

Submission-IPC Hearing re-Narrabri Coal Operations Narrabri South Extension Proposal

Presented by Owen Hasler, former councillor and Mayor, Gunnedah Shire Council on

18 February, 2022

As a newly elected councillor to the first elected Gunnedah Shire Council in 1981-3 I, and other councillors, were somewhat surprised to hear the amount of coal detected in our Region and the size of the workforces proposed to be employed utilizing methodologies of the period with workforces of up to 700 suggested-the larger number of whom were expected to reside in Gunnedah Shire.

In 2012, after a lengthy break from council of some 13 years, as Mayor I was very surprised and disappointed to find that GSC had been excluded from VPA discussions with the Narrabri Mine due to the location of the mine in Narrabri Shire.

From 2015-2017, as an Executive member of MERC, the Mining and Energy Related Councils, I was one of three MERC representatives given the responsibility to achieve a VPA Negotiation Process with representatives from the Minerals Council.

These representatives, were particularly keen to see the domicile model which reflected, in their view, the social and economic impacts on those communities directly effected by mining proposals such as the one we are discussing today.

What was finally agreed upon was a Framework which included timeframes, a Road Contributions Methodology, and a non-roads contributions methodology based on Social Impact assessment, Population Change and Impacts on Local Infrastructure and the capacity of existing infrastructure.

I have copies of those jointly agreed documents before me today which, when finally agreed upon after 3 years of negotiations were sent to the Department of Planning for inclusion on their portal.

In 2017-18 I was appointed by MERC to represent them on the Resources Advisory Forum and it became very evident in that forum that while the Industry Reps- ie. the miners, considered assessment reports to be impartial while environmental and community groups considered the reports were NOT impartial.

This was re-inforced by the Lisa Corby Report, entitled "Independent Review of Department of Planning and Environment Assessment Report" in August, 2017, of which you, as members of the IPC would know doubt be aware, which reported similar findings and provided a list of reforms to improve thoroughness, impartiality and transparency.

Ms Corby recommended that government decision makers, such as the Land and Env Court, need to undertake more comprehensive analysis of both the potential positive and negative economic consequences of proposals such as the Narrabri proposal we are discussing today.

She also found that local councils and their communities require more respect and attention-a very valid point here as I believe the adequacy of the DPIE assessment report in

this case appears to not have considered the social impacts of the Narrabri Extension Mine development on the Gunnedah Community.

I base this conclusion on the following observations:

- 1) The DPIE apparently accepts the Whitehaven contention of regular meetings between them and GSC representatives re-the VPA. As Chairman of the council which reviewed the limited negotiations I can state that there weren't a number of meetings between the parties.
- 2) The DPIE report refers to unemployment in the two Shires (Gunnedah and Narrabri) being above the rates in Regional NSW and in NSW itself. This clearly suggests that they did not review the rates as the ABS data refutes this showing that Gunnedah Shire has been below those rates for most of the last 5 years
- 3) But more reprehensible is the statement on page xiii Executive Summary, Social Costs and Benefits) where it says "that there would be limited social costs on top of those that have already arisen for the directly affected communities of Baan Baa, Boggabri and Gunnedah'.

This conclusion does not reflect the fact that there will be additional employment numbers including an increase on the present number. Yet their conclusion is that there will be "limited social costs!!"

- 4) But perhaps the worst of the DPIE's erroneous comments occurs when the document states that GSC accepted NCOPL's methodology in determining their share of the VPA (p. A3, Appendices, Appendix E-Agency Advice) including combined employee /contractor domicile data, "location of vehicle movements" and "location of the project".

Once again, as Chairperson of the council meeting which ratified our position at the time, I can assure you that it was the former only ie. the numbers of workers and contractors domiciled in our shire -which was accepted by council.

- 5) The position adopted by GSC with regard to the % of CIV that we sought was primarily based on the advice we had received from our consultant engaged to assess the quantum impacts of the employee and contractor data as found in the Social Impact Assessment of the EIS which was translated into the percentage of CIV being 1.71%.

The fact that this percentage reflected that which we had negotiated with regard to the Vickery South Extension Project (ie. 1.764%) should re-inforce the validity of the figure arrived at and give greater credence to Gunnedah Shire's position, rather than be used to undermine that negotiated outcome.

The fact that the DPIE have seen fit to include the Whitehaven offer virtually verbatim suggests to this concerned community member a lack of transparency and impartiality on behalf of the report writers which supports the claims by many environmental and community groups that the Department is usually sympathetic to the industry advocates rather than recognizing the concerns of the communities most effected by the mining projects.

- 6) Furthermore, when we consider the DPIE's assessment that the Gunnedah population will increase while Narrabri shire population will continue to decline. The figures supplied in the EIS show that of Narrabri's population of 13,084 there are 1124 mine jobs of which 313 are locals and 811 are imported. There will be 46 new miners -28 in Boggie and 18 to Narrabri equating to 115 new residents including family or an increase of 0.9% in total population. Meanwhile of Gunnedah's population of 12,215 some 500 are mine workers and the EIS predicts 75 new miners to relocate to Gunnedah -182 people including family with a net increase of 1.4%

I believe these figures support the claim by Gunnedah Shire that we deserve a larger percentage of the VPA offered-especially considering that we were excluded from the first Narrabri Mine VPA -until , of course, being given the minimalist \$100,000 belated amount-which was not a negotiated VPA!!

This "contribution" clearly recognized the social and other impacts on Gunnedah Shire but our community was never given the option of a VPA for 2010-22.

Furthermore, some part of the report (Section 448 & 449) has focused on the contributions made by NCOPL to community groups and programs in the two communities, including the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service.

I believe this to be irrelevant in terms of the VPA negotiations as these contributions are not required by the legislation and may be seen as part of the company's public relations exercise and should not effect those undertakings required by the IPC.

In summary, I believe the section of the report which refers to the Social Costs and Benefits of the proposed project (section 427, 432, 437) on pages 70/71 clearly shows that both Gunnedah and Narrabri "communities likely to be both positively and negatively impacted by the Project and are together considered to be the primary region of social influence" with particular impacts listed including:

- surface water and groundwater
- community co-hesion-sense of place in-equalities based on high pay rates of the mining industry
- emissions and climate change
- Aboriginal cultural heritage
- community infrastructure and services eg health services
- housing affordability and availability particularly for low income households

I , like most Gunnedah residents , can assure you that most, if not all, of these items are the subject of community conversation on a regular basis.

I would strongly suggest that the IPC should be indicating to NCOPL that they should be negotiating a VPA with both councils based upon the percentage figures referred to in 4.2.4.5 of the SIA and 6.16.2 of Section 6 Assessment of Impacts (39% Gunnedah, 37% Narrabri, 20% Other and 3% Queensland) when determining the distribution of employees, and that the percentage of CIV should reflect the actual

quantums assessed by the consultant (1.71% of CIV) which reflects the actual amount of 1.764% negotiated by Gunnedah Shire for the Whitehaven owned Vickery South Extension Mine.

Such a direction by the IPC would, hopefully, see the negotiations expedited and a satisfactory and realistic outcome achieved for the benefit of our local communities.