What’s an “Extension”?

This mining application to “extend” the existing environmentally and agriculturally destructive Whitehaven mine is actually a new mine which will further impact negatively on the productive farming district of Boggabri. A new rail connection crossing the Namoi River and floodplain will hugely impact the district as it moves a massive 10 million tonnes of coal per year for at least 17 years. The notion of this development being an “extension” is farcical, a misnomer and at the very least, a gross misrepresentation of the facts.

* Climate Change Multiplier

Given the undisputable scientific knowledge and warnings about the global warming consequences of burning fossil fuels, if this development is approved, this additional mine will add *370 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere*. This *additional* *emission* is dangerous to the climate of the planet, is an unacceptable risk, and tantamount to anti-social and unethical corporate behaviour.

We cannot accept that our planet’s future can be destroyed for corporate profit using misrepresentation of the truth about the effects of their activities on climate change to justify an “extension” of coal mining. The earth’s biosphere is already providing many warning signals to us about the immediate consequences of rising emissions. There is now no believable economic or social argument in support of an “extension” of Whitehaven’s mining activities in 2020!

* Water Resources

Our continent is the driest continent on the planet. *Fact*. Australia is continuing to experience in many places a very severe drought which is having dire consequences on the lives and livelihoods of Australians. *Fact*. Droughts are frequent climatic occurrences in Australia. *Fact*. Water in Australia is a finite, unreliable and limited resource varying in quantity each year. *Fact*. Mines use huge amounts of fresh water in their extraction processes. *Fact*. Water used in mining cannot be used for human consumption and agricultural production. *Fact*.

Apart from the inherent huge water usage involved in mining, a troubling aspect about this mine is its probability of inadequate water supply. The Department of Planning predicts it might run out of water in dry times. To feed its thirst for water, Whitehaven’s nearby Maules Creek coal mine has already taken water illegally, outbid local farmers for water at auction and built pipelines from nearby farms to divert farming water for mining. What will happen should “the extension” be approved? Building another water hungry coal mine in the parched Namoi Valley is a terrible idea!

Additional to this, Whitehaven proposes to pile mine spoil on top of 202 hectares of the Namoi alluvial aquifer, a plan the Department of Planning Industry and Environment’s Water Division has stated that it does not support because “the presence of acid forming materials in the spoil will mean heavy metals could leach into the aquifer below”.

* Anti-Social Consequences

We understand that the mine site includes the historic “Kurrumbede” property, said to be the inspiration to Dorothea MacKeller’s poem “My Country”. Unfortunately, given coal mining uses frequent blasting to break up the coal seams, it is likely that vibration from mine blasting will harm the homestead. Not a good outcome for one of Australia’s historic artifacts!

We simply wish to add our objections to Narrabri Council that has formally objected to the project, due to its social impacts on the Boggabri district, already reeling from the depopulation of farms by Whitehaven’s nearby Maules Creek coal mine.

What more really needs to be said? The “cons” far outweigh the “pros” for this development to be allowed to proceed. The people living there must have the final say in this matter.