

**From:** [Robyn Bird](#)  
**To:** [IPCN Enquiries Mailbox](#)  
**Subject:** Vickery Extension Project  
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Dear Commissioners,

Please accept my submission on the Vickery Extension Project.

I object to the Vickery Extension Project for the reasons outlined in this submission and I will refer to it as the project in my submission.

I am a retired pharmacist and have spent most of my working life as a locum pharmacist in the New England and Upper Hunter regions. Since retiring I have spent some time farm sitting including a farm on the Liverpool Plains.

I have many reasons for objecting to this project however my main objection is the detrimental effect that the Vickery Extension will have on the quality and quantity of water in the immediate area and the subsequent issues in the Murray Darling Basin Area .

Water is a precious resource and is best used for agricultural purposes in the Boggabri area rather than by the Vickery Extension Project .This project will be taking water for coal extraction and coal dust control. Water will also be required for washing coal for this mine and some of the other Whitehaven mines in the Boggabri/Narrabri region.Whitehaven Coal has been a very poor corporate citizen in its use of water. At the moment The Regulator(NRAR) is charging the Whitehaven Coal owned Maules Creek Coal Pty Ltd with two alleged breaches of the Water management Act for taking water without an access licence over a three year period between 2016 and 2019.There have been other adverse findings concerning water e.g. The NSW Department of Industry found in 2017 that Whitehaven's review into its water use "was deficient in a number of areas" and that the company did"not provide sufficient evidence to adequately determine if impacts were occurring to groundwater and connected water systems". In 2018 the same Department found that Whitehaven's groundwater modelling gave a "poor correlation between modelled and observed data". This is an area where farmers rely on a secure supply of bore water.Some farmers have reported bore failures which they have attributed to the existing mines and some farmers would like "real time" monitoring of water use. I see no reason why Whitehaven Coal would comply with water regulations in the proposed Vickery Mine because of their past poor performance and because there is no provision for" real time" monitoring and therefore I object to the Proposed Vickery Extension .

This mine is in a dry climate area and with the increasing effects of climate change the rainfall will be increasingly unreliable . There will possibly be increasing lengths and severity of droughts interspersed with perhaps short bursts of high rainfall but with an overall decrease in the annual rainfall. Many farmers in the Liverpool Plains area have been adapting to farming in this increasingly dry climate by using farming and grazing

methods, such as Soil for Life , No-till farming and Regenerative Farming, which hydrate the soil. These farmers are being more productive and improving the quality of their soil and farmlands with less water while the Vickery Mine will use copious amounts of water. The existing mines did not decrease their water usage during this recent drought. Previously when farmers in this area have needed to purchase water on the open market they have been outpriced by Whitehaven Coal which has paid three times the normal price. This practice will no doubt continue with the proposed Vickery Mine and therefore I object to the Vickery Extension Project.

It is important that the Namoi river is healthy because it is one of the rivers at the head of the Murray-Darling Basin .This proposed new mine will reduce the flow of the Namoi and will result in toxins from mine runoff entering the river and aquifers. The mine is only 400metre from the Namoi River. There is a major issue because Whitehaven plans to place mine waste on top of 202 hectares of the Namoi alluvial aquifer which the Department of Planning Industry and Environments Water division does not support because acid drainage and heavy metals could leach into this aquifer. These toxins can then adversely affect ecosystems downstream . I object to this proposed mine because of the adverse effect on the Namoi River and possible detrimental effect on other areas of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Whitehaven Coal has been found to be in breach of environmental laws or conditions on more than 20 occasions since 2012. In February this year a dam wall failed at the company's nearby Tarrawonga Coal mine. In May this year the NSW Environment Protection Agency fined the company \$15,000 for the failure of the dam wall as well as failure to maintain an inspection schedule or plan of maintenance.

Whitehaven Coal has also been convicted in March 2017 by the NSW Land and Environment Court for breaching its environment protection licence. A post-blast plume of potentially harmful oxides of nitrogen gas passed over farmland near the RocGlen Mine near Gunnedah . Whitehaven Coal did not notify neighbouring properties that the potentially hazardous gas was in their properties. This company is not a good neighbour and people should not have to live with the possibility of a toxic cloud . Again I object to this project because Whitehaven Coal has shown disregard for the safety of people and the environment.

Whitehaven has already bought out 90 farm covering an area the size of Singapore. Australia is an ancient continent and much of the land mass is desert, a lot of the remaining land mass has infertile soil and I feel we should be protecting as much fertile land , such as that in the Namoi Valley, as possible especially as climate change is making it more difficult to produce the same amount and quality of food . The Federal Agriculture Minister, David Littleproud, has said that Australia only needs 25% of the food we produce. This will not be the case if more fertile land is sold to coal mining companies. We need fertile land and a secure water supply for Australia's food security and for the food needs of our export customers. I object to this project because it will convert fertile ground into waste land.

