

To the Independent Planning Commission
Ref: **OBJECTION** to Vickery Coal Mine Extension

2/7/2020

.To the Independent Planning Commission Panel.

I am Stuart Murray, a retired Agronomist now cattle farmer in the Narrabri Shire, and unfortunately have the Whitehaven Underground Mine as my neighbour.

Resource companies are notorious for exaggerating the benefits and downplaying the negatives of their proposed projects when arguing for their projects to be approved.

I remember at Boggabri when submissions to the Vickery Extension EIS were being presented that Paul Flynn the CEO of Whitehaven Coal, twice claimed the project was **sustainable**. Coal mining cannot be described as sustainable because it is a finite resource. A more compelling definition of sustainability is the ability of the project to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Coal mining fails miserably by these criteria as demonstrated by the unrest among the younger people around the world.

At the same hearing the case was made by eloquent young coal mining employees that coal mining was good for jobs and no doubt this argument will be trotted out again at this hearing.

Never do they mention the fact that more than eighty farming businesses, along with the associate jobs have been squeezed out by these coal mines. That's an area of 61,000 hectares and increasing.

Never do they mention the contribution coal mining has to global warming and climate change and the loss of jobs as a result. Recently job losses for the electorate of Barwon due to the drought were calculated at around 17,500 full time jobs equivalent in 2017-18, and more than 34,000 jobs in 2018-19. Exactly what number of job losses could be attributed to a particular mine would be difficult to determine however the fact that fossil fuel industries collectively contribute to climate change, means job losses as a result cannot be disputed.

Never would they mention the negative impact of climate change on the economy, a message delivered clearly over the last year or so. Drought followed by Queensland floods that washed away over 500,000 cattle, back into drought, rivers dry up with massive fish kills. 2019 saw many records broken, record heat waves, hottest year on record, driest on record and the worst fires on record during 2019-20. More floods in early 2020 and damaging hail storms in Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, and Rockhampton, and don't forget the dust and smoke and continued bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef.

So what does the Commonwealth and NSW governments do to keep these people employed and stimulate the economy, blame arsonists for the bush fires, brush it all under the carpet as' *this not the time to talk about it*', and recommend another two global warming projects, Vickery and the Narrabri Gas Project.

GIVE US A BREAK!

The Murray darling Basin of which the Namoi River is a part has dried up before due to droughts, but the discussion now is how much worse the problem has become since some of these water resources have been allocated to irrigation and the needs of communities along the river. Combining this with climate change which now has a significant negative impact would suggest it has been brought to its knees. Indeed, the Federal governments own State of the Environment Report 2016 gives a poor assessment on inland water flows in the basin. It reports long term downward trends in flows since 2011 and a widespread loss of ecosystem function. Since then on average it has got hotter and drier so the situation is likely to have got worse.

The fact that our government has spent \$8 billion so far trying to restore environmental flows, and so far there is little to show for this expenditure, it begs the question of why would they allow coal mines to (allegedly) suck up water illegally, outbid local farmers for water at auction to be used for dust suppression and washing coal?

We would rather see this water used by a **sustainable** industry like agriculture.

Conclusion

Digging up more coal will not get us out of the mess we are in; it will only lock in more of the same for longer.

Therefore the economic contribution of mining coal and gas is nowhere as big as you might think.

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