

Maules Creek Branch of the Country Women's Association of NSW. Vickery Mine submission/ speech. 2 July 2020- Narrabri Crossing theatre. (L.Laird)

The Maules Creek Branch of the CWA members are here for the long haul. We are here for our children and our children's children. Today, on behalf of our Branch, I stand here for them – in front of you - our government decision makers in a time of extreme change.

Your decision to approve new coal in our region will affect our generation. An approval will provide wealth for some of this generation, while ultimately the environmental, agricultural and heritage costs will fall to the children of this region.

For this reason alone we object to this Whitehaven Coal Vickery Extension application. In the first instance we ask that you reject this development consent application and failing this we ask that you ensure that the draft conditions are fit for purpose- that is conditions must be met- not "generally," and not qualified by such words as "reasonably and feasibly." We have no room left in our environment for a project of this kind that agrees to get it approximately right.

Our key concern today is the threat this project poses to our groundwater.

Since the last time we spoke to the Commission, much has changed.

Firstly, we ask you to take into consideration that Whitehaven Coal is under two water investigation we know of, for alleged water take at the Maules Creek Mine and may face prosecution. Under these circumstances, it is our view that where the water comes from for each project and clear conditions without loopholes for ground and surface water should be up front, before approval. Further the term "available" must be clearly described in relation to water supply. Taking from farming should not be on. The water is either in the EA and conditioned in the approval or not. To our understanding, this is not - one big 20 km mine pit from Maules Creek to Vickery. These are all separate projects and a mine can only use the water once.

We know that in November 2019 Department of Water wrote to Planning- with a number of Vickery mine concerns particularly to confirm if the proponent needs had enough (water) entitlement," GI-4.

In March 2020, we note that Department of Water wrote another letter to Planning this time raising the link between Tarrawonga mine Mod 8 applying to access Vickery water licences.

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(“DPIE Water is currently in receipt of a request involving water supply of 1.6 ML/day to Tarrawonga Mine Mod 8 from groundwater Water Access Licences held under Whitehaven Vickery Coal Project, which may further inhibit the proponent from accessing necessary WALs for the Vickery Mine Extension.)

The Department of Water identified that Vickery Mine had a water short fall in dry times.

We ask, does the Commission know about Tarrawonga Modification 7 that is also in the planning assessment process?

Because at the same time as Vickery is proceeding, Tarrawonga Mod 7, is also proceeding and is also linked to the Vickery mine but this time via a proposed pipeline.

Our community seeks clarification.

Section 3.3.4 of Tarrawonga Mod 7 Surface Water Assessment refer to mine water sharing being allowed between the Boggabri-Tarrawonga-Maules Creek mines. It outlines that Tarrawonga could, if approved, access water from the Vickery mine via pipeline.

And with a pipe in place, it is not a big stretch to see how future changes could be granted to allow water to go all-ways through the pipe- or by truck.

Use of Maules Creek ground or surface water for mining at Tarrawonga or Vickery was not included in the original 2012 approval conditions for the Maules Creek coal mine. We already have water issues, we object to this door being opened as part of the Vickery Extension project. It was not contemplated in Maules Creek Approval and the water must not be used for Tarrawonga or Vickery.

Further, Mod 7, involves the removal of a promised 2013 Planning Assessment Commission condition for a bentonite wall in the Tarrawonga Approval. The wall is a barrier to protect seepage of alluvial water into the pit. So now- if approved- the water may seep into the pit.

Additionally, water understanding is now less clear. The crucial groundwater modelling that is being undertaken now by all the Leard Forest mines was not included for community scrutiny in the Tarrawonga Mod 7 Environmental Assessment for consideration- so you see the difficulties.

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Water security is very serious. If water is being moved from zone to zone we need the science understood by all the parties. We need to understand what each mine's take is and what the impact is. We need the up to date modelling.

The surface and groundwater must not be turned into Whitehaven coal's "available" water supply for whichever mine it chooses. The risks need to be understood and then addressed.

