



## VICKERY EXTENSION REPORT IDENTIFIES KEY ISSUES REQUIRING “DETAILED CONSIDERATION”

30 April 2019

A report from the Independent Planning Commission on major expansion plans for a coal mine in the state’s northwest has identified a raft of issues requiring “detailed consideration”.

Whitehaven Coal is seeking approval to incorporate and extend the mining and ancillary activities of the Vickery Coal Project near Boggabri. The proposed changes include extending the footprint of the open cut coal mine to the north and south, and increasing to approximately 179 million tonnes (+44 million tonnes) the amount of run of mine (ROM) coal to be extracted over 25 years.

Under its proposed changes, Whitehaven also wants to:

- construct and operate a coal handling and processing plant, train load-out facility, rail loop and rail spur line at the project site
- construct and operate a water supply bore field and pipeline, and
- change the final landform by removing the eastern overburden emplacement area, increasing the size of the approved western overburden emplacement area, and retaining one pit lake void (rather than two).

The former Minister for Planning asked the Commission in October last year to conduct a public hearing into the carrying out of the Vickery Extension Project.

Chair of the Commission, Professor Mary O’Kane AC, appointed Mr John Hann (Panel Chair), Professor Chris Fell AM and Professor Garry Willgoose to conduct a Multi-stage Public Hearing.

The Commissioners met with the applicant, the Department of Planning & Environment, and Gunnedah and Narrabri Shire Councils, and undertook an inspection of the site and surrounding areas.

They also held an initial public hearing over two days in Boggabri and Gunnedah in February this year to listen to the community’s concerns, which focussed on air quality, agricultural impacts, biodiversity impacts, groundwater and surface water impacts, noise, rehabilitation and final void, visual amenity, economic and social impacts.

The Commission has today (Tuesday 30 April 2019) completed the initial stage of the public hearing and published an Issues Report, which identifies key issues requiring detailed consideration to ensure a full and thorough final assessment.

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In its Issues Report, the Commission stated: “There are several issues where uncertainty remains about the predicted impacts of the Project, including those related to:

- strategic context and Project justification;
- groundwater;
- surface water and flooding;
- water balance;
- noise and blasting;
- air quality;
- Project infrastructure area;
- Biodiversity;
- rehabilitation, final void and final landform;
- heritage;
- social and economics;
- visual amenity;
- traffic and transport; and
- the public interest.”

“The Commission has identified a number of issues associated with these 14 aspects of the Project, all of which the Commission considers are key issues requiring detailed consideration by the Department in its evaluation of the merits of the Project,” it added.

The Project now goes back to the Department for a full whole-of-government assessment.

It will return to the Commission for determination in due course. After a public hearing is held by the Commission, no merit appeal may be made in respect of any future decision it makes as consent authority.

**The Commission’s Issues Report can be read in full here:**

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2018/11/vickery-extension-project>