



Boggabri Branch NSW Farmers Association

Submission to the Department of Planning and Environment Vickery Extension Project

NSW Farmers' Association Background

The NSW Farmers' Association is Australia's largest State farmer organisation representing the interests of its farmer members – ranging from broad acre, livestock, wool and grain producers, to more specialised producers in the horticulture, dairy, egg, poultry, pork, oyster and goat industries. It is made up of over a hundred local branches of which one is Boggabri.

Boggabri Branch Submission

The NSW Farmers' Boggabri Branch appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed expansion to the Vickery Coal Mine located near Gunnedah, NSW. We have a number of concerns with the development, particularly around the impacts to neighbouring landholders and the close proximity to the Namoi River. We believe that this is not really an extension as it is a Greenfield site.

Mining has reached saturation point around Boggabri as existing mines have bought out nearly 80 farms in the district which contributes to the diminished life style for rural residents due to these major developments, changing the fabric and structure of our proud agricultural community.

The proximity of the Vickery Extension Project to the Namoi River and the associated floodplain presents a range of worrying potential impacts. The EIS lacks sufficient detail relating to the potential risks associated with the expansion of the mine on floodplain areas and the impacts on the associated water resources of the Namoi River, tributaries and aquifers. It is critical that the proposed Vickery expansion does not cause or contribute to adverse impacts to the water resource in particular, but not limited to, altering flood risk, up-catchment flows, aquifer storages and water quality.

In our opinion there is not enough water for this mine. The Department of Planning [DPIE] admits this in their assessment. Whitehaven were scrambling for water with their existing mines last year. They propose a bore field with a transect of 10 bores in the Namoi alluvium approximately 6km from the Boggabri town water bores. Research shows, that last year they would have needed 3300ML more than their current licence entitlements from this source. We have also been told that when rainfall exceeds just 38mm over 5 days, the Mine will be allowed to release water from sediment dams directly into the Namoi River.

Additionally, the EIS provides limited engineering details in relation to the construction of the rail spur over the Namoi River and floodplain areas. The construction of the rail spur has the potential to

affect water movements (including surface water and river flows), therefore detailed analysis of these impacts and associated risks must be taken into consideration. The accumulation of flood debris against the construction also has the potential to increase flood levels, which may contribute to the flood risk in Gunnedah, especially in areas already prone to flooding. Changing variability in climate may also see increasing intensity and frequency of rainfall events. This needs to be considered in flood risk assessments over the life of the project.

A number of nearby landholders have raised concerns about the likely creation of dust and noise disturbance during the construction and production phases of the proposed expansion. NSW Farmers acknowledges the efforts taken to model and develop strategies to minimise the potential impacts on nearby landholders, although there are perhaps still questions as to their accuracy and applicability in a real world setting. With the mine expansion more than doubling the size of production and the proposed expansion area being in closer proximity to landholders, these landholders and the wider community must be assured that the creation of dust and noise pollution will be minimal. Recommended conditions from the DPIE will leave nearby farmers with less protection from dust and noise than those near Maules Creek.

Another concern is that the mine will impact the historic homestead 'Kurrumbede' which belonged to the Mackellar family, and was the inspiration for several Dorothea Mackellar poems, including the famous 'My Country' – I love a sunburnt country.

Let it be known that even the Narrabri Shire Council has formally objected to the mine, believing that it is in not the communities' best interest. The mine will leave a final void lake that will, in perpetuity, be filled from groundwater seepage eventually becoming more saline than sea water.

Recently with the price and demand for coal plummeting the impacts of this proposed new product mine on the environment and our communities are too great to risk for this ailing now high risk.

Overall, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the EIS for the Vickery Expansion Project and strongly believe that the best outcomes will be achieved if the concerns of landholders are genuinely considered alongside other stakeholders.



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Hon secretary

Boggabri Branch

NSW Farmers Assn.