

Presentation: Independent Planning Commission Panel - Rosemary Vass  
5<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Vickery Extension Proposal

Panel Chair: John Hann

Panel Members: Prof. Chris Fell and Prof. Garry Willgoose

Thank you Mr. John Hann, Chair of the panel and panel members Prof. Fell and Prof. Willgoose for giving me this opportunity to make my presentation.

Firstly I'd like to give you some information regarding my background and why I'm standing here today. My home is approximately 100kms to the West of Gunnedah just outside of Coonabarabran. My professional career was as an educator of 40 years experience most of which was in regional schools. Now retired, my roles are many, wife, mother, grandmother, carer, community member and environmentalist. Today I'm representing the Knitting Nannas against Gas and Coal, an important community group that incorporates all of my personal roles. My adult life has always been about the welfare, care and health of children. The Knitting Nannas' core principles are all about the protection of children and ensuring a healthy and viable planet for their futures. I stand here today as a Nanna to be a voice for children.

There are so many good reasons to oppose the approval of this coal mine extension as outlined by speakers over these two days but my concerns relate to it's effect on health and climate change.

Perhaps the panel would indulge me by each answering a simple question. Do you accept that the science on anthropogenic climate change is largely settled amongst the majority of the scientific community and that we must heed the scientific facts laid out in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report issued in October 2018?

Any confidence in decisions made by this panel and the IPC is reliant on the Commission making that decision based on the knowledge of these scientific facts. What are the implications of these facts for this coal mine, or any other, when the IPC is considering its approval or rejection? The facts are blunt.

Here is what the World Economic Forum stated when analyzing the IPCC report from October:

*... we have at most 12 years to make the drastic and unprecedented changes needed to prevent average global temperatures from rising 1.5 degrees Celsius, roughly 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit. Limiting global temperature increase to that amount is the goal of the international Paris Agreement. Meeting that goal “will require unprecedented action to drive decarbonization of agriculture, energy, industry and transport,”*

This report from the World Economic Forum (WEF) went on to outline what was already happening due to climate breakdown and what the long term outcomes would be if we fail to take sufficient action.

*The risk report pointed to the “accelerating pace” of biodiversity loss as a particular concern. Species abundance is down 60 percent since 1970, it said. That affects the human food chain, health and socio-economic development, “with implications for well-being, productivity, and even regional security.”*

*Climate change as well is increasing strain on the global food system through changes in temperature, precipitation and extreme weather events, along with higher carbon emissions. The last four years have been the hottest on record, it said.*

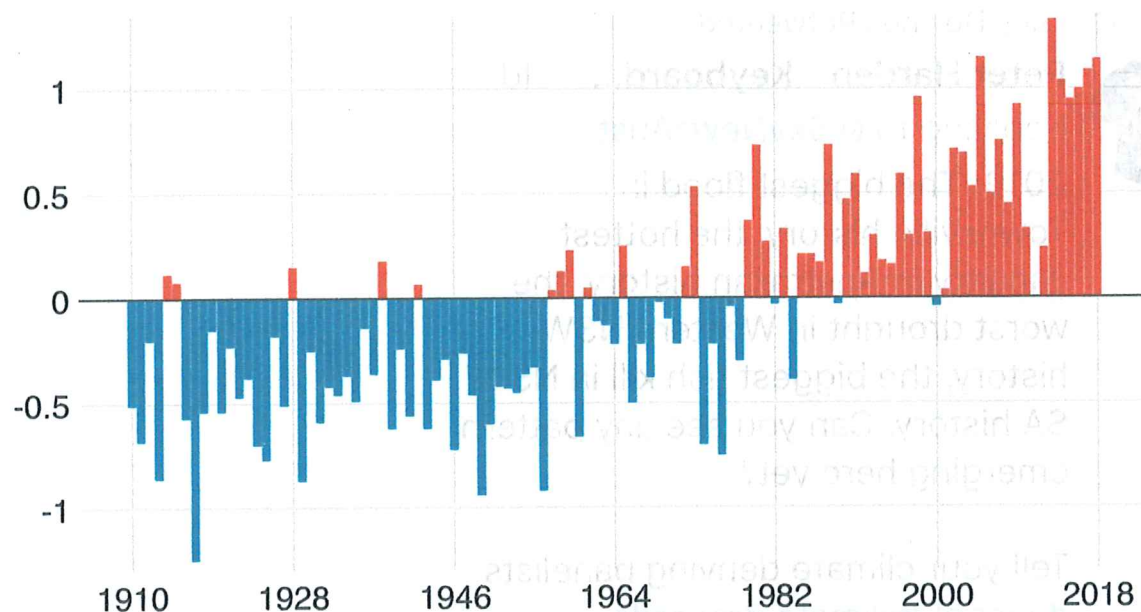
*Sea-level rise is another peril. An estimated 800 million people in more than 570 coastal cities are vulnerable to oceans rising 1.6 feet by 2050.*

