

Janet Watt's Vickery Extension Public Hearing Speech 4.2.19 Boggabri

My name is Janet Watt and I'm a mother of 3 beautiful children. My husband and I operate a farming business just 4km from the proposed mine site and we live there and love it. We both grew up on family farms, did Agricultural Science degrees and had a dream to be farmers. We couldn't stay on our family farms so 11 years ago we found our farm, our beautiful, highly productive farm. It is extremely difficult for young people to get into farming and we feel proud that we have been able to do so. It has not been easy raising 3 children and running a farm. I could handle the floods and the droughts because it was out of my control and other people's too! But this has tipped me over the edge. The mental anguish this has caused me and my fellow neighbours and friends has been ongoing for a couple of years now and has been a terrible rollercoaster ride of ups and downs where one week you think it will be ok- I can deal with this, to absolutely giving up. I want you to know the huge strain that this causes people and even their children. This mental anguish is real and it is happening to people before mines come into areas and it continues every day that they are here.

The EIS is written by paid WHC consultants whom have disclaimers that are so heavily worded that they are not worth the paper they are written on. This is then peer reviewed but no new research conducted. This makes us very wary of the accuracy of the EIS. If data is wrong, models will be inaccurate. We have seen Whitehaven already get modelling wrong at it's Maules Creek Mine, with many more families being affected than the models predicted. There are substantially more people living near this project than the Maules Creek Mine and we are on a sensitive river and floodplain and yet they have predicted a smaller zone of affectation.

And then when they do get it wrong and they adversely affect our water, land and families it is up to us to prove it, **instead** of the mining company proving that they **haven't** affected us.

We have gone into detail about our concerns in our written submission, but I will briefly outline our fears today.

Greater impact from flooding largely due to the proposed rail line over the floodplain. How can this be accurately modelled without a rail design? And, also the predictions of worst-case flood scenarios are inadequate as reviewed by the Independent Scientific Committee. We will see increased damage to the river ecosystem, crops, livestock, earthworks, infrastructure and homes and even God forbid human lives lost. With more extreme climatic events devastating floods are happening and we will not be immune.

River and groundwater interference are stated in the EIS with increased river leakage, bore drawdown and allowable runoff of contaminated mine water near the river. If WHC already say there are risks to water and we have concern over model inaccuracy then who knows how bad it really could be! The groundwater and river are why these areas were settled and prospered. Any effect to the groundwater and river will be devastating and far reaching. The Namoi flows for another 250km west past Boggabri, Narrabri, Wee Waa and to my hometown Walgett. At present Walgett is battling to get enough river water for their residents to drink. How do you think they will feel when they find out their drinking water could be contaminated with runoff from mine overburden containing chemicals including Arsenic!

Being classed as "mine affected land" by land valuers. This is the case for properties at Maules Creek a similar distance to the mine as ours will be. Majority of people don't want to live near a coal mine. The effects of this for farmers is compounded as our farm is our job, home, often only asset, superannuation plan, legacy and inheritance for our children. Property values affect farmers ability to borrow in times of drought and expand their businesses, this reduces the income potential of the farm. Just as the effects for dust and noise from coal mines are considered and mitigated under VLAMP, so too should land devaluation. Policy must be developed prior to any development consent to ensure that landowners are duly compensated for reduction in land values on what is to be regarded as "mine affected land"

My family's health suffering due to mining dust, noise and blast fumes is a real and grave fear.

Why should my family and others like us subsidise our health and financial wellbeing for the economic gain of WHC?

I also want you to be aware that WHC has strongly encouraged people to support their mine and even groomed them on what to say. These people are speaking at the hearings, writing submissions and signing petitions in support as they fear losing business, their land leases, their donations and even their jobs. Some are set to make a lot of money from the expansion. Then there are farmers whom **would** speak **against** Whitehaven and it's mining but they have been put under confidentiality agreements where they are not allowed to complain about the company publicly. Then there are the people that are just so devastated and despondent about the whole thing that they can't bring themselves to get up here and speak. And I totally understand and respect all of people's reasons to speak or write, but IPC, it is **not** a fair and accurate representation of the people. Please take into account people's reasoning behind their words.

The only thing the WHC can spruik as a benefit to the community is jobs and we already have 5 operating mines in our area, plenty of jobs for all people wanting to work in the mining industry. If WHC are to benefit this town as they promised when they first came to the area, then they are going to have to drastically change the way they treat this community. Boggabri has seen little, if any benefit from WHC and yet will bear the brunt of the environmental and health impacts of the project. The town has had a reduction in families since I have been here and a drastic reduction in farming families. About 70 family farms have been bought by coal mining companies in this area. Another 20-30 have already or will be affected by this new mine. The economic benefit that these farming businesses have on the local economy is very significant and farming families are usually hugely involved in rural communities. And guess what it is all long term! Farming families could still be farming these lands in 1000 plus years from now, if it is not wrecked by 20 to 30 years that mining is here.

Our community is depending on you, the IPC. You will decide on the future health of our land, water and families. You have been put in a position that will drastically change the future of our amazing, productive area and it will be written in history. If not for the people here now, PLEASE for the sake of our children and future children REJECT this mine expansion.