We need cumulative mine water use modelling conducted by an independent water modeller, and we need the modelling peer reviewed, and an understanding of weather condition and the forecast impacts of climate change before any water is taken to or from Vickery mine.

Water is precious to us all. If the piecemeal approvals continue, - we understand that there will be groundwater pipelines between Maules Creek, Tarrawonga, the farm bores and Vickery.

We are particularly concerned for any potential for Maules Creek groundwater ending up in Tarrawonga coal mine and then being pumped to Vickery.

These pipelines, if given approval, must have full transparency via telemetry water metres that the public can view, on pipelines leading to or from the Vickery Mine.

We are concerned as to what will happen when water is not available. We recommend that the Commission independently assess the cumulative issues around water.

The issue of regional economic security is everyone's concern. And this is a point all stakeholder have in common. From our perspective, our State Country Women's Association organisation has had in place since 2016 a policy position calling on our government to scope for new industries and invest in alternatives in mine impacted regions to prepare for energy transition. Our Branch would like to draw the Commission's attention to local government leadership.

1. The Gunnedah Council last September voted to rebuild and restart the town's abattoir- and make it shovel ready after privatisation and a shut down in 1997. ('A giant in the life of Gunnedah – 100 years since O'Keefe born' Namoi Valley Independent 23.10.2012) This Council run abattoir used to employ 600 in its peak. The council said it "is the diversity we are looking for."

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[\(https://www.nvi.com.au/story/6395760/agricultural-processing-the-way-forward-for-gunnedah-mayor/\)](https://www.nvi.com.au/story/6395760/agricultural-processing-the-way-forward-for-gunnedah-mayor/)

NSW govt investment is even more important since the pandemic has sped up the collapse of coal markets to South Korea and Japan, and with the government's geopolitical pivot away from China- this step in returning local employment – without reliance on coal- a product that increasingly countries have replaced - is stabilising for our region.

Further, the Commission will note our region's geographic distance from the coal port. We feel that the changes to global economic markets, and the economic risk associated with approving new coal- places our regional community at risk. The last thing our region needs is for coal being an even bigger employer in the region. It is reasonable that a reduced number of coal buyers in a market will go for cheaper coal because it is closer to the Newcastle coal port – when coal crashes- it won't be a bust- for our region, but a decimation.

If Commissioners, you approve this development application we request that you include human and nature respectful conditions to protect the environment- from mining. We ask that you protect our climate, air, land and water for heritage, farming, biological diversity and recreation for our children.

We have read the justification and disagree that leaving a final void is the precautionary principle in action. If a void is the only way to protect the region and avoid serious environmental damage than signing this approval means the risk of long-term impacts on the groundwater is borne by the community and our children.

If the final void is the only way to localise impacts than the mine is in the wrong place. If backfilling a void will make the impacts worse, than this is a no-go zone. Responsible mining in these times of water insecurity, does not leave voids. Our regional water needs cannot afford an irresponsible project.

If the commission does approve the closure, we recommend that funds should be retained in trust sufficient to close the final void. We ask that the leading practice occur. That the Aquifer Interference License should not expire at the conclusion of mining after the final void is closed. And that funds should be retained for monitoring of the groundwater levels sufficient for a minimum of 400 years.

We believe that closing the void is the cost of doing business and these costs must be paid for by the proponent.

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The final landform should be engineered in such a way as to maximize social, recreational and educational opportunities.

In closing, we have experienced "stringent conditions," and "best practice," where 'reasonable and feasible,' are being applied "generally" and Over time, significant protections are removed via modifications, the secretary's approval or through the extensions to EPBC obligations, changing of the MOP or management plans- under a strategy known as adaptive management. Unfortunately, the project you approve will be worn away quickly unless you lock in legally robust approval conditions and regulations.

Our region's stability is at risk from this approval. We say it would be better, faced with falling prices, that the coal be left in the ground and none of this busy work need occur. Then, our efforts and our region can focus on building the nature respectful and climate respectful jobs and future we require for our children to survive.

