Independent Planning Commission

Re: Vickery Coal Mine Expansion Project

I would like to take this opportunity to add a submission in opposition to the proposed Vickery Coal Mine Expansion. I am currently working within the family farming operation we own and run in the Narrabri and Gunnedah Shire Councils. I am also currently studying in the science field at university. As someone within the Agriculture sector I feel it is my duty to debunk the notion that another mine is required within the North West Region.

The idea that this mine expansion will “bring flourishment to the local communities” is outrageous; observations made in the main streets of towns within the proximity of the expansion, show that the retail sector is at an all-time low and shop fronts have never been emptier. Even the current operating mines have had no enhancement of the failing townships retail prospects, it has just been announced that Narrabri will be losing its last remaining affordable clothing store Target. This will not be improved with a mine expansion. Further, the number of live- in community members that are currently employed by the mines is almost at job availability capacity and has the ability to be at full capacity with the already operating mines, an expansion is only encouraging fly in fly out workers that will only be heightening the problems faced within our communities.

With the worlds move away from the use of fossil fuels and push towards renewable energy sources, Australia itself has a push towards zero emissions by 2035, I ask why then are we are looking to approve a fossil fuel polluting pit? As a farmer we are always looking at the best possible practices to enhance sustainability and ensure our productivity can be generational, coal mines cannot give the same guarantee. With the soil being formed over thousands of years, how can this then be placed back into a formation that can be once again profitable? Science has shown that it simply cannot and a wide range of additives must be implemented to achieve the same results from unmined land, this further goes against where the agricultural sector is moving with an increased push towards less additives and chemical usage. It has been quoted that this expansion will only be giving 25 years of productivity, a short life span in comparison to other energy solutions, for example solar and hydroelectricity, and noticeably short in comparison to productive Australian producers that are multi-generational.

If this expansion is approved, what will be left in terms of community and jobs within the region after the coal has been extracted and exported and farming land has been diminished beyond repair?

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak on the proposal before you in the commission.

Emily Nott