Ref: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-forecast-world-is-sleepwalking-into-catastrophe/>

We only need to look at our newsfeed in Australia for the last month to see the reality of the statements from the WEF. It's not way off in the future it's here now. The weather extremes we are experiencing have an overlay of exacerbation caused by climate change. Across the nation we have warnings for health and safety regarding fires in Tasmania, heatwaves across the centre and all the south eastern states, and life threatening and unprecedented floods in Northern Queensland. The economic and social costs of the ongoing drought and water crisis for inland rivers and communities has not even been fully evaluated yet nor the costs to infrastructure and livelihood from the Tasmanian fires or Queensland floods. These are the problems we are bequeathing our children and the environment that sustains them.

## Australia has been getting warmer

Annual mean temperature above or below average (°C)



Note: Average is calculated from 1961-1990 data

Source: Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology

BBC

We know that the oceans around Australia are getting warmer and their temperature has increased by about 1 degree C since 1910. Oceans are experiencing more frequent marine heatwaves. Sea levels are rising and the pH decreasing as the waters become more acid. There have been large coral bleaching events in the Great Barrier Reef, which are becoming more frequent and occurring over larger areas. The time may soon come that it cannot recover and it will be but a remnant of what it once was. The economic impact of such destruction will be immense. Some jobs may be created by mining fossil fuels like coal (although less and less with increased automation) but as emissions rise and greenhouse gases turbo charge climate change there will be a net loss of jobs and prosperity across our nation and others. As Prof. Tony Ingraffea has expressed it (and it applies to both people and all that depend on our planet.)

*"It's the health of the many versus the wealth of a few"*

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**Peter Harden - Keyboard...** · 1d

Replying to [@SkyNewsAust](#)

2019: The biggest flood in Townsville history, the hottest January in Australian history, the worst drought in Western NSW history, the biggest fish kill in NSW/ SA history. Can you see any pattern emerging here yet?

Tell your climate denying panelists.

[#auspol](#) [#climate](#) [#records](#)

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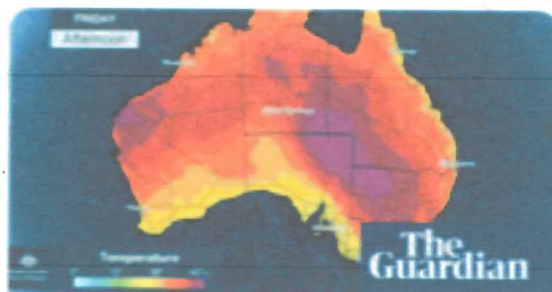
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**Lenore Taylor**  
[@lenoretaylor](#)

This is BOM proof of what anyone who tried to sleep during January already knew....January was Australia's hottest month since records began



January was Australia's hottest month since records began

[theguardian.com](#)

The Bureau of Meteorology has just confirmed that January 2019 was the hottest month in more than a hundred years of records, which meant that for the first time ever on record the mean temperature across the whole

country exceeded 30 degrees C. Records were broken for hottest overnight temperature (36.6) and also for the highest January temperature (49.5 C or 121.1 F).

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/weather/january-was-australia-s-warmest-month-on-record-bureau-says-20190201-p50uz1.html>

Our children and our planet are looking at a new changing climate of dangerous extremes. These extremes will have a huge negative impact on human health and as we know, it is the young and the frail old who will suffer most. In a report from the University of California in August 2018 the major consequences for human health and welfare rising from the extreme events of climate change were outlined.

*.... researchers forecast that beyond 2050, as much as 44 percent of the planet's land areas will be exposed to drying. This will lead to severe drought conditions throughout southern Europe, North America, much of southeast Asia, and most of the Amazon—affecting about 1.4 billion people.*

At the other extreme heightened risk of severe rainfall events will expose an extra two billion people to floods. Human health will be impacted in many different ways.