Depopulation of the Boggabri area has been the result of this huge buying up of farming properties. This has had a negative impact on the community. Narrabri Shire objects to the project because of the negative impact on the mine and because it will have a negative financial effect on the Shire. Many people , adults and children, in the community have suffered and are suffering stress and uncertainty caused by this project already even before it begins operation. Again I object to the project.

The Gomeri People are the custodians of this land . They have the right to have their sacred places and artifacts kept in situ if they wish or whatever their wishes are should be in writing and legally binding. I do not know if this has occurred. If there are no legally binding issues. requested by the Gomeri people then I would object.

There are issues regarding the rail spur required by this project. It is to be built on the Namoi flood plain and will be too close to existing homes. The rail line will be within 300metres of some homes and not much further away from others so the noise and toxic dirty coal dust would be intolerable. For these reasons I object to the project.

Some existing homes will be very close to the proposed mine itself and this will mean , noise pollution from mine blasts and general activity, light pollution, toxic coal dust and the possibility of toxic gas plumes. The effects of the mine blasts could also result in damage to the homes and contents. The toxic coal dust and light pollution would not be beneficial for plants or animals and the noise would adversely affect some animals. Because of the damage caused to people, homes, animals and crops I object to the project.

The work done at at Siding Springs Observatory near Coonabarabran which is of world wide importance . This work would be severely negatively impacted by light pollution from the project.

The historic Kurrumbede homestead , and surrounding land will be adversely affected by this project. This homestead is much respected because it is assumed to be the home and landscape which inspired Dorothea MacKellar to write the poem , My Country ,and many of her other poems . The Dorothea MacKellar Poetry Competition began in Gunnedah many years ago and is still an important activity for school children. The Kurrumbede homestead will be 300metres from the rail line and coal loader and just over a kilometre from the mine pit head .The homestead will then be subject to damage from blasting and deterioration from coal dust. The landscape will be entirely ruined. I object to the project because of the damage it will cause to the Kurrumbede homestead and the annihilation of the surrounding landscape.

There is a prospect that the koala may be declared an endangered species so it is necessary to save as much of the existing koala habitat as possible . This project will destroy existing koala habitat so I object to this project.

There is uncertainty in the number of jobs which the project will provide and they will not be "transition" jobs which our economy needs. Whitehaven Coal has already began an automation process at the nearby Maules Creek mine by introducing a fleet of six autonomous haulage trucks and excavators. I object to the project because there is no certainty in the number of jobs which will be provided and those jobs would be short term, a maximum of 25 years. I object to this project because his mine replaces farms and the associated jobs which last for generations and the soil would be nurtured.

The burning of fossil fuels is the greatest contributor to global warming and hence causing Climate Change. This project is planned to mine 168 million tonnes of coal contributing 370million tonnes of greenhouse gases to our atmosphere and this will exacerbate Climate Change and this is another reason why I object to this project.

It was announced in The Northern Daily Leader that Whitehaven Coal had put this project on hold due to " volatile financial market conditions". It also announced that " Whitehaven does not expect to consider making a final investment decision in relation to these projects ie the Vickery Extension Mine and Winchester South mine in 2020." This uncertainty is intolerable for the people of the Namoi Valley.

The future for coal exports from NSW is dubious at best. India will not be importing coal from 2021. South Korea is planning a Green New Deal and will be decreasing exports as will Japan. Australia should also be planning to use less coal, export less coal and to transition to a fossil fuel free economy. I object to this project because it will result in the production of green house gases, the exacerbation of Climate Change and will not produce any transition jobs.

In summary I object to this project because it adversely affects the quality and quantity of water in the Namoi Valley and thus the Murray-Darling Basin. The project will cause health issues for people in the Namoi Valley because of toxic coal dust and toxic gases in the air as well as stress caused by uncertainty of the future and damage caused to homes, crops and land caused by mine blasts and toxins in the air and water. Stress will also be caused by having a company with such a dreadful record for environmental and safety records in their area. The loss of productive farmland is a tragedy for the whole of Australia. This loss of land takes away the possibility of many great jobs in sustainable farming and value adding farm products. The presence of an extra mine in the area will deter tourists. The production of more fossil fuel is a catastrophe for the world because of the exacerbation of Climate Change. I cannot speak for the Gomeroi people but I can imagine that seeing their land trashed by a mine after being dispossessed of it would be unbearable.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Robyn Bird.

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