrose, who has done a degree in business and has come back to the farm. I also lease land from Whitehaven Coal, as do several farmers in my area. I do lease land adjacent to the Vickery Project. Whitehaven has been proactive in granting longer leases to ensure security for leasees and has adopted a long-term approach to
30 ensure each leasee uses best practice to manage the land so it is not only productive, but sustainable in the future.

Whitehaven has endeavoured to evaluate the farming practices on the lease farm by an auditing panel consisting of two a financial expert, Whitehaven representative
35 and a stock and station agent. These audits identify any problems arising on the lease farms and assist in resolving any problem. 70 per cent of these farms are outdated. Invasive box-thorns and gal burr need controlling. Stockyards, water infrastructure and fencing is an ongoing maintenance. Whitehaven are working together with farmers on these lease lands to address all these matters. We have
40 biosecurity plans in place and aim to have paddocks well fenced and watered for new stock arrivals in the 24 hour lock-up.

It is a positive time in the Nandewar farming district, because Whitehaven are encouraging existing farming families who have sons and daughters to stay on the
45 land, thus keeping the active and helping small towns grow. Looking back, from 1991 to 1995, district farmers faced adverse dry conditions. Our agriculture industry was challenged with the crash of the wool floor price and the widespread bans on

cattle export due to contamination from Helix and the cotton trash, which was introduced as a supplementing drought fodder. During those difficult years, the presence of mining in the district helped carry the local economy and kept our towns alive.

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Then, in 1995, 1996, we witnessed the closure of the Gunnedah Colliery, which had operated for 100 years. Likewise, around this time, the Vickery Mine, then owned by Rio Tinto, also ceased to operate. Both were big employers in the local area. As a result, people did leave the district. I began to notice commercial buildings and retail shops falling vacant. I have recently spoke to the locals about those years. Most recall it was a tough time to be in business.

15 It was in 1999, 2000 that Keith Ross established Whitehaven Coal. It was a small group of men taking a chance, rolling the dice with a high risk of failure. I recall the local papers often running headlines, articles following the planning and approval process, full of hope for the future, breathing life back into Gunnedah and Boggabri, especially with the closure or the Abattoir in 1997, which was a big loss to the town. The success and growth of Whitehaven has created a footprint in the Moore Creek, Wean and Nandewar districts.

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Farmers can feel threatened from mining, which is understandable. It is an issue that needs to be resolved, but achievable. In my opinion, based on my own experience, I believe that farming and mining can work together. I consider Whitehaven a company similar to an agriculture of super farm company, in that they have to be always looking to the long-term future. I understand that the resources of Rocglen and Sunnyside only have approximately 18 months of life left. Werris Creek Mine has seven years left and Tarrawonga Mine is already halfway through. So I understand the need for Vickery to beef up and perform.

30 Regarding water, I have had personal experience growing up on an irrigation property on the Peel River in the 60s and 70s. We grew about 14,000 square hay bales per year. We irrigated from wells five foot round and 18 foot deep that did 30,000 gallons per hour. Dad went from diesel to electric. When the power poles were being put in, they kept on hitting water at five feet on the lucerne flats. My sister and I always went fishing when we could, catching yellowbelly and catfish. The water was clear and beautiful to swim in.

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40 Chaffey Dam was completed in 1979, and four years later, we found ourselves digging our wells deeper to 23 feet, where we hit bedrock. The water was draining back to the river. We abandoned our wells and went back to the river. We then realised that once Chaffey got back to 50 per cent, we could only use 50 per cent of our licence. The river literally died. The river stopped flowing and the water was no longer clear. In 1986, we had to fence off the whole river so the stock didn't walk across to the neighbours.

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In 1984, we purchased a farm at Goodooga. We were there then. We had tended it. We weren't there long, and attended a meeting at the Goodooga Pub regarding stock

and domestic flows. Cubbie Station in Queensland had built a storage to grow cotton which was affecting the river system. It affected three main rivers: the Culgoa, Bokhara and Narran that flowed into New South Wales. The Narran River, which was known in the 70s as one of the best fishing rivers out west, simply died. There
5 was little water getting through, and any water that did come through went down, directed into the Bokhara, because of the township of Goodooga depended on it.

Farming along the Narran River then – farmers along the Narran River had to build their own water storages to be able to pump when the Narran flowed for stock and water, so in my lifetime I’ve personally witnessed the extreme change in two river
10 systems. The demise of these rivers had nothing to do with mining. Dams are necessary but, in my opinion, they do come at a cost, sacrificing the beauty of our rivers and turning them into pipelines. River management has been an ongoing problem for many decades, and we now find ourselves in the situation, with Lake
15 drying up and hundreds of fish that could be 50 years old left to die.

None of us should be pointing the finger at each other. We should work together and plan, put a plan in place, when levels get down to 20 per cent in dams, act for the sake of our dams and rivers. In closure, I again say that farming and mining can
20 work together. I know many farmers who work in the mining industry, both full-time or part-time, especially through a drought year like this one. They are using mining as a tool to create cash flow and keep their dream alight, keep the family farm growing and expanding so they can work side-by-side with their sons and daughters going forward. Thank you.

25 MR HANN: Thank you, Keith. Our next speaker is Libby Laird.

MS L. LAIRD: Thank you, and good afternoon, IPC commissioners. Our organisation is arguably the most influential women’s organisation in New South
30 Wales, working to improve the condition of women and family in rural areas. At our 2018 state conference, our state patron, His Excellency The General The Honourable David Hurley said of the Country Women’s Association, “You have been the backbone and, to some extent, the saviour of generations of families that live in some of the harshest and driest agrarian land. The Country Women’s Association makes it
35 possible for families to continue to live in those regions.” Our Maules Creek branch was formed one year later, in 1923. Our branch has some members who have one or more or their family working in the coal industry, including Whitehaven Coal. We acknowledge this. People need jobs. Towards the Vickery Extension EIS, our position is contained in the CWA Just Transition Policy, and that is:

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*That the Country Women’s Association of New South Wales supports positive action on climate change by calling for and supporting the implementation of a plan for transforming regions, communities and workers from fossil fuel extraction, processing and burning sectors to new, inclusive and sustainable
45 economies.*

Our members have overwhelmingly supported a move away from coal-dependent regions and an openness to new economically, socially, environmentally and climatically responsibly possibilities. We object to the Vickery Coal Extension. Our community's – our Maules Creek community's experience is painful, and we do not
5 want to see this pain spread further. In 2011, the Maules Creek branch made a submission to the Maules Creek Coal Mine Environmental Impact Statement. Our submission outlined our fears regarding health impacts, pollution, climate breakdown and water loss. Disappointingly, our fears have come to pass.

10 We fear that the Namoi Valley could become the next Hunter Valley. The Muswellbrook and Singleton areas have the worst air quality in the state, a place where there are many days of the year when asthmatics and the infirmed are recommended to stay indoors. This is fast on the way to becoming a reality for the Namoi Valley, with the most recent OE&H rating of air quality in this region being
15 ranked as poor. We don't see how this is going to improve with the approval of more mines in this valley. Apart from this Vickery mega-mine, if you are not aware, we can reveal that the largest mine, Maules Creek, is already in the process of planning its next expansion to the north of the current footprint. This will bring dust and blasting impacts even closer to our residences, farms and our public school. This
20 expansion agenda is not going to stop with the Vickery expansion.

Today's hearing for the Vickery Extension EIS is another step in reducing the quality of the environment we all live in. You, the commissioners, have immense power in your hands to make determination – to determine the fate of not only the town of
25 Boggabri but all of those who live along the proposed railway route and our region as a whole. The decision you make will impact the health and financial fortunes of families in the area, a grave responsibility. Therefore, we do not want to see any fast-tracking of the IPC process. We are concerned about the last-minute resignations from the panel and the lack of thoroughness in the Department of
30 Planning and Whitehaven interviews with the IPC panel.

Nonetheless, the DPE has put key issues to the IPC and has also noted other and additional issues, these being Aboriginal and historical heritage, greenhouse gas emissions, traffic and transport, social and economic. We ask you, once you address
35 these, and if the IPC commissioners recommend approval with conditions – we ask you, once you address these, and if the IPC commissioners recommend approval with conditions, what message do you send to our region?

Yesterday, you heard the CEO pitch the Vickery project based on projections of coal
40 consumption growth in Asia that will lead to more than a two degree global warming and a failure to meet our Paris Agreement goals. We cannot agree that it is just for current decision-makers to continue building this regional coal economy for our children, a legacy that will result in our region carrying the reputational burden of being climate wreckers. The CEO also, as you may recall, described the company to
45 the IPC commissioners as a pure play coal company, a one-trick multinational. It considers itself to be low-cost, but to us, the company has proven to be very high-cost.

This is a company that has been given by our governments, against the will of our community, a mining lease in a critically endangered public forest at a time when the world is crying out for old growth carbon sinks, a company that can apparently afford to buy thousands of hectares of local farmland and move out long-term food-producing families, a company that has moved a major mining operation into Maules Creek and then denied it has caused any impacts on our water system, a company that has been given the ability to self-report and not be subject to approval conditions that are objective and measurable, a company that paid no tax on a two-billion-dollar-plus income, and a company that is then given the opportunity by governments to take local public school children on science tours.

One tour, for example, under the banner “Future EDU” was provided by Whitehaven Coal to the Maules Creek Primary students. It took the children on site, and then gave them a lesson on how science and industry experts conduct air quality and noise monitoring. This tour was then reported in the local paper as being a perfect fit with the school’s environmental change and sustainability unit. In terms of education for the future and what you have heard yesterday, for example, this is rock bottom. A non-tax-paying multinational, the lowest cost coal producer, should not be part of futures education in our region. The government should not be allowing this privileged access. The company has been given enough.

The families in our region deserve a less risky base for their jobs future. Therefore, when considering the Vickery mine, we request that you take into account the environmental track record of Whitehaven Coal Company, which I draw to your attention. Whitehaven Coal was penalised by having its environmental protection licence re-rated at level 3, high risk, in 2017, a risk level shared by only two other coal mines out of 49 in New South Wales. Despite the company overcoming this immediate crisis in its environmental standing, there is a lengthy history of complaints, and then internal investigations by both the Department of Planning and the EPA. We ask that you look into these issues.