Vickery Extension Hearing

Additional information In response to the water security question asked by the Commission to our organisation- Are we comforted by the Vickery Licences held?

The key to this is that to meet its tonnage targets, the Company uses the Consent Conditions to control the local water use over and above the water sharing plans citing jobs. SSD have separate rules can drill for water onsite.

The Maules Creek Mine is a surface water dependent mine that has bought up many groundwater licences and also on-sells any additional surface water to water users downstream. Further, it is now facing prosecution for surface water theft and is under active investigation over groundwater take.

Our position is that for the impacts of the project on water and neighbours that the water is either in the EA and has been assessed as being ecologically sustainable across climate change conditions and is conditioned in the approval or it is not. No water issued and licences updated to say mining, due to buying power.

Working to “available water supply,” is an environmental condition- that has been allowed to be interpreted as an economic condition arguing that environment and local water users must pay the costs of unsustainable operations and unsustainable jobs promises.

When mining moves into your neighbourhood, your whole life is spent with modifications to the project conditions the IPC (PAC) and DPE award to the proponent. The use of modifications is to wind back protections and make the project cheaper for the proponent. I am sharing with the Commission a list of modifications to local mines.

In approving this project, you will condemn a region to the misery of modifications for 30 years. We have dreams of regenerating our landscape to draw the carbon back it to the soil and spending family time. But, right now, due today, Hanwha blast contractor to Whitehaven Coal is applying to Modify its Approval to increase from 28,000 tonnes to 65,000 tonnes to a precursor plant for Whitehaven Coal – although strangely Vickery is not listed as a destination. And strangely, much information was left out of the original EIS and this is now not relevant and hasn't been updated for the SEE.

We ask that you do not cruel this community and approve this expansion.

Regards

Libby Laird

President, maules Creek Branch of the country women's association of nsw

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Narrabri Gas-Fired Power Station
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Determination

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[Modification 6 - Rail Limit](#)

Determination

Tarrawonga Mine
[Tarrawonga Coal Mine - SPL Modification](#)

Determination

Tarrawonga Mine
[Tarrawonga Coal \(MOD3\)](#)

Determination

Maules Creek Coal Mine
[Maules Creek Modification \(Mod 3\) - Transport](#)

Determination

Narrabri Mine
[Narrabri Coal Mine - Annual Review Modification \(MOD6\)](#)

Determination

Boggabri Mine Boggabri Coal	Determination
Boggabri Mine Development Consent - Modification 3	Determination
Narrabri Gas Project Wilga Park Power Station - Modification 2	Determination
Narrabri Mine Narrabri Coal Project - Stage 2 - MOD 2	Determination
Boggabri Mine Development Consent - Modification 2	Determination
Narrabri Mine Narrabri Coal Project - Stage 2 MOD 1	Determination
Narrabri Gas Project Wilga Park Power Station - Modification 1	Determination
Tarrawonga Mine Tarrawonga Coal Mine Modification (DA-88-4-2005 MOD 1)	Determination
Narrabri Mine Narrabri Coal	Part 3A - Now SSD
Narrabri Mine Stage 1 - Modification 1	Determination
Boggabri Mine Development Consent - Modification 1	Determination
Narrabri Hospital Project Application 08_0073	Determination
Queensland Hunter Gas Pipeline, Wallumbilla (QLD) to Newcastle (NSW) Queensland-Hunter Gas Pipeline	Part 3A - Now SSI
Narrabri Gas Project Wilga Park Power Station	Part 3A - Now SSD
Vickery Coal Mine Three year consent extension	Determination
Whitehaven Coal Mine DA 8-1-2005 - MOD 2 Second Minor Extension	Determination
Narrabri Mine Stage 1 Project	Determination
Whitehaven Coal Mine DA 8-1-2005 - MOD 1 Minor Extension	Determination

