I am a 24 year old farmer between located between Emerald Hill and Boggabri at **property 144** (on various maps in the EIS provided by Whitehaven) and I am strongly opposed to the Vickery Extension Project proposed by Whitehaven Coal.

As I am at the beginning of my farming career and a relatively close neighbour to the mine and railway spur, I believe that I and other future farmers in this corridor **have the most to lose** and the least to gain if this Extension project is given approval. I don’t say this lightly as the proposed extension project has the potential to threaten the livelihood of my farming community.

I believe this mine has the ability to effect farming productivity in a number of ways. Firstly the impact the mine could have on the areas water supply and quality could be detrimental. The mine is proposing an elevated train line that crosses the namoi river and is elevated on pylons all the way to Emerald Hill. As there are no plans for the entire trainline it is unknown how deep these pylons will be drilled into the earth. This concerns me, as these pylons I assume will have to go down to a great depth to support numerous train crossings a day and up to 10 million tones of coal per year and over a hundred million of tonnes over its lifetime. This is extremely risky as it has the potential to put the aquifer at risk, which has a standing water level of approximately 12m below the soil surface. As my farm is irrigated by bores from this very aquifer it would be catastrophic for me if I was unable to irrigate future crops. Flooding is also concerning to me as no railway heights due to the lack of details have been released. As I have grown up during floods I have personally seen the amounts of water that can quickly inundate the entire floodplain. If the railway is not built above flood level it will have the ability to hold large amounts of water back making the impacts of flood even worse for neighbouring famers with houses and infrastructure at greater risk of being ruined and extending the period of time water will lie on fields potentially.

Another aspect of the railway line that will damage my production is it is for a long stretch on the other side of my boundary fence. I grow irrigated crops like cotton here and I expect coal dust to blow off from the train carriages and damage the quality of the cotton particularly the colour. I will be given harsh penalties for this reducing the amount of cash inflow greatly to our business. I do not believe it is fair that I should have to pay the consequences for the railway being put along our fenceline that will destroy the quality of a product we work hard to produce.

I also believe if we experience more hardship caused by drought the mine will not be have enough water available to run its operations (admitted by the Department of Planning). There is a proposed borefield in the extension which I believe will have drastic impacts on the water supply as Boggabri township is a mere 10km away. I also expect they could further explore water bore harvesting to the southern side of the river and pump large volumes to the mine, similar to how they are currently pumping and piping water from the Gap to Maules Creek. As my farm will be close by I believe it will put unnecessary pressure on the water table particularly during summer months when crop irrigations are more frequent.

The mine can also detriment local water river water. Being so close to the Namoi river the water from run off is going to harm the local water quality affecting river health. This is the case that the mine can directly dump water from sediment dams directly into the river if rain exceeds 38mm over 5 days, when larger amounts of rain occur it is unknown how much harmful sediment and toxins could end up in the Namoi river which is the lifeblood of many communities.

The final void of the mine will leave behind a lake. The lake is most likely to become more saline than seawater due to leaching of salts in the final lake bed. This is can than potentially impact the environment and other water supplies surrounding it.

Another topic that concerns me with the Vickery Extension project is the livibilty for myself and family as well as my neighbours. Whitehaven will tell you that agriculture and mining can coexist together without causing any harm to surrounding farmers. There are likely to be a small number farmers who will show support for Whitehaven saying this is true. However I do not believe this is the case**.** It is often the case that these farmers have often done business with Whitehaven, commonly in the form of farm leases that benefit the lessee greatly and they are happy to put up with the consequences as they are obviously would prefer a financial gain instead of instead of the health of the environment and themselves and families. Former neighbours of Whitehavens current mines if they were allowed talk **(as many have signed legal documents preventing the to speak out against the mine)** would tell you that it is an absolute nightmare to live next to the mine. They often fight for many years and takes a huge toll on them both emotionally and financially. They are also not compensated for living in hazardous conditions such as coal dust and noise caused completely by the nearby mine.

For me personally Whitehaven have constantly told me and my family will not be affected by this mine. **I cannot believe they are able to lie directly to our faces like this.** My house is approximately **4km** from the mine itself and **400m** from the railway spur. This is extremely close and I will be expected by the mine to put up with noise and dust for as long as the mine is operational. This will put me in a number of tough positions.

Firstly it is extremely difficult both financially and practically to live away from the farm especially as our farms are quite productive as we grow both summer and winter crops and rarely have a slow season. We also irrigate crops, predominately during summer where we often have shifts at any given hour of the day and nights. Although it is you might not think being 25km from town is a long commute it adds up to a lot of time over an irrigation season where you regularly do 3 irrigation shifts per day minimum and over the past summers of high temperatures and no rainfall we had to irrigate for the large majority of the summer.

Secondly how can I expect a future wife to move to the farm and endure these conditions**?** It can put her health at risk with blasting from the mine that have often released toxic gases and metals from these blasts. It hardly seems like a desirable place to move into start and start a career and family don’t you think**?** As Whitehaven I believe is a rogue company that meaning they are happy to break the rules and regulations and hope they don’t get caught. They will simply do as they like by running the mine at maximum speed, trying to do everything as quickly and cheaply as possible which in turn disrupts nearby neighbours with dust and noise and as well as disrupting the environment. This means that every time noise exceeds it limits and dust becomes too bad we have to contact the EPA and usually they aren’t stationed in Gunnedah or Boggabri and often arrive too late to catch them in the act.

Another recent incident that shows Whitehaven showing total disregard for the rules is the recent reports of alleged water theft. Whitehaven clearly believe that they are entitled to anything and have been pumping water out of a creek near the Maules Creek Mine **without a licence, in the middle of the regions worst drought.** This water could have gone a long way to help the creek wet and healthy and help downstream farmers water stock. With this attitude that they have I am fearful of how they will treat my family and my neighbours if the mine becomes operational.

The mines have also changed the social aspect of the town that I believe has had more negative outcomes for the greater community. Whitehaven have bought over **80 farms in the Boggabri region**. That is a loss of farming families that used to send their kids to school, play sport, support local businesses and contribute to the local community. The majority of people here now are not looking to settle down here and don’t have families yet or aren’t planning on bringing families to Boggabri, simply because of this change in atmosphere in town. I am afraid that if they Vickery Extension project is approved than the Boggabri community will be further depleted as the mine grows bigger and farming families grows less, which have been the backbone of small towns since they were established.

Overall it would be **unwise** to approve this project. There are too many unknowns surrounding the project and given Whitehaven’s track record there is likely to be severe hurt to the environment especially with river health and local water supply. Neighbouring farmers are to be severely impacted and towns like Boggabri could experience a further loss of community.