At Maules Creek in 2012, the holding of the Planning Assessment Commission hearing resulted in a loss of our merits appeals rights. It was the first project to be subject to this rule. History is repeating itself here today. As we understand that by holding a public IPC hearing, the community cannot take the proponent to a court to appeal the merits of the approval. Therefore, we call on the panel to thoroughly consider all the evidence that is presented today and not to shy away from seeking to validate or conduct further investigations because of your time constraints. Such major industrial complexes like a major coalmine and car washer, crusher and loader complex should have an onsite government representative to observe the operations closely, not attempt to investigate after the fact from a long distance.

Among its many impacts, Whitehaven threatens the groundwater and surface flow of the Namoi River. Maules Creek farmers have faced loss of groundwater never before experienced in over 100 years of records. The far-reaching effects of such a catastrophe go beyond culture, beyond household use, but even to the extent of endangerment of the community because there may not be enough adequate water

for firefighting. Reading the EIS and the transcripts of Mr Young and Mr O'Donoghue's interview with the previous panel members, I note much discussion about the drawdown being from the Permian rock source, not the groundwater. My, how history repeats itself. This is exactly the same argument we faced at Maules
5 Creek. The valley has lost its groundwater and we too are embroiled in unending debate about whether the mine is the cause with the same argument – water is coming from the Permian rock source, not the groundwater aquifer. Now is the time to invoke the precautionary principle and not let this happen again.

10 We have perused many of the submissions in favour of the Vickery extension. Overwhelmingly, the submissions are short and focused on jobs. There is a strong theme which appears to be, in the pro-approval submissions, a belief that Whitehaven coal has an excellent environmental track record. And, by the way, I know that the previous panel members have discussed the issue of the Kamilaroi
15 Highway overpass. The last time this multinational company promised an overpass was when it was trying to gain approval for the Tarrawonga Mine extension. The overpass has still not been built. And a final word on the interruptions to the passenger train: countrywomen, particularly our older member and families, value the passenger train to Sydney. This is critical for medical appointments and
20 independent travel. This service is regularly, and with very little notice, interrupted by coal trains and late or, worse, replaced with a bus.

The social impact is unacceptable. Yesterday, the ARTC spokesperson Michael Clancy said, in support of this project, of the 250 trains in hunter Valley, only half
25 are coal trains. We are in Namoi Valley, not the Hunter Valley, and I can report that a Leard Forest Research Node investigation into train movements over a 24-hour period conducted November '17 – 2017, sorry, peak harvest time recorded 23 trains: one passenger train, one cancelled passenger train, two freight trains, two grain trains and the remaining 18 were coal trains. Despite the New South Wales State
30 Government spending \$62 million in Gunnedah for a rail overpass, our children and families do not need the health impacts of 125 daily coal trains and the associated explosion in mining that will necessarily accompany this. Thank you.

35 MR HANN: Thank you. Thank you, Libby. Elizabeth O'Hara.

MS E. O'HARA: My name is Elizabeth O'Hara. I'm the secretary of the Wando Conservation and Cultural Centre Incorporated, Maules Creek. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the elders past, present and emerging of the Gomeri, the traditional custodians of this land, and thank you for the opportunity to have a
40 hearing here today. Wando Conservation and Cultural Centre is an environmental centre which conducts tours with – and educational activities. It engages in policy development and environmental monitoring. I – the – our full submission is too long to present in 10 minutes, so I've chosen a few points to speak to. Firstly, we will address three matters found under point 6, point 7: other issues, traffic and transport,
45 global warming and final void, and then describe four instance of Whitehaven's failure to care for community or even for its own approval undertakings as they already exist.

So speaking firstly to the issue of traffic and transport, a number of people have referred to this already in the – over the past two days. Traffic approvals, we have experienced, have been subject to approval creep, a process by which the mine simply ignores conditions in approvals until such time as the government concedes
5 the changed conditions. This means the Kamilaroi Highway now sees a mining related vehicle turning off or entering every 45 seconds at peak traffic times, and that’s based on the company’s own data. Under the current plans, this – for the Vickery extension, this road traffic would be compounded until such time as the rail spur is built, perhaps as long as 12 years. As previously noted, this transport and
10 traffic is relegated to point 6, point 7, “other issues” in the responses. We ask that the panel examine closely the submission paper which I’m about to present on – briefing paper presented by Leard Forest Research Node, Whitehaven Coal Transport Developments. It’s really just too much to ask of a community.

15 Second thing I would like to just quickly address is this question of global warming. The single most pressing issue of our time is cursorily dismissed as another issue. Should there be, in fact, no requirement to consider this matter in accordance with the requirements of the EPA Act and applicable government policies and guidelines, this would constitute, in our view, a damning indictment of the planning process and
20 be sufficient reason to call a halt to the entire process. Until the government institutes a planning regime appropriate to the 21st century, it is just not adequate to accept, as the preliminary issues report appears to do in 6.3, that emissions would be comparable to other coal mining projects and would – then would contribute a small proportion to Australian and global emissions. Assessment of emissions must
25 include those produced not only during the mining, but during transportation and burning of these fossil fuels.

The third thing I would like to just address is the question of the final void. We note on page 33 of the preliminary issues report that a number of government authorities
30 raise issues regarding the final void or final landform and the associated long-term groundwater impacts including the DRG, EPA and Gunnedah and Narrabri Shire Councils. The authorities recommend that further work should be done to investigate alternatives to the final void. The fact that Whitehaven did not even model the groundwater implications of alternative final void scenarios suggests the company
35 fails to realise that the practice of mining companies walking away from final voids is no longer acceptable to the wider Australian community. Whitehaven’s position that the cost of partially or completely filling the void, 440 million or \$600 million, renders the action not reasonable or feasible is irrelevant to considerations of conservation or planning.
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The cost of filling the void should be considered an expense incurred in production. It is a real part of the cost of coal production. Wando CCC urges that the mine be required to complete the filling of any final void should this project proceed. I would like now to turn to one of the reasons Wando CCC feels that it’s in a position to
45 make some contribution is because our lived experiences show that Whitehaven really has failed to live up to the conditions that we would hope and expect that it would fulfil. The first example I can give you is with the question of a Sunnyside

Mine. Sunnyside should be rehabilitated by now. It's still in care and maintenance mode, and we understand the company will be allowed to walk away, having trashed biodiversity, leaving a void and impacting on water. There needs to be an understanding that the best practice level of operation employed by the company is, in fact, bottom line practice. It is not the leading practice we have a right to expect.

In July – a second example of this: in July 2017, the Department of Planning and Environment had to step in to stop Whitehaven's Maules Creek mine from clearing a section of the TSR adjacent to Leard State Forest in the winter months. The designated clearing window is between 15 February and 30 April to prevent vulnerable fauna being harmed or killed while hibernating, nesting or raising young, but the mining company was perfectly happy to push an attempt to break through that. In July 2017, the EPA of New South Wales, which is responsible for issuing the licence EPL 20221 for the Maules Creek Mine, escalated the risk level, as we have just heard, of the mine from level 2 to level 3, the highest risk classification.

At its AGM, Paul Flynn the CEO of Whitehaven claimed that the reasons for this were administrative, not actually risk in terms of environmental outcomes and were based on complaints from one serial complainant. Mr Flynn's claims were not correct. The fact is that a number of noise and dust impacts, ie, environmental factors, were responsible for the change in the EPA's risk rating level. Of 49 coal mines, as we've just heard, in New South Wales, only two others share this serious risk classification. And attached to the notes will be the memorandum prepared by Wando about that.

Another instance is that traffic signs in the Maules Creek area that designated the no-go zones for mine traffic have disappeared from roads designated, under statements of commitments, to be not acceptable to mines vehicles. For example, the Leard Forest Road, turning onto Harparary Road. This once quiet country road now has a security presence that has been established by the EPA to override the statement of commitments that work in tandem with the project approved conditions. The community members now find themselves followed by mines security down these roads, or being monitored by security as they go about their daily business.

The process that we're currently engaged in here causes us great concern. It is deeply flawed in transparency, and compromised. The EIS was woefully inadequate. By any reckoning, this is not extension of the 2014 approved mine, but an entirely new project. A preliminary issues report, which has obviously been completed in unseemly haste, especially 6.7, which just scatters a number of issues into the "other issues category". Most of these issues it observes will require further information and/or assessment from Whitehaven to respond to the issues raised.

This hearing, which pre-empts the community's rights of appeal by the mine with the IPC – sorry – is an example of a process that is deeply, deeply flawed and lacking in transparency. The targeted consultation enjoyed by the mine with the IPC, where apparently those invited were given the opportunity to discuss the multi-stage hearing process with staff, Commissioners and Professor Mary O'Kane. We note

with concern that the purpose of this hearing is for the Commissioner to hear views on the department's assessment report, when we were guaranteed at the Boggabri meeting that there would be a number of opportunities for us to develop and add to concerns expressed in our initial submissions. This step appears to have disappeared almost completely, or actually completely, and a number of important issues have yet to be considered. These include the ones that I have just mentioned, particularly the historical interaction between Whitehaven and local communities, and the implications of these.

10 Just in concluding, Wando CCC urges that the precautionary principle be considered, and also matters of intergenerational equity. We need to acknowledge that this proposal is so much more than an extension to the already approved mine, and that approval even with the imposition of stringent conditions would be unconscionable in the 21st Century. Thank you.

15 MR HANN: Thank you, Elizabeth. Our next speaker is Adam Smith. I'm taking it that Adam Smith is not in the hall, in which case the speaker after – listed after Adam Smith is George Avard.

20 MR G. AVARD: Mr Chairman, members of the IPC, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Commission in regards to the Vickery Extension Project, or more particularly the benefits that I see that Whitehaven Coal has brought to the Gunnedah community. My name is George Avard. I'm 70 years old. I have been here a resident all my life. Having a farming and business background. And until the day – and till this day, ran a steer fattening enterprise, so I'm still involved in agriculture.

