**Whitehaven’s Vickery Extension Project/Maules Creek coal mine – Objection submission**

**Blair Palese, NSW resident and concerned citizen**

To the NSW Independent Planning Commission regarding Whitehaven’s Vickery “Extension” Project, May 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I strong object to any new coal mines and to any new or extensions of mines in the Narrabri Council area for the following reasons:

Boggabri has already felt extreme damage from coal mining, with three large open cut mines nearby taking water from waterways and driving local farming families away, some of whom I know and have shared their tragic experiences or blasting, noise, dust and heavy machinery taking over their beautiful part of the world.

This “extension” is in fact not an extension at all but is in fact a new mine in the productive farming district of Boggabri, with a new rail connection that will cross the Namoi River and its floodplain. This area is an important farming area that needs protection and, given the decade of drought experienced by NSW, its waterways must be prioritised and protected.

Most importantly, I strongly object that this new mine would see 168 million tonnes of coal, at a rate of up to 10 million tonnes per year, being dug up and exported for burning and, if it goes ahead, will add 370 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere.

Our climate is already more than one degree warmer than in pre-industrial times with scientists telling us that unless we rapidly curb emissions, it will warm as much as four to six degrees Celsius. This would mean an unliveable planet. We have a limited, diminishing carbon budget and experts have told us that to maintain a liveable planet we can have NO new coal, oil and gas mines and must move to retire our most polluting carbon sources as quickly as possible. The initial Maules Creek mine should never have been allowed to go ahead. Given it’s now 2020 and the impacts of climate change, including bushfires that impacted one third of Australia last summer due to more than a decade of drought and extreme heat, his “extension” simply cannot go ahead.

Beyond the climate change impact, the most troubling aspect of the mine is its lack of water. Even the Department of Planning admits 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.

Building another water hungry coal mine in the parched Namoi is environmentally unacceptable and unacceptable for those who live in the region who depend on what little water there is in dry times.

Unbelievably, 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 own Water Division has stated it does not support because the presence of acid forming materials in the spoil will mean heavy metals could leach into the aquifer below.

As the local council, Narrabri Council, has formally objected to this project due to its social impacts on the Boggabri district, granting permission for this “extension” is unacceptable on these grounds as well. I know the region and I also know that it is already suffering from the depopulation of farms by Whitehaven’s nearby Maules Creek coal mine, which has had extensive detrimental environmental impact. I believe the Narrabri Council knows what is best for this region and its objections should be heeded.

I urge the Planning Commission to do what it knows is the proper decision and reject this coal mine. To do anything else is unconscionable.

Sincerely,

Blair Palese, NSW resident

29 May 2020