*In the years to come, it is expected that more than half of the population may be exposed to extreme heat waves and perhaps one-third to vector-borne diseases.*

*They added that heat and droughts threaten regions that produce much of the world's food. Food prices are expected to rise 23 percent by 2030, making food markets more volatile, and under heat stress, the nutritious content of food crops is declining.*

*"Extreme weather disasters also have negative impacts on mental health. When heat is over 130 degrees, whole societies can come unglued," the authors wrote.*

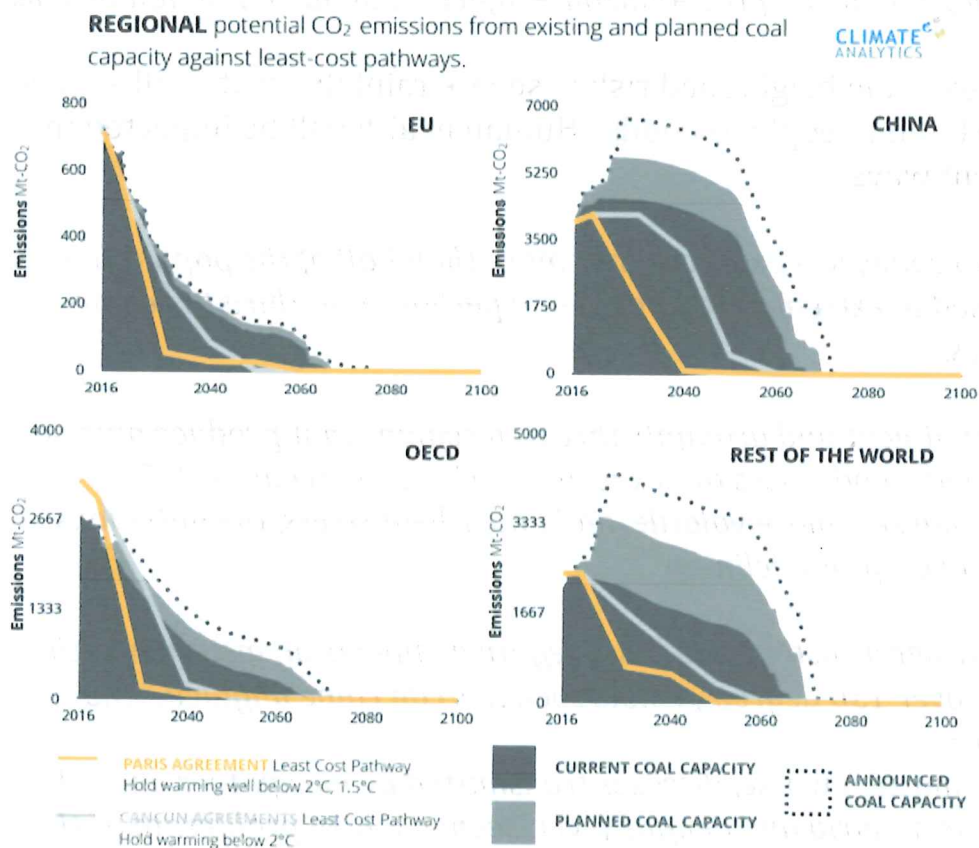
*And, to make matters worse, diseases transmitted by mosquitoes and other insects, such as malaria and dengue fever, seem likely to proliferate as the habitats of mosquitoes expand, thanks to climate change*

Ref: <https://phys.org/news/2018-08-insights-climate-legislative-momentum-emissions.html>

Given that we know these scientific facts ..... what then must we do?

Over 200 countries including Australia signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change 3 years ago committing to hold global warming to below 2 degrees C. The evidence from our government tells us we are not reducing our emissions in line to achieve these goals despite the need to take urgent action year on year. We need to escalate our efforts if we are to have any positive effect.

Currently the coal export industry is Australia's and New South Wales' largest contributor to climate change. Climate Analytics have calculated that emissions produced by burning NSW coal exports (both thermal and coking coal) in 2017 were around 393.12 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> which is approximately 1% of global emission from fossil fuels. There is a pathway to meeting our reduction goals but it means that OECD countries like Australia (and out coal customers Japan & S.Korea) will need to phase out burning coal for electricity by 2030. China and the rest of the world will need to follow by 2040 and 2050 respectively.



Climate Analytics. November 2016. *Implications of the Paris Agreement for Coal Use in the Power Sector.*

We must consider any new coal mine or extension of a coal mine in the context of these facts. The NSW State Environmental Planning policy for Mining states that downstream burning emissions from coal mines (Scope 3 emissions) must be considered in the decision making process so too Scope 1 the on site emissions and Scope 2 emissions created by energy use. NSW Government policy also states that they endorse the Paris Agreement and will take action consistent with achieving the goals. It must follow then that the IPC will look at any coal mine approval in this framework.

You then, on this panel are at the forefront of this race against time. Debra Roberts, Co Chair of the IPCC Working Groups II said;

*“The next few years are probably the most important in our history.”*

Each incremental decision regarding fossil fuels tips us closer to the brink or edges us back. Please do your part in protecting the future from catastrophic climate change whose effects will cascade in countless directions for water and food security, health, biodiversity, economics, social cohesion and will alter forever how our future generations can live on this planet. Do not approve the Vickery Extension and be a part of the solution not part of the problem.

Rosemary Vass