I initially prepared my speech in support of Whitehaven's Vickery project in reference to my position as past president of the Gunnedah Show Society. Of which I'm a life member, and the experience gained through selling real properties for 25 years. I had a typed – thing, and I went to Boggabri yesterday, and I slept on it last night, and I changed some of my address. And I explain during the speech.

35 During my tenure as president of the Gunnedah Show Society, it was evident that unless we could attract a major sponsor, the longevity of the show was in doubt. I took over as president. We had a \$25,000 bank balance. It takes us \$68,000, 10 years ago, to run the show. You don't have to be Einstein to work that out. Such was the financial situation. I approached the then CEO of Whitehaven, Mr Tony Haggarty, who did not hesitate to this day, and to this day Whitehaven have been the prime sponsor of an iconic event, that has been going for 128 years. And we have an amicable working partnership.

45 Further to this, Gunnedah Show Society was forced into a position whereby they had to demonstrate we could hold major events at the grounds, in order to attract some identified \$4 million worth of infrastructure that didn't comply with safety. The society came up with the IEMEX concept, Innovation, Energy and Mining Expo, which was held in November, which some 60 major exhibitors. Whitehaven,

through Mr Paul Flynn and Mr Jamie Frankum, put their hand up to be the major sponsor and exhibitor. It will now become a biannual event, and I think most important to Gunnedah. The inaugural event attracted 3000 visitors, and in preparation, we identified – I personally identified 85 direct businesses in Gunnedah associated with the mining industry. And we raised \$13,000 for local charity. This culminated in the society receiving \$1.8 million of government funding, which I believe was partially due to IEMEX event.

To many this may be perceived as a conflict of interest, having received ongoing sponsorship deals from Whitehaven. But to the contrary, it demonstrates their commitment to the Gunnedah district. And I believe part of their mantra, as a good – is – as a good corporate citizen.

It is also interesting to note that many of the major agricultural properties and associated industries would – would not entertain sponsorship of this magnitude. Surprising, as we an agricultural show. As mentioned earlier, the speech I had prepared has been drastically altered after attending the Boggabri forum. I was disappointed, to say the least, that phrases like “environmental vandals”, and “not having a social conscience” were loosely bandied around by some of the speakers.

First, let me say that my position as a real estate agent and salesman, specialising in real properties, I witnessed many atrocities committing by the rural sector over the eighties and nineties. In particular, tail water being tipped into – directly into regulated streams; pumping aquifers until they were not sustainable, till bores went dry, Carroll went dry; indiscriminate chemical spraying, etcetera. The catalyst that brought this to a halt was the issue with the Helix and the endosulfan, which affected many cattle producers, including myself. Thankfully, this has stopped, with the implementation of the water sharing plans, strict regulations, earthworks, and the banning of certain chemicals.

Conversely, during this time, I witnessed discrepancies with many mining companies. As I own a property in an EL designated area. This included dubious rehabilitation, practice – safety practices, and noise issues. Not related to Whitehaven, but to Bloomfield Coal and Centennial Coal.

As previous speakers have said, I have vivid memories when the coal mines and abattoirs closed. It was devastating for the town, with 35 vacant shops, a depressed real estate market, and worst of all, young people were leaving to seek employment in other centres. Our population dropped to seven a half thousand. There didn’t seem to be any hope for recovery. I headed a venture capital group, which tried to gain an agricultural college, but to no avail.

Unfortunately, as the years progressed, farms were amalgamated, gear was getting bigger. With the advent of Roundup-ready cotton, there was no cottons – chipping, and contract farming became the norm. Hence the employment in agriculture was diminishing. The mines were a salvation – in 2005. Along came jobs, business and

a resultant confidence. Confidence to build a new home. Subdivisions were created, and day to day, we have a prosperous town, with magnificent facilities.

5 Today, like the farming fraternity, the mining companies are highly policed by not only government bodies and monitoring systems, but activist groups, neighbours, and the wider community, who would not hesitate to do them in. The issue with water extraction was constantly addressed by speakers. And although an expert – not an expert – I understand the obligations of the water sharing plans. And such licences – in order for Whitehaven to extract some 2000 megs of groundwater and surface
10 water from the new proposed mine, they would be required to have the relevant licences. Also, to put this in perspective, it is the equivalent of a 300-hectare cotton farm.

15 I must mention the foresight of Gunnedah Council in not allowing FIFO camps in this shire, for it has brought certainty and optimism back into the market. I've finished now. One of my concerns are, though, for those few genuine farmers, namely, the Barlows, the Watts, the Mcilveens and the Daleys, who get caught up in scenarios like this. To flippantly say, as Mr Warwick Giblin stated, that they are collateral damage is no consolation. But I have confidence that although it may not
20 be their preferred outcome, a realistic solution must be obtained for them to move forward.

I conclude, may I – in conclusion, may I offer qualified support for the project, and hope that the science – scientific evidence provided satisfies the critics, for without
25 science, we have no barometer to gauge projects of this sensitivity. Gunnedah Basin having the highest quality coal, and mined by what I believe is a good corporate citizen, should ensure that best practices will apply, and that the project will be done right.

30 MR HANN: Thank you, George. Our next speaker is Hal Adam. Hal Adam. Okay. Then, following Hal Adam, we've got – Adam King has cancelled – so we have Stacey Cooke, from the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce.

35 MS: I think she just went to the ladies'.

MR HANN: Did she? No, that's all right.

MS: Here she is.

40 MR HANN: Okay, no problem. It's okay. No need to run.

45 MS S. COOKE: Hi. Sorry about that. My name is Stacey Cooke and I am the president of the Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I have been associated with the Chamber of Commerce for five years and been in my own business for eight-and-a-half. It is difficult to provide representation on behalf of every member and, in that regard, we did send a simple survey to the business community, both members and non-members. One of the questions were:

Coal mining of the Gunnedah Basin is forecast increase over a few – the next few decades. Are you expecting the growth to have a neutral, positive or negative impact on the turnover and profitability of your business?

5 The second being:

In the context of living and working in Gunnedah, considering wider social and environmental, as well as economic factors, are you in favour of the increased coal mining that is anticipated?

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It was by the very nature of our town a small sample size. The result, statistically, was significant. 80 per cent believed that business would increase as a result of coal mining and comments included that the additional employees at the mine will provide additional trade for businesses. However, it should be noted that the increase from trade is predominantly from the employees of the mine. There is not a lot of local business employment directly from the mines and this is something that should be taken into consideration.

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77 per cent were in favour of the anticipated coal mining, considering the wider and socio-economic factors. However, it was noted that this is quite a broad question. It is difficult just to say yes or no. One chamber member did state and insisted that we do say on her behalf that:

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The project should be assessed individually and relevant problems need to be adequately addressed. Increased coal mining needs to be accompanied by all sorts of other benefits to ensure the costs of proposed projects are distributed fairly. Many of the costs go unacknowledged and that is grossly unfair. State government processes have been shown consistently to fail to ensure risk mitigation in the mining industry and this is not acceptable for our area.

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It was also noted in the survey results that the community is not a more mining versus less mining debate and that it is about appropriate development and risk management that addresses risk for all stakeholders. As a woman who has elected to bring up my young family in this community, I cherish the community that I live, its size and sense of community and sense of place. Gunnedah is a strong commercial entity rich in diversity and this is what keeps our community to prosper in good times and survive through the down times. It is imperative that this diversity is maintained to ensure the sustainable growth of our community.

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Agriculture has been at the forefront of our community and therefore it is essential that our water resources are prioritised and risk management strategies are implemented to ensure the sustainability of our resources in the future. Industry pressures for many years have been changing in the town. The days of three whitegoods sellers, five to six dress shops, four pharmacies are a department store are a thing of the past. These pressures have been brought about by the increasing size of landholdings, agricultural corporatisation, increasing average age of farmers, better roads and transport, to name a few. Gunnedah's population during the 90s and

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the first few years of this millennium was shrinking. Fewer teachers, fewer kids in schools, less services offered, fewer shops, decreased variety.

5 Mining in a region does reverse the population decline and it introduces varied ages into the community with new skills, new ideas and new innovative business opportunities together with their families. In conclusion the chamber is in favour of the expansion. However, it is imperative that the farming businesses in our region and the associated local agricultural resources and caretakers and operators are
10 looked after. Water resources must be handled using the precautionary principle and that mining is undertaken in a responsible manner and does not come at the expense of our environment or our social fabric of our community.

MR HANN: Thank you, Stacey. Our next speaker is Nicole Barlow.

15 MS N. BARLOW: Thank you. Good afternoon, Commissioners. My name is Nicole Barlow. I'm married to James Barlow and we have a beautiful, eight month old daughter. You saw our home, heritage and livelihood in the drone footage which played while my husband was speaking this morning. As you can imagine, we all
20 enjoy living on the banks of the Namoi, particularly the section we do which, as my husband pointed out, is Broadwater and recognised as one of the most biodiverse sections of the Namoi. We are part of a fantastic rural community many of you have heard from over the last couple of days. It will be sad to see us forced to leave this community.

25 I don't believe the EIS has adequately captured the potential detrimental social impacts of this project. It has already created social divide and much personal angst. It has taken a lot of time and enjoyment from our lives over the last two-and-a-half years and it has not been good for our mental health. The EIS also stated there will
30 not be any direct impact on agriculture in the area. Mining is a competing water user, driving up water prices to the point where they are not affordable to a farmer.

Then mining affected land drives down a property's value. It is a competing industry on a congested railway line and could potentially force grain from the rail to road transport. The coal dust itself has the potential to directly affect the quality of the
35 food and fibre grown at Mirrabinda, let alone my daughter's health. The mine dust, a New South Wales Health fact sheet with – which Whitehaven was required to give to us states that people who may be more susceptible to the health effects of fine and coarse particles are infants, children and adolescents.

40 So apart from Whitehaven themselves telling us we will be fine, anyone with any experience with modelling and/or Whitehaven has – have grave concerns for my family, neighbours and the community. Why should any of the surrounding landholders or the Boggabri community wear the burden of this project? If it did go
45 forward, the burden of proof should be at least be placed on the miner, so any of those affected don't spend a large part of their personal and family time, financial resources – like we are now – showing how it is affecting their quality of life, water resource or livelihood.