Maules Creek Coal Mine Maules Creek Coal	Part 3A - Now SSD
Boggabri Mine Boggabri Coal	Determination
Boggabri Mine Development Consent - Modification 3	Determination
Narrabri Gas Project Wilga Park Power Station - Modification 2	Determination
Narrabri Mine Narrabri Coal Project - Stage 2 - MOD 2	Determination
Boggabri Mine Development Consent - Modification 2	Determination
Narrabri Mine Narrabri Coal Project - Stage 2 MOD 1	Determination
Narrabri Gas Project Wilga Park Power Station - Modification 1	Determination
Tarrawonga Mine Tarrawonga Coal Mine Modification (DA-88-4-2005 MOD 1)	Determination
Narrabri Mine Narrabri Coal	Part 3A - Now SSD
Narrabri Mine Stage 1 - Modification 1	Determination
Boggabri Mine Development Consent - Modification 1	Determination
Narrabri Hospital Project Application 08_0073	Determination
Queensland Hunter Gas Pipeline, Wallumbilla (QLD) to Newcastle (NSW) Queensland-Hunter Gas Pipeline	Part 3A - Now SSI
Narrabri Gas Project Wilga Park Power Station	Part 3A - Now SSD
Vickery Coal Mine Three year consent extension	Determination
Whitehaven Coal Mine DA 8-1-2005 - MOD 2 Second Minor Extension	Determination
Narrabri Mine Stage 1 Project	Determination

Narrabri Mine Stage 1 Project	Determination
Whitehaven Coal Mine DA 8-1-2005 - MOD 1 Minor Extension	Determination
East Boggabri Open Cut Coal Mine Development Application	Determination
Tarrawonga Mine East Boggabri Coal Mine	Determination
Whitehaven Coal Mine Canyon Coal Extension	Determination
Whitehaven Coal Mine Whitehaven Coal	Determination
Maules Creek Coal Mine Maules Creek Modification (Mod 4) - Sound Power Levels	Withdrawn
Narrabri Solar Farm Narrabri Solar	Withdrawn
Inglegreen WEST NARRABRI ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITY	Withdrawn
Narrabri Gas Project Narrabri Gas Project (Eastern Star Gas)	Withdrawn
Narrabri to Wellington Gas Pipeline Narrabri to Wellington Gas Pipeline - Project Application	Withdrawn
Narrabri Gas Project Site Verification Certificate - Narrabri Gas Project	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Site Verification Certificate - Vickery Coal Mine	Determination
Narrabri Mine 08_0144 MOD3 - Emergency Trucking	Withdrawn
Boggabri Mine Boggabri Coal Project - Modification 1 - Emergency Trucking	Withdrawn
Narrabri Gas Project Wilga Park Power Station - Modification 4	Withdrawn
Boggabri Mine Boggabri Mine1	Determination
Boggabri Mine Boggabri Mine 2	Determination

Boggabri Mine Boggabri Mine1	Determination
Boggabri Mine Boggabri Mine 2	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 1	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 2	Determination
Whitehaven Coal Mine Increased Production	Determination
Boggabri Mine Boggabri Mine 2 (Mod 1)	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 1 (Mod 1)	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 1 (Mod 2)	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 1 (Mod 3)	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 1 (Mod 4)	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 2 (Mod 1)	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 2 (Mod 2)	Determination
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Coal 3 (Mod 3)	Determination
Queensland Hunter Gas Pipeline, Wallumbilla (QLD) to Newcastle (NSW) Queensland-Hunter Gas Pipeline (Mod 1)	Migrated to New Website
Vickery Coal Mine Vickery Extension Project	Migrated to New Website
Narrabri to North Star - Inland Rail Inland Rail - Narrabri to North Star	Migrated to New Website
Narrabri Gas Project Narrabri Gas Project	Migrated to New Website
Narromine to Narrabri Inland Rail - Narromine to Narrabri	Migrated to New Website

Queensland Hunter Gas Pipeline, Wallumbilla (QLD) to Newcastle (NSW)
[Queensland-Hunter Gas Pipeline \(Mod 1\)](#)

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Vickery Coal Mine
[Vickery Extension Project](#)

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Narrabri to North Star - Inland Rail
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