NSW Government

Independent Planning Commission

Re Vickery extension project.

I wish to offer a submission in opposition to this project.

As a farmer and business owner living within 30 klms of this proposed project ,I regard myself as a stakeholder ‘

As a farmer , land manager , and volunteer fire fighter , observing a rapidly changing climate I am not in denial of the effects of carbon pollution. I regard myself as a stakeholder.

Globally , we are seeing temperature records consistently broken , eclipsing the previous record set only the year before. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to operate a farming business , with skyrocketing evaporation and transpiration levels. Surely the recent bushfire crisis is a wakeup call that disastrous changes are afoot .

Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels have now reached 417 ppm ,on the cusp of levels that are expected to cause runaway climate change. Over 6000 peer reviewed scientific documents, received by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ,have suggested that the climatic situation is dire, unless immediate and substantial actions are taken. Those actions should not involve the opening of yet another bloody coal mine , regardless of the quality of the coal produced .The proponent Whitehaven , as an “energy” company should have a plan to transition into less carbon intensive ,or renewable energy sources, as most other responsible providers have done. Sadly that is not the case with Whitehaven. Further evidence of the belligerence so commonly exhibited by this company over the last decade in our area.

Much of the justification for this project lies in the perception that much employment will be created. The sad reality is that , in the event of approval of the project , we will continue to witness the wholesale plundering of skilled employees of other non mining related industries. Gunnedah Shire Council loses 80% of its ground and plant operation staff on an annual basis, to the coal industry. Agriculture is similarly affected, unable to compete with an industry offering $140k for machinery operators. Cost of doing business will continue to rise with yet another mine in the district.

Whitehaven now owns in excess of 80 farms in our district .This number will increase as landholders choose to flee, or are forced to move away from a potential Vickery mine . These farms are leased out , rarely to anyone prepared to farm in a sustainable manner. There is very little further investment in the agricultural productive capacity of these farms in the hands of Whitehaven. Whitehaven consistently out bids surrounding farmers when parcels of water become available.

Over the past decade I have spoken to numerous workers about their job satisfaction .Given the high wages offered , it would be assumed Whitehaven would have a stable and reliable workforce. It would appear that Whitehaven suffers a genuinely toxic work culture , particularly at their Maules Creek mine. So much so that Maules Creek has almost 100%turnover of staff per year, as well as substantial absenteeism .So the question has to be asked...., will it be any different at a potential Vickery mine.

Thank you for an opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Alistair Donaldson