There is an existing approval for a smaller mine, the Vickery Coal Project. With this extension project, Whitehaven is proposing to double the output, increase significantly the associated infrastructure with a coal handling plant, railway and bore field, yet the noise impacts are reduced in some areas and dust isn't a problem.

5 We, personally, will be .2 under the PM2.5 cumulative 24 hour criteria for dust, according to their modelling, that is. In reality, if we take Rosalyn Drews' as just one example, yesterday, she spoke of the impact she feels that her home, four to five kilometres away – Mirrabinda's residences are between 1.5 and 2.3 kilometres away from the mine – and one home is 900 metres, approximately, from the railway.

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In our written submission, we have noted our concerns regarding noise and dust modelling and how the difference between the existing approved mine and proposed extension does not make any sense. Grant Mcilveen also illustrated this this morning. With our time limited today, I will stop on this topic and ask that you please read our written submission and concerns regarding accuracy of the modelling. The data inputs for surface water, groundwater and the floodplain modelling is also of utmost concern, as raised by Warwick Giblin this morning. We do not feel that the inputs into the models are accurate and wonder how, then, the peer reviews can be worthy. This drought has highlighted how important our water resources are and yet we are dealing with a proposal that is set to capture runoff or pollute the runoff into the Namoi River, interfere with the aquifers and a sensitive floodplain.

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I urge you to please listen to the experts that have presented on this matter, the written submissions, look at what is going into the models and adopt the precautionary principle where necessary. There are just so many areas of the EIS which seem incomplete or lacking. As many of the government agencies and interest groups have pointed out in their written submissions, how is this good enough? With regard to Mirrabinda itself – or property 127, as we are referred to – the Department of Planning noted in its preliminary issues document and again in Mr Young's presentation yesterday morning, that the property has voluntary acquisition rights and the already assessed noise exceedances will continue under the proposed extension. It needs to be clear that this is not acceptable to us or adequate in any way.

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35 In the EIS for the Vickery Coal Project approved in 2014, Whitehaven repeatedly gave a false and misleading statement as follows:

At the time of writing, Whitehaven has entered into negotiations with the owners of receivers 127A, B and C.

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My husband will confirm with you that this was definitely not the case and we hope no weight was given to this statement by the Department of Planning in assessing that EIS or in the assessment of this current EIS. We hope that this did not lead to the Department of Planning's lack of consultation with the landholder back at that time and the Department of Planning giving Mirrabinda those so-called voluntary acquisition rights. We have been dealing with Whitehaven for two-and-a-half years. It hasn't been an enjoyable process in any way. They have shown no reason as to

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why they can be trusted and we do not look forward to the stress we will continue to endure dealing with them in the future.

5 The so-called voluntary acquisition process itself falls short and we hope you do not wish that upon us. This extension project as a whole is a whole new approval, not a modification of a continuing mine, as you could see in drone footage, and the project in its entirety should be assessed, not just the extension, and we hope the IPC makes this recommendation. It is so much more than an extension. Lastly, I would like to quickly address some of the supporting submissions and speeches over the last two
10 days advocating on behalf of Whitehaven.

We have heard about the jobs, training programs, Aboriginal workplace programs, business generated to local businesses. These benefits do not rely on this extension. These benefits already exist and the coal mining in the area is not going to stop
15 operating. Additionally, Maules Creek is set to continue to ramp up and there is an existing approval for a more sustainable Vickery Coal Project which is supposed to commence this year. We do not need this extension project to continue to prosper. We need balance, we need sustainability for the region, the environment and the people. The already existing approved Vickery Coal Project is quoted to provide up
20 to 60 construction jobs, 250 operational jobs and approximately 461 million in capital investment and these jobs over a 30 year lifespan rather than 25 years proposed in the extension.

30 years means the benefits associated with the mine will be around longer for
25 Gunnedah, Boggabri and Narrabri. It's a more sustainable approach. The extension is only going to exacerbate the detrimental impacts, potentially accentuate a boom and bust cycle. It really is a tipping point for the area. It will change the landscape, the environment and cause an imbalance if you let it. It is not in the best interest of long term sustainability for our region, the environment or the people. It is not in the
30 best interests of agriculture and mining working together, the long term future of this area, the balance, the sustainability we need, our water resources. And our children's future is in your hands. Thank you for your time.

MR HANN: Thank you, Nicole. Our next speaker is Chiara Leabon, who does not
35 appear to be present right now. So in that case, Errol Darley - - -

MR: No, no, no. I think - - -

MR HANN: I'm sorry. Thank you.
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MS C. LEABON: Have you ever been stalked by security guards who are allegedly guarding a coal mine? Have you ever seen them hiding in bushes, taking number plates on the side of the road and lurking around corners? Have you ever watched a forest being blown up, bulldozed and destroyed? Day by day, week by week, month
45 by month and year by year. Have you ever felt an explosion from a mine site that shook your house then seen a dust cloud rise up into the sky? Have you ever been kept away by constant and unrelenting noise composed of bangs, crashes and a

constant rumbling? Have you ever lived close to a coal mine that you have been told won't affect you but does?

5 You may not have experienced any of these things but if you have lived close to a mine you will know what I'm talking about. IPC members, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I have come to speak to you because I want to reject this Vickery Mine extension application. At my home in Maules Creek I can no longer drink the water from the tap, even when it has been filtered, as the filtering is unable to remove heavy metals. To reduce the toxic levels in my system, I have
10 been prescribed to drink special bottled water that is triple purified. Although I cannot prove it is from drinking rainwater that has heavy metals from the dust fall into it, I think this is the source of the toxic levels in my system.

15 Water is really important at Maules Creek. Our groundwater is depleting and the water is becoming more and more salty where we are. One of my favourite places along Maules Creek is at Elfin Crossing. It is the permanent water source in the creek that we have always swum in and even the one grandpa used to swim in when he was little. Lots of the kids in Maules Creek used to swim in here. The problem is that last February it stopped flowing. This was before the drought hit. I do not think
20 it was the drought that caused the loss of flow, as Mr Niall Blair, the Minister for Water, has said. Now Elfin Crossing is all swampy and dirty.

25 One of the things I really care about is the environment in our area, both the land and water environments. Maules Creek and all the creeks running into it are protected creeks. It is part of the endangered aquatic ecological community of the lower land catchments of the Darling River. This creek ends up flowing into the Namoi River, then further north and west. Stygofauna are aquatic creatures that live in groundwater systems. They are important because they contain many ancient linkages to the Gondwana and Pangaea super-continent and are one of the building
30 blocks to the food chain. As the creek has now turned into a puddle I fear for the water quality and the 400 million year old creatures, like Cynocardia, a blind Stygofauna creature that looks a bit like a tiny prawn. They are only found at Maules Creek.

35 As you listen to my thoughts, don't look at me as a 13 year old. Look at me as someone whose stake in the future is bigger than anyone else in the room. The decisions that have been made in the past and present will impact me more. I would rather see our region valuing its native wildlife and places, a rapid shift out of fossil fuels and a greater importance placed on cleaning our air, saving our water for life
40 and health instead of everything being about more coal and coal being the only thing we can have. Thank you.

45 MR HANN: Thank you, Chiara. Errol Darley, who you may recall spoke yesterday but today he's representing the Boggabri Farming and Community Group.

MR E. DARLEY: I'm very sorry but I can't better the last speaker. Good afternoon. My name is Errol Darley and I'm talking on behalf of the Boggabri

Farming and Community Group. This is a group most affected by this proposal, having everything to lose and nothing to gain. Department numbers show that if you live within two kilometres of the rail spur, and up to 10 kilometres from the proposed mine, 31 objected, two supported and two only commented. When you look at a map showing the dwelling locations, it appears that the CHPP rail and infrastructure has been moved now where it affects the absolute most amount of dwellings – 22 in total. Was this move necessary? So it is assured that the proposal is going to change the lives of those near it, just as it has at Maules Creek and Werris Creek. The number of objectors are also reduced because of confidentiality agreements.

We are now towards the end of the second day of hearings and I have yet to hear one – not one person who supports this proposal who actually lives on the floodplain or near the mine. It's easy to support a proposal that doesn't physically affect you and when you financially benefit. Some farmers supporting the have leases with them and some have even moved away from the mine area. Firstly, EL7407. Is this a legitimate exploration licence or does it have Obeid and Macdonalds' fingerprints all over it? Is it a legal document? Can the IPC Panel investigate how the proponent obtained a 600 megalitre porous rock licence and did they actually pay for it? Let's examine the impacts of noise and dust. How can this mine have reduced noise when it is larger than the first mine, has a CHPP moved to closer to dwellings and a rail loop with associated locomotive noises, flanging and wheel squeal noise?

Weather observations in December 2018 show gusts from the south-east to north-east as the following – 43 kilometres an hour, 78 kilometres an hour, 35 kilometres an hour, 43 kilometres an hour and 30 kilometres an hour and 29 kilometres an hour and 48 kilometres an hour. There was just one day missing in that. Does Whitehaven really believe that our members won't be affected by noise and dust during these type of meteorological conditions? Where is the noise management plan so we can see what mitigation Whitehaven will conduct? Whitehaven have provided their own wind data for this proposal. Maybe this explains why no one will be affected by noise and dust. The accuracy of this information needs to be re-assessed.

An independent noise assessment shows that members will be affected by noise from the railway line, with flanging, wheel squeal and the elevation of the track, raising noise levels above Whitehaven's estimates. Also, if the CHPP is not to exceed maximum noise levels, it needs to be constructed with – I quote:

... good quality full double skin enclosed – enclosure design with minimal openings –

this is not in the EIS. The positioning of the 10 borehole fields is rather intriguing. Rather than use any one of the three existing bores, which are 10 inches in diameter and eight inches – with an eight inch PVC liner test-pumped and close to the proposed CHPP, why go all the way to the north to obtain the water? The answer is that they wish to de-water this area. Those at Maules Creek and Werris Creek will tell you that nobody de-waters better than Whitehaven. So once de-watered, an underground mine, possibly with longwall miner, will be installed to remove a four

metre thick coal seam which is reportedly in this area. In this area, the Permian rock formation is deeper, overlaid with Quaternary sediments. The longwall miner from Narrabri underground may be just used for this purpose if that mine has finished.

