

To the Independent Planning Commission,

Please accept my submission objecting to the proposed Vickery Extension Project near Boggabri.

Whitehaven's poor record:

I note that on top of this company's poor record (see listed below) the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) announced last week that it is prosecuting notorious repeat offender Whitehaven Coal for stealing water at the company's controversial Maules Creek mine.

1. The company has been investigated or found in breach of environmental laws or conditions on more than 20 occasions since 2012, across five different mine sites.
2. Over that time Whitehaven has been fined or made to pay \$235,000 in total for regulatory breaches.
3. Whitehaven has now been taken to court five times, once by the EPA, once by Maules Creek Community Council, currently by the Resources Regulator and NRAR and South East Forest Rescue.
4. Whitehaven has breached a range of conditions designed to protect the public and the environment over the 12 year period, including:
 - Allowing toxic blast fumes to drift over neighbouring properties
 - Polluting air and water
 - Illegal dumping of waste
 - Illegal clearing of bushland
 - Worker safety breaches

Because of the huge Maules Creek mine, locals are very aware of the extremely dismissive attitude of this corporation toward community, regulations and environment.

1) Whitehaven pays no tax on its \$6.09 billion revenue.

2) Whitehaven has treated local farmers with total disrespect, ignoring repeated and continued complaints about toxic gases, excessive noise and dust released from the mine and refusing to compensate for impacts on farmers' bore water.

3) This impact on the community has been amplified by the fact that at least 90 family farms have been purchased by Whitehaven in close proximity to the town of Boggabri. This is more than 61,050 ha of land over 471 freehold titles. This land was purchased for mine infrastructure, as biodiversity offsets, and as a buffer zone to protect neighbours from air and noise pollution. This has caused many of these farming families to leave the region permanently, changing the very nature of this area, hollowing out the township, affecting local businesses and rending the entire social fabric of the district. This Vickery proposal will mean even more family farms and rural properties bought up because of air and noise pollution, irreversibly changing Boggabri. People in this small community believe the community cannot handle a fifth mine in close proximity to the town. They're concerned that the scale of the project is far too large for the town to cope with.

The Vickery proposal will destroy even more high value farmland and local farmers believe that once again Whitehaven will seek to expand the mine and the impacts of dust and noise will make this land unliveable.

Whitehaven already has an approval for a mine at the site, but with this project the company wants to more than double the volume of coal it mines every year, to 10 million tonnes.

Although Whitehaven was forced to move its pits a little further away from the Namoi River, thanks to the efforts of farmers opposing the mine, after struggling through record droughts, local farmers are extremely concerned that their livelihoods will be destroyed by Whitehaven draining the aquifer and the Namoi river itself.

Climate Change

The world's scientists warn and it is very clear that holding global warming to 1.5°C or even the more risky 2°C, means that coal mining and power generation *must* be phased out globally by 2050, with coal production required to fall 67% by 2030.

Despite this, Whitehaven has more than doubled its production of coal over the last five years, and plans to ramp up even further with this proposed Vickery expansion which will add 370 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere, putting all Australians at risk of extreme weather and dangerous fires.

Whitehaven justifies these reckless plans with questionable forecasts of a growing demand for coal in Asian for at least twenty years. Failing to declare/admit that their projections would doom the Paris Climate Agreement to failure, and cause runaway greenhouse gas emissions causing global warming in excess of around 3°C of warming by 2100 resulting in catastrophic social and economic collapse of civilisation as we know it.

Even 2°C of warming is estimated to expose 37% of the world's population to extreme heat, while 32-80 million people would be exposed to flooding from sea level rise, and an extra 411 million people would face severe drought and starvation. 2°C would also spell the death of the Great Barrier Reef among many of the worlds reefs, and massive biodiversity loss in Australia and worldwide because climate knows no national borders. This is the scenario Whitehaven using and is asking us to accept in order to justify its operations. It is irresponsible, reckless, and as the insurance industry and security agencies around the world have predicted...catastrophic.

Heritage Impacts

The proposed Vickery mine would be located within 300 metres of the 'Kurumbede' homestead which has important historical significance as the inspiration for several Dorothea Mackellar poems including the famous "My Country". I understand that one of the 'Kurumbede' outbuildings would actually be destroyed by the mining activity and the homestead itself would be effected by coal dust and be seriously impacted by the vibration of blasting which would put the structural integrity of the homestead at risk.

Without doubt there would be a devastating loss of scenic value and a total loss of the appropriate tranquillity and peace associated with such a significant heritage site.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely,

Meg Nielsen
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