5 Now, if Whitehaven have rail access approved under this proposal, then they will control or monopolise who can financially tender for any exploration licence released in the future. They already own the land. My point is because of Whitehaven's infrastructure presence, the people of New South Wales who own the coal will get a much smaller price for any exploration licence as no mining company will try and
10 compete with Whitehaven. So the solution is – for the State Government is to build a rail spur over the gap to the north which can be done because they can compulsorily acquire the land, then charge Whitehaven a dollar a tonne for every tonne of coal that goes over it and they have it paid for. Then every other tonne of coal transported on the line will be profit for the people of New South Wales.

15 This is also the reason why they won't commit to dismantling the rail spur, as they know that they will be using it after Vickery. They have moved the CHPP plant so it is not built on land that may be subject to subsidence. Some say Tarrawonga and Vickery will join up one day and it's common knowledge that there is coal under the
20 Vickery forest. So I ask you, Commissioners, to ensure that a meeting be held with the Department of Minerals and Energy so it can be established where the coal seams are and the Department of Planning so a future plan can be formulated to benefit the coal owners, us, every one of you, the residents of New South Wales, so we can all benefit. The overburden material when placed on the western escarpment creates a
25 huge risk of being washing into the Namoi River during storm events.

Whitehaven has to only capture 38 millimetres of rainfall over five days. This will easily be exceeded when rainfall patterns return to normal. The Independent Expert Scientific Committee also ask for groundwater testing to include boron, copper, lead,
30 antimony, tin, zinc, silver, cobalt, nickel and mercury. It is noted that levels of aluminium, molybdenum and arsenic are elevated in other Whitehaven dams. This water may potentially be discharged into the Namoi River.

Members are sceptical that this proposal may already be done deal. Construction of
35 the Gunnedah overpass, current Breeza rail constructions, Scone and Singleton Highway bypasses are all indicators that planning for increased coal tonnage down the main line is very advanced. Locally, land access agreements and a whisper of land purchase discussions only add to our disbelief. So, please, are we being told the
40 truth?

Numerous speakers today have already expanded into Gunnedah. It gives me no joy to explain why Whitehaven has lost its social licence. By now, you have heard numerous talks about the effects Whitehaven has inflicted on honest landholders who have had to go to extremes to try and protect their property right and a right to
45 occupy. My personal experience is I used to speak quite favourably of the coal mines, and once, I even stopped at the protest outside the Gunnedah CHPP and gave the protestors a mouthful as much as to the disgust of my youngest daughter;

however, I have since learned that they have lied to many members of our group, denied any wrongdoing at Werris Creek and Maules Creek and pushed landholders to the brink of depression during land acquisition applications. They have sent toxic clouds of blast gases over the elderly and dusted the Fairfax School.

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Their tactic is to deny everything upfront and then hide behind a peer-reviewed model for acquittal. How grown men can be so reckless with the truth and constantly lie to a community is apprehensible, and then they try to intimidate a senior gentleman of our community who just happens to be good friend of mine and members of this group. So those who make money out of Whitehaven reluctantly embrace them, but anyone who happens to be in their way are bullied into submitting.

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Boggabri has received very little benefit from this company, and the landholders of this group are fearful of the negotiation process they may have to endure or the lifestyle they will be left with. The revolving door at their employment office, where I believe about a 50 per cent turnaround of employees a year is commonplace – this is testament to how they treat their employees. This wouldn't be complete without a 30,000 donation to the Liberal Party or about four million performance share rights for the executive officer of the company. There are no reasons to support this extension. Whitehaven have betrayed our trust. This proposal should be unanimously rejected.

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MR HANN: Thank you, Errol. Our next speaker is Anthony Mingay.

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MR A. MINGAY: Firstly, I would like to pay my respects to the Gomeri people and past and present landowners and acknowledge the importance they play within the community. It's with great pleasure on behalf of Hitachi Construction Machinery that I be given this opportunity to provide a public statement of support to the Whitehaven Coal Vickery Extension Project to the Independent Planning Commission.

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I have roots in the Gunnedah region that go back to the 1950s. My father taught in a one-teacher school for the soldiers' settlement families in Piallaway on the Breeza Plains. My mother worked in the telephone exchange in Gunnedah, which is now the post office, and my mum and dad met at a church social in 1957. Dad always said he knew he would marry Mum the minute they met. They married two years later in 1959 at the Gunnedah Church of England church. My grandfather was the head grocer at Storey's Department Store in Gunnedah and my grandmother was a housewife who passed away way too young and was laid to rest here in Gunnedah in 1969. I often go say hello to the grandmother I didn't get to know.

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40

It's quite ironic – and one could say full circle – that I'm now back in Gunnedah after all these years but the past five years have been enjoyable and both rewarding personally and financially. Gunnedah is where my wife and I choose to live and we are happy here. HCAs interest in the Vickery Extension is twofold. We are both a key partner, supporting Whitehaven Coal at a number of their locations, and we are

45

also one of the major employers currently operating more broadly in the north-western region of New South Wales.

5 Located in the Gunnedah coal basin about 25 kilometres north of Gunnedah, the Vickery Extension Project is a coal mine and infrastructure project of immense positive benefit to both the state economy and the local north-west region of New South Wales. It strengthens the economic and social benefits already being delivered by Whitehaven through existing projects. In aggregate, the Vickery Extension is forecast to create over \$1.2 billion in economic value over the project lifespan. This includes an expected injection of over 700 million into the state economy, generating over 500 direct jobs during construction phase and creating over 450 direct jobs during the 25 years' expected operational phase.

15 This additional job creation comes on top of Whitehaven's current commitment to the north-west New South Wales region as its largest independent employer. From HCAs presence in the local area, we can confirm that Whitehaven have a longstanding and positive relationship in the community. Whitehaven has achieved their social licence to operate through a continual program of engagement with their employers, local community and indigenous community and government. This was achieved by demonstrating a preparedness to actively incorporate their views into the investment and operational decisions they make at Vickery on a regular basis.

25 As a major stakeholder, HCA believes the project should be developed for a number of important reasons. In the first instance, the project directly supports objectives of the New South Wales Government's New England North West Regional Plan 2036 in the following ways. The nearby centre of Gunnedah has an unemployment rate currently 1.41 per cent above the New South Wales economy average. This highlights the need for further private sector investment and additional job creation at locations such as Vickery. The Vickery project alone would create additional jobs to the account of roughly 7.5 per cent of the local Gunnedah population at current levels.

35 To support local job creation, Whitehaven have committed to a target of 75 per cent local, 10 per cent – 75 per cent local component, 10 per cent indigenous employees across the extension. Workforce is focusing in the Gunnedah, Boggabri, Narrabri and Manilla areas. The Vickery Extension provides opportunity for the region to continue the creation of diverse employment opportunities for locals and, in particular, the region's indigenous community. Whitehaven has in place an award-winning Aboriginal employment strategy which is having a strong supportive, positive economic development outcomes in the local indigenous community.

45 As outlined in the cost-benefit analysis, the Vickery Project is expected to contribute \$1.2 billion in economic benefit over the life of the project – an incremental increase of \$271 million in disposable income payments that will help strengthen and support the local business and economy. As evidenced earlier – the submission by other supporting submissions to the IPC hearing – the Vickery Project will also provide further indirect employment opportunities for supporting industries in north-west

New South Wales and these are aligned in industries of hospitality and accommodation.

5 To facilitate the additional mining activities at Vickery, Whitehaven plans to construct a new coal handling plant on site, which includes a new rail service for mine. The transportation infrastructure will enable the removal of coal trucks from the Kamilaroi Highway. The road transport assessment identified no significant impacts on performance capacity, efficiency or safety of the road network. Moreover, Whitehaven have agreed to fund any necessary upgrades resulting in the
10 Vickery Extension.

I have one more page. It should be noted that the project, from a transport and infrastructure standpoint is consistent with both New South Wales Government
15 Long-Term Masterplan 2012 and the New South Wales Roads and Freights Board Strategy 2013. HCAs own efforts contribute to the support of growing communities in north-west New South Wales directly linked to the ability of key and trusted partners such as Whitehaven to continue investing in quality job-creating projects.

HCA are a manufacturer of 800 – of hydraulic excavators to the 800 tonne class, as well as rigid-frame mining dump trucks and a wide range of wheel loaders. We've
20 currently moved into a new facility in Gunnedah – an investment of approximately \$5 million – that currently employs 36 people in the local area and all work undertaken by local people. We also invest in local communities specifically with a donation of a number of pieces of medical equipment to local paediatric hospital
25 wards.

The Whitehaven Vickery Project marks over 20 years of commitment for the north-west New South Wales community with HCA being able to commit to creating approximately 50 additional jobs to deliver services to the mining and excavation
30 equipment necessary for the project extension. Hitachi supports and endorses Whitehaven's Vickery Project. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Anthony. We will take a short 10-minute break now and then have the last session directly after.
35

RECORDING SUSPENDED [3.20 pm]

40 **RECORDING RESUMED** [3.28 pm]

MR HANN: We might get started for the last session for today, if you wouldn't mind grabbing a seat. And if I could ask Steven Talbot and Raymond Weatherall, if
45 you're ready to go. Excuse me. I think we're ready to start, if you don't mind. I think we should go.

MR S. TALBOT: Yeah, I would like to acknowledge the elders past and present and also the traditional owners of the land. And I would also like to acknowledge the non-Aboriginal people here today as well as yourselves. Me and Whitehaven and GTC, Gomeroi Traditional Custodians, go back to the Maules Creek stage, when we
5 walked off the Management Plan. Now, I was involved in the initial stage of this and they put it on the backburner while they done the Maules Creek Project and I was totally disgusted in some of the comments yesterday coming from the Aboriginal brothers out there at Boggabri in regards to dollars and sense. I mean, I don't put a price on our culture and heritage and it stems – it's in here. Either you
10 got it or you ain't. And I stand alongside those farmers that might lose their land for acquisition because now they know how we felt when we lost our land.

So the reason I'm here today is to talk about the culture and heritage side of the project. Now, when the original assessments, I was one of the regional reps for that
15 project and there was a guy by the name Lance Steins who Whitehaven employed to do the archaeology stuff. Now, I questioned his archaeology skills and found out that he wasn't a qualified archaeologist and he had done a couple of other projects within New South Wales that had to be redone. Whitehaven then, in turn, bought a bloke, Cupper, from Queensland, an archaeologist, to do a desktop study based on
20 Lance Steins' report. Now, at a meeting at the Police Boys Club with Whitehaven and this bloke, Cupper, archaeologist, the community, along with the senior elders – the reason why I say senior elders is they were 65 to 80-odd years old. That's why I acknowledge them as senior elders, because I don't know acknowledge myself as an elder.

25 And then they hunted this Dennis Cupper away because they was disgusted in him doing a desktop study report on someone who wasn't a qualified archaeologist in the first place. Now, because Maules – this was prior to Maules Creek – like I said, Maules Creek, Vickery South got put on the backburner and now it's back on the
30 burner again. And myself and about 15 other Aboriginal reps from that original project when Lance Steins was engaged were no longer given the opportunity to walk on country from that original assessment. And in that original assessments, there was stone arrangements that we raised this with the Department of Planning and OEH.

35 Now, OEH have an obligation under their OEH guidelines and Act in regards to Aboriginal culture and heritage and they're supposed to share that information with the Department of Planning, which they didn't – or raised those issues or concerns with it. Well, it took a lot of fighting for them to go out and have a look at these
40 stone arrangements. Now, I turned around and questioned Phil Parcell, OEH's archaeologist based in Dubbo, in regards to his credential in regards to, you know, stone arrangements, because Gomeroi stone arrangements are more unique than other tribes.

45 So just – it's all – while they're talking about dollars and sense, it's all about the culture and heritage. So look, I haven't got a problem if things are done properly and in a proper and with a bit of respect that Whitehaven hasn't shown the elders of GTC

and some – one of those elders is actually sitting in this room today along with myself. I mean, I am a traditional owner. I'm also a Gomeroi applicant elected by the Gomeroi people to represent over 15,000 people in the Gomeroi Nation.

5 In regards to the water, there is nothing that has come across – and I spoke to NTS
Corp yesterday – in regards to the water, because we have native title rights over
water. So those licences that Whitehaven are so-called supposed to have, they have
not surfaced at the Native Title Services for us to review or support or disapprove
with that. So you know, they used people from the Whitehaven – the Maules Creek
10 Project to do the assessment in regards to culture and heritage because people didn't
– wouldn't ask questions and raise issues that I might have or the others. So in other
words, they were used as a ticker box process for Maules – Vickery South to get the
go ahead. So this is what I mean about, you know, mining companies like to divide
and conquer communities. Well, yes, they might have divided it, but they haven't
15 conquered.

So you know, I praise that young lady, that girl that got up and she spoke from her
heart. And I've got two other nieces in here. I mean, it's not about me, it's not about
you. It's about saving something for these kids and their – and you know, and the
20 kids later on. This is a totally different project from the one that they've got and it
should be assessed as that and they should start from the bottom, because I guarantee
you, you know, this EIS that they've got in – and I've seen how Whitehaven works
and their bully tactics – that they turn around should make – be made to do it all
again. And that's – and I will be raising it at the applicant meeting and I'm sure you
25 will get a submission from us as a native title claimant group. And that's all I've got
to say because I'm - - -

MR HANN: Thank you. Our next speaker is Alec Macintosh.

30 MR A. MACINTOSH: Perfect. Thank you. Good afternoon. Thank you for the
opportunity to speak at today's hearing. I am the regional manager for Cotton
Australia's grower members in the northwest of New South Wales. I'm here today
to acknowledge the concerns of members in the Lower Namoi Valley. Also, as a
resident of the area for 15 years, my concerns also reflect a person with an
35 employment history in the district, all agriculture-based, and including acting as an
agent for the trading and selling of water licences.

Cotton Australia considers that the protection and sustainability of land and water
resources and enhancement of maintenance of landholder – land access rights is of
40 utmost importance. While we recognise that the mining industry offers potential
economic benefits to Australia, without proper regulation and enforcement, the
mining industry also poses significant risks to the Australian cotton industry.
Specific to mining, our long-held policy principles include protecting the productive
capacity of agricultural land from mining extraction activities and opposing any
45 mining development unless and until it can be definitely proven that the development
will have no impact on the productive capacity of the land.

Apart from the water take and risk to water quality over time, concerns held by members include the lack of detail about the rail spur and its construction. Statements simply indicate that it will be built to engineering standards and to a manner to enable floodwater passage underneath, such as appropriately sized
5 culverts. If approved, this would be the third structure on the floodplain which, from my understanding of the indicative maps, have the rail spur located in the flood storage and secondary flood discharge, upper Liverpool Plain zone of the Upper Namoi Valley floodplain. The other two are the transport corridors of the Maules
10 Creek Road and rail bridges further downstream. It is accumulated or knock-on impacts that this new structure itself, let alone in combination with the other two, will have on floodwaters across the landscape and hence the downstream communities I represent that I want to flag today.

Any changes to the flow of the river are particularly highlighted in flood times and
15 farmers and communities have adapted to past floods, e.g. construction of flood banks to protect assets or movement of assets to less flood-prone areas. If a flow of the river changes in a flood, the flood damage could be catastrophic to structures and crops, from which many farmers and businesses would be unable to recover from or, at least, be unable to continue to be as productive as they were prior to the flooding.
20 To top off these natural disasters – excuse me – the mining industry has reduced the amount of water available to agriculture in recent years, as the mines have to purchase existing licences, both groundwater and river, and are prepared to pay well above the current market price to obtain this water. This has reduced the irrigated crops grown, with the flow-on effects to local industries that support agriculture.
25 Thank you for your time.

MR HANN: Thank you, Alec. Our next speaker is Jennifer Brown.

MS J. BROWN: Thank you, commissioners, for the opportunity to address you
30 today to speak about some of the concerns Cotton Australia has regarding the Vickery Extension Project. Cotton Australia is the key representative body for Australia's cotton growing industry, supporting about 1200 cotton farming families in 152 regional communities in New South Wales, Queensland and now into Victoria. Cotton Australia does not typically get involved in locally-based issues, as
35 we take a position that we only represent the broad concerns of growers, however we believe that the Vickery Extension Project has much broader implications for our growers due to the proximity of the development to prime agricultural lands and high-quality water resources, in particular, that key elements of the project represent significant development creep.
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While Cotton Australia would take the opportunity to provide a written submission that expands on these concerns, it's the impact of – potential impact of dust on cotton
45 crops that I want to speak about today. The farmland adjacent to the Namoi River and through which the rail spur could traverse is used to grow crops, cotton included, and it's not just used for grazing. This is not unlike the rest of the Namoi Valley which, as ABS employment figures indicate, the agricultural workforce for sheep, beef, cattle and grain farming can be as much as just over 2000 employees in a good

year and, compared to cotton, sugar and other crop growing employees, around – which are around 300. While the project’s EIS has considered dust impacts and is also potential impacts of coal dust for grazing cattle, it has not considered such for cropping. This is an unfortunate omission.

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Successive Cotton Research And Development Corporation grower surveys confirmed that an agribusiness growing cotton will have the majority of its available land area dedicated to cropping, but due to crop rotation strategies, cotton is not the only crop that is grown. Indeed, cropping is not the only activity on a farm. In 10 2016/17, the survey results, for instance, indicated, on average, 75 per cent of total farm area was available for cropping, with the remaining 25 per cent used for grazing or native vegetation, and, on average, only 21 per cent of total farm area was under cotton production. Hence, by describing the physical – potential physical and financial impacts coal dust could have on a cotton crop, I’m suggesting these could 15 also be used as a surrogate of what could also be happening with other crops.

In order to provide examples of the potential scale and nature of these impacts, it is first necessary to provide some understanding of growing, classing and processing the cotton crops’ lint. That’s the fluffy white fibres you see emerging from the seed 20 pod or boll when they’re on show at harvest. Cotton lint is used to make textiles so, as you know, socks, jocks, T-shirts and so on, so cotton lint is classed and priced according to its physical attributes. In 2016/17, cotton lint generated by New South Wales had an export value of \$593 million. When you consider that the northern region of New South Wales, which includes the Namoi Valley, in that same year 25 generated 10.9 bales per hectare, fully irrigated, while the industry average for fully irrigated was 9.88 bales, you can begin to understand why Cotton Australia is concerned about coal dust, all the more so if – in light of how a plant grows.

Cotton is grown as an annual crop in summer. The growing season from planting to 30 picking lasts about six months. Cotton nutrition determines crop yield and being a newly planted crop each year means the grower has to reapply some of the nutrients for the plants to grow. Each cotton fibre is a single seed hair inside the boll from which they’re harvested. It takes about four to five months of growing before that boll opens, and on opening it exposes the fibres to the elements and dries them out.

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Quality fibre at picking is a combination of two components. The first is the genetic attributes of the variety, and the second is the environment in which the fibre developed. For instance, colour of the fibre in the field is affected by weathering, so rainfall, early termination of bolls caused by frost, insect damage to bolls, 40 deterioration of the fibre caused by fungi and contamination with the fibre. Similarly, fruiting position of the boll will determine the boll size, so too from which branch the plant is – it is on. Even the presence of persistent shading has an impact on the fibre thickness. All these attributes affect the quality of the finished product, what colours it can be dyed, how easy it is for the mill to create the desired textile.

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For example, a single foreign fibre can lead to the downgrading of yarn, fabric or garments, or even the total rejection of an entire batch. It’s because of this represents

a significant cost to spinning mills, it's led the mills to implement a range of methods to cope. Consequently, the particles that can't be removed at harvest detract from quality and hence the price the lint is sold is decreased. These contaminants could be leaf or seed pod fragments, dirt or dust, even plant sugar residues. These make the fibres sticky. The price of cotton lint is determined by classing the lint into different grades that represent its fibre quality, which determines its potential use.

Australia uses the US Department of Ag-developed classing system, and that includes whiteness, so colour, grade, reflectance and yellowness, fibre length, uniformity of length, strength, fineness, which is given by a micronaire reading, plus contents of leaves, sticks and so on, and it's in this respect Cotton Australia is concerned by the increased likelihood of coal dust travelling off-site from the expanded project onto areas being cropped and over the months when the cotton plants are growing. In fact, the quality of the fibre and keeping the processed fibres as free from contamination is so much of an imperative for the industry that the Cotton Research and Development Corporation has done and continues to invest in research and extension regarding these issues. Doing so helps growers to operate sustainable and profitable businesses. Doing so also protects the reputation Australian cotton has achieved as being high-yielding, clean raw cotton.

It's a status repeatedly observed by the International Textile Manufacturers' Federation in their cotton contamination surveys. These are annual surveys of global significance across 40 producing cotton countries. To produce some – to provide some insight into how this might affect a grower's bottom line, I refer to the CRDC's annual grower survey, which regularly records the size and type of the quality discounts cotton growers incur each year. In the 2016/17 year, 85 per cent of the 214 respondents reported at least one quality discount was incurred, also that the three discounts to have the most impact across the largest number of bales were leaf, colour and lack of thickness or fineness. That season was described as challenging. High insect pest pressure, extreme temperatures and lack of summer rainfall.

More details are provided in the previous year's survey for '15/16, which similarly described as being a season of limited water with a hot, long, dry finish. For 2015, quality discounts received range from 18 cents up to \$130 per bale. Respondents for irrigated cotton farms averaged a discount of \$25.10 per bale, but they were the ones that incurred the 18 cents up to 130 at times. Partially irrigated averaged \$14.90 discount per bale, and rain-grown averaged \$31.60 a discount. We also know from the growers surveys that colour continues to be nominated as the discount that is the most costly each season.

Added to that, we know from the people in cotton research that delved into the ABS employment statistics the cotton industry, like other agricultural commodities, generates a workforce of support service employees, so, for instance, apart from the 2000 sheep, beef and grain farming employees I mentioned, and the 300 cotton, sugar and other cropping employees employed in a good year, these industries are supported by another approximately 300 support service employees.

What we don't know is the scale and significance of coal dust on a cotton crop. If the project was to go ahead, there's not just the risk of coal dust from the mining activities being dispersed into the wider environment which may arise. Additional activities on site have been proposed, and all are potential sources of coal dust,
5 namely relocating Whitehaven's existing coal handling and preparation plant from Gunnedah to the project's location. In doing so, processing coal from Tarrawonga and Rocglen Mines will occur, as well as that from Vickery. On top of that, there are the potential dust activities from the train and its load out facility, so approval of extension would result in coal from three mines being processed in this part of the
10 valley, as well as the shipment off-site to Port of Newcastle.

In explaining how the cotton crop grows, is classed and processed, as well as the influence the environment has on the product, I've attempted to outline the potential risk to the cotton lint and also financial impacts to a grower's bottom line, but I ask
15 the commission: what are the unintended consequences for other crops being grown, let alone the community and general amenity? To reiterate Cotton Australia's long-held policy principles, protection of land and water resources for food and fibre production from negative impacts is paramount. Only when it is definitively proven the development will have no impact on the productive capacity of the land should
20 the government consider permitting the project. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Jennifer. So our next speaker is Rosemary Vass.

MS R. VASS: Thank you, Mr Hann, Chair of the Panel, and Panel Members
25 Professor Fell and Professor Willgoose, for giving me this opportunity to make my presentation. Firstly I'd like to give you some information regarding my background and why I'm standing here today. My home is approximately 100 kilometres to the west of Gunnedah, just outside of Coonabarabran; and my professional career was as an educator, of 40 years' experience, most of which was in regional schools. Now
30 retired, my roles are many: wife, mother, grandmother, carer, community member, and environmentalist. Today, I'm representing the Knitting Nannas Against Gas and Coal (commonly known as KNAGC), an important community group that incorporates all of my personal roles.

35 My adult life has always been about the welfare, care and health of children. The Knitting Nannas' core principles are all about the protection of children, and ensuring a healthy and viable planet for their futures. I stand here today, as a nanna, to be a voice for those children.

40 There are so many good reasons to oppose the approval of this coal mine extension, as outlined by speakers over these last two days. But my concerns will relate to the effects on health and climate change. Perhaps the panel would indulge me by each answering a simple question: do you accept that the science on anthropogenic
45 climate change is largely settled amongst the vast majority of the scientific community, and that we must heed the scientific facts laid out in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report issued in October 2018? Will you indulge me?

MR HANN: Ah, we don't take questions.

MS VASS: Okay. As the scientific backgrounds that I know you have, I will assume that you do. Any confidence in decisions made by this panel, and the IPC, is
5 reliant on the Commission making that decision based on the knowledge of these scientific facts. What are the implications of these facts for this coal mine, or any other, when the IPC is considering its approval or rejection? The facts are blunt. Here is what the World Economic Forum stated when analysing the IPCC report from October:

10
We have at most 12 years to make the drastic and unprecedented changes needed to prevent average global temperatures from rising 1.5 degrees Celsius (roughly 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). Limiting global temperature increase to that amount is the goal of the International Paris Agreement. Meeting that goal will require unprecedented action to drive decarbonisation of agriculture, energy, industry and transport.
15

This report from the World Economic Forum (WEF) went on to outline what was already happening due to climate breakdown, and what the long-term outcomes
20 would be if we failed to take sufficient action:

*The risk report pointed to the accelerating pace of biodiversity loss as a particular concern. Species abundance is down 60 per cent since 1970. That affects the human food chain, health and socioeconomic development, with
25 implications for the wellbeing, productivity and even regional security. Climate change as well is increasing strain on the global food system through changes in temperature, precipitation and extreme weather events, along with higher carbon emissions. The last four years have been the hottest on record. Sea level rise is another peril. An estimated 800 million people, in more than
30 570 coastal cities, are vulnerable to ocean rising 1.6 feet by 2050.*

And I have references for you in that paper. We only need to look in our news feed in Australia for the last month to see the reality of the statements from the WEF. It's
35 not way off in the future. It's here, now. The weather extremes we are experiencing have an overlay of exacerbation caused by climate change. Across the nation, we have warnings for health and safety regarding fires in Tasmania, heat waves across the centre and all of the south-eastern states, and life-threatening and unprecedented floods going on now in northern Queensland. The economic and social costs of the ongoing drought and the water crisis for inland rivers and communities has not even
40 been fully evaluated yet; nor the cost to infrastructure and livelihood from the Tasmanian fires or the Queensland floods. These are the problems we are bequeathing our children and the environment that sustains them.

I would like to refer to the graph, which is from the Bureau of Meteorology. And
45 I'm sorry for the audience; I don't have that as a digital. It shows that Australia has been getting warmer. The annual mean temperature, above or below average

Celsius. And from 1982 onwards, nearly all of that graph is above – and getting higher.

5 We know that the oceans around Australia are getting warmer, and their temperature has increased by about one degree Celsius since 1910. Oceans are experiencing more frequent marine heatwaves. Sea levels are rising, and the pH decreasing as the waters become more acid. There have been large coral bleaching events in the Great Barrier Reef, which are becoming more frequent, and occurring over larger areas. The time may soon come that it cannot recover, and it will be but a remnant of what
10 it once was.

The economic impact of such destruction will be immense. Some jobs may be created by mining fossil fuels like coal, although less and less with increased automation. But as emissions rise, and greenhouse gases turbocharge climate
15 change, there will be a net loss of jobs and prosperity across our nation and others. As Professor Tony Ingrassia has expressed it – and it applies to both people and all that depend on our planet, it's the health of the many versus the wealth of a few.

I have a couple of references, again, in there, from my social media feed. One is a
20 Twitter feed. From Peter Harden, from 2019:

*The biggest flood in Townsville's history. The hottest January in Australian history. The worst drought in western New South Wales history. The biggest fish kill in New South Wales/South Australian history. Can you see any pattern
25 emerging here yet?*

And this isn't to you, panellist; it's to the Sky News panellist:

Tell your climate denying panellists.
30

There's also, then, a picture from another tweet, which is of the map of Australia from the Bureau of Meteorology:

*This BOM proof of what anyone who tried to sleep during January already knew: January was Australia's hottest month since records began. The Bureau of Meteorology has just confirmed that January 2019 was the hottest month in more than 100 years of records, which meant that for the first time ever on record, the mean temperature across the whole of the country exceeded
35 30 degrees Celsius. Records were broken for the hottest overnight temperature, 36.6 degrees, and also for the highest January temperature, 49.5 degrees Celsius, or 121.1 degrees Fahrenheit.*
40

Our children and our planet are looking at a new, changing climate of dangerous extremes. These extremes will have a huge negative impact on human health. And,
45 as we know, it is the young and the frail old who will suffer most. In a report from the University of California in August of 2018, the major consequences for human health and welfare arising from extreme events of climate change were outlined:

5 *Researchers forecast that beyond 2050, as much as 44 per cent of the planet's land areas will be exposed to drying. This will lead to severe drought conditions throughout southern Europe, North America, much of South-East Asia, and most of the Amazon, affecting about 1.4 billion people. At the other extreme, heightened risk of severe rainfall events will expose an extra two billion people to floods. Human health will be impacted in many different ways. In the years to come, it is expected that more than half of the population may be exposed to extreme heatwaves, and perhaps one third to vector-borne diseases.*

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The report added that:

Heat and drought threaten regions that produce much of the world's food. Food prices are expected to rise 23 per cent by 2030 –

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That's even in my lifetime, I hope –

making food markets more volatile; and, under heat stress, the nutritious content of food crops is declining.

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25 Extreme weather disasters also have negative impacts on mental health. When heat is over 130 degrees – and you will remember that previous thing with 121, we've already had that one – whole societies can become unglued. And to make matters worse, diseases transmitted by mosquitoes and other insects such as malaria and dengue fever seem likely to proliferate as the habits of mosquitoes expand thanks to climate change.

30 Given that we know these scientific facts, what then must we do? Over 200 countries, including Australia, signed the Paris Agreement on climate change three years ago, committing to hold global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius. The evidence from our government tells us that we are not reducing our emissions in line to achieve these goals, despite the need to take urgent action year on year. We need to escalate our efforts if we are to have any positive effect. Currently, the coal export industry is Australia's and New South Wales' largest contributor to climate change.

35 Climate analytics have calculated that emissions produced by burning New South Wales coal exports, both thermal and coke and coal, in 2017 was around 391.12 million tonnes of CO₂, which is approximately one per cent of global emissions from fossil fuels.

40 There is a pathway to meeting our reduction goals, but it means that the OECD countries like Australia and our coal customers, like Japan and South Korea, will need to phase out burning coal for electricity by 2030. China and the rest of the world will need to follow by 2040 and 2050 respectively. And, again, I've got the graphs there showing. We must consider any new coal mine or extension of a coal mine in the context of these facts. The New South Wales State Environmental

45 Planning Policy for Mining states that downstream burning emissions from coal mines, scope 3 emissions, must be considered in the decision-making process.

So too scope 1, the on-site emissions, and scope 2 emissions created by the energy use. New South Wales Government policy also states that they endorse the Paris Agreement and will take action consistent with achieving the goals. It must follow, then that the IPC will look at any coal mine approval in this framework. You, then,
5 on this panel are at the forefront of this race against time. Debra Roberts, co-chair of the IPCC Working Group II said:

10 *The next few years are probably the most important in our history. Each incremental decision regarding fossil fuels tips us closer to the brink or edges us back.*

Please do your part in protecting the future from the catastrophic climate change whose effects will cascade in countless directions for water and food security, health, biodiversity, economics, social cohesion, and will alter forever how our future
15 generations can live on this planet. Do not approve the Vickery extension, and be a part of the solution, not part of the problem. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Rosemary. And our next speaker is David Riley.

20 MR RILEY: Good afternoon. Thanks for letting me speak here this afternoon. I know it has been a long day for you, so I won't take you – keep you too long, anyhow. All I want to say is I've been a resident of the Gunnedah and Boggabri area now for all my life. We bought a farm at Boggabri in 2003, we drove around this little hill down towards the river there, and see this little oasis, and it was perfect, so
25 we bought it. And we've been there now since – for 16 years. We run cattle, sheep, dry land farming.

We also – we grow cotton as well, so we do a bit of everything, and my objection – not objection, my thoughts on this mine is concerns about the additional 10 megs of
30 – or 10 additional bores, one meg bores. Can they be increased at any time and what sort of stops them increasing them? We've also got a driggle-draggle, which is a little creek that comes down through our place, and it comes in from the mine. It has been there, and I've seen stages where we have 100 mils of rain overnight and it brings all this water down – a massive amount of water – fills up Barbs Lagoon both
35 ways, breaks out through Barbs Lagoon and runs down to the river. So we're talking water.

My concerns would be if – contamination with the likes of the mine off the overburden and all those sort of things, vehicles coming down through the river.
40 What else? It's very easy to get 100 mils of rain overnight. And then we go down here to air quality. We're roughly 1.3 kilometres from Vickery, our bottom boundary, and – which puts us pretty close to Vickery. They're on the north – sorry – they're on the south east side of us – south east side of us. I'm concerned about the air quality. I'm concerned about the noise. Also we're talking about the rail
45 putting a rail across the plain there like so. We're looking at how it's going to be built, the pressure it will put onto floods and all those sort of things.

Our neighbour is roughly 5.6 kilometres east of Tarrawonga Mine at the moment, and they were bought out a few years back with well, we're 1.3 kilometres from Vickery, and my concerns are how the noise is going to be monitored and the pollution. And also the Braymont Road – it's not a designated road for vehicles from
5 Boggabri, and my concern is at the moment that we get vehicles going – using that road from the mine all the time, and they can drive excess of over 100 kilometres an hour on that road. And I've got two young daughters which use that road a fair bit, and they spray them with rocks and all those sort of things. So I would like to think that something can be done about that. Apart from that, that's all I've got to say
10 about the problem. Hopefully, that sheds a little bit of light. Thanks for hearing me.

MR HANN: Thank you, David. We have another speaker, which wouldn't be on your list, Stuart Morrison.

15 MR S. MORRISON: I may as well start just to – I've got a presentation. Yes, thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name's Stuart Morrison. I have moved to Gunnedah based – a Pirtek franchise in town eight years ago. So I moved here with my family and I'm speaking for the proposed Vickery extension. I'll just – so just a bit of an understanding of our business and how we grew through the mining sector.
20 Pirtek's a franchise group across Australia that does hydraulic clothes and fittings and there's 96 of us around Australia. We expanded to an area where Gunnedah didn't have a Pirtek centre and opened up in 2011. Sort of humble beginnings and a fairly small workshop.

25 So just recently, due to our mining support from Whitehaven and other mining contractors, including the agricultural businesses, we have been able to move to a purpose-built building and, as you can see in those photos there, it's quite a nice facility and we have been very blessed to have lots of support from lots of different businesses throughout town. Pirtek sort of lives by a live local, buy local, support
30 local theory that we do. We're involved in lots of sponsorships over multiple different areas throughout Australia and these principles have been put in town. All of our staff live in Gunnedah and are part of the community. We buy as much locally as we possibly can, by guys, and these are the organisations in town that we sponsor or support through – based on sales as a percentage of our sales goes back in
35 the community through the franchise system.

So Pirtek Gunnedah employment, when we started in 2011, there was myself and one other staff member. Due to the support of Whitehaven, the support of our mining contractors and a national care customers and agricultural business, we now have 12
40 staff in eight years. If the Vickery Mine was to go ahead, I can see an additional four staff members in our business to help support our key customers. Without even guaranteeing any work from Whitehaven, the benefits, obviously, to our business would be the four more employees, more support in the community, living locally, buying locally and supporting locally and further job security for our staff which is a
45 huge thing. We have 12 staff, so including my wife, then it's 11 families are in town now living locally and supporting locally as well.

To me, personally being involved in the community for eight years and some people that know me and stuff – I have been presidents of rugby clubs, been involved in multiple sporting organisations. To me, the flow-on benefits and personally speaking is, obviously, there's an increased revenue for local businesses with a further mine
5 coming into the area. Personally, I'd like to see, obviously, all the environmental things met, and I'm not an expert in those areas, and I hope and trust that Whitehaven do the right thing by that. There's further jobs, obviously, across the area. When I talk about the flow-on effect, it's not just our business or the mine employing people. It's the local hardware store getting busier. They're hiring more
10 people.

It's the – you know, the new restaurants that open and the new housing development, and all these things that comes with further industry in the area, whether it's mining or agricultural. So continual growth in the area is something that's very important to
15 me. I'd moved from Sydney eight years ago to start this business, really love this town and I really want to make sure that the future generation, including my children and everyone else, has an opportunity to – not leave this area. Stay in this area, work in this area and I believe that Vickery Mine is one of another employer that may offer those opportunities for people in the area. Thank you for your time.

20

MR HANN: Thank you, Stuart. And we have one final speaker for today in the hearing and that is Michael Broekman.

MR M. BROEKMAN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, committee. My name is
25 Michael Broekman. I am the manager of Namoi Valley Bricks, a company that uses and depends on the high-quality coal produced by the Whitehaven mining companies. I am also the chair of the Sunnyside Community Consultative Committee and an active member of the Chamber of Commerce. In my submission, I need to declare that our business has a financial link to Whitehaven. They lease
30 land from us which used to be a coal mine and is now under rehabilitation. Our working relationship through this venture has been unquestionable.

I and the company that I manage, Namoi Valley Bricks, supports this project. Born
35 and bred in Gunnedah, educated here and was successful in obtaining my trade certificate at Preston Colliery and worked in the industry for nearly 10 years before taking the skills I had learnt into the family business, which now I manage and have worked in for the last 30 years. I'm a supporter of this project not because I have a great understanding of the geological makeup of the mining plan. I'm a supporter because of the major contribution the mining industry has to our community and the
40 financial worth to our nation.

The expansion of this industry has had a major impact on the economic strength of our region, which in turn has seen a strong growth in the construction industry. Through our sales history, we can see a consistent improvement in the last 10 years
45 and I believe it's a direct reflection to the expansion of the resource sector in our region. Namoi Valley Bricks relies on the coal for its main fuel source to produce the high-quality products in our brick range.

The high-quality coal produced by Whitehaven is paramount to our business success in meeting the demands of the construction industry. The mining industry is one of the most highly regulated industries in Australia. As a community member, I must be able to rely on the regulator and the due diligence of the process to ensure me that
5 this project meets all of the requirements to be environmentally sustainable. This process must be done without question and much responsibility falls on the regulator to do this job on behalf of the communities without prejudice. If this project is approved by the regulator, we must feel confident in the regulator's assessment that
10 the project is sustainable and will not affect other community assets or industries, i.e. agriculture.

In conclusion, as Gunnedah is now experiencing strong economic growth, we can look forward to strong employment opportunities. These opportunities are the envy of many country communities and, as a father, I welcome these opportunities and
15 hope this creates the platform for youth retention within our community so our kids can enjoy the great life that we have in Gunnedah. I wish Whitehaven much success. I thank them for being a part of our community. Thank you for taking my submission. Thank you.

20 MR HANN: Thank you, Michael. And Michael's presentation completes today's proceedings and that brings, therefore, a close to this initial hearing, of course commenced yesterday Boggabri and then completed today. So look, on behalf of the Commissioners, we greatly appreciate all the time that you have devoted yesterday
25 and today. I know many of you have been to both days. And particularly those that registered to speak and spoke over the two days. We know you put a lot of effort into it and we greatly appreciate it and we always learn a lot and we particularly learnt a lot in the last two days. So thank you once again.

30 **RECORDING CONCLUDED**

[4.17 pm]