

## **Narrabri Underground Stage 3 Extension IPC – Hearing Speech 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2022**

Firstly, I would like to pay my respects to the traditional Gomeroi owners of this land, Past, present and emerging.

Good morning, commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns and objection of this Stage 3 extension Project.

My name is Roselyn Druce, a local who has had more than a decade of contact and knowledge of the Whitehaven company, a community representative member on two mining CCC's in my area. I live approximately 3 Km from the Maules Creek coal mine.

It's heartbreaking to see life-long neighbours and friends bought out and pushed by coal mining companies. My local community has been divided by Whitehaven, to establish open cut coal mines in the Leard State Forest.

Farmers that have lived here for generations, have been pushed out and now cannot hand their family properties on to their children, intergeneration equity destroyed and no longer possible, social fabric of the local community irreparable damaged.

How can Agriculture and Mining co-exist when properties are bought out by mining companies to satisfy their failure, yes, their failure, to comply with their Approval conditions?

More than 80 local farms around the Leard and in the district have been precured by mining companies, why? Predominantly to obtain irrigation licences and offsets.

Purchase of properties has become acceptable by the department as the norm due to inability of companies to comply with their approval conditions.

The reason I raise these concerns is that I can see the same impacts happening in the future at the Narrabri Coal project, destroying local farmers lives, their mental and physical health and their water supplies, and bought out. Farmers that feed the Nation.

Having previously worked in the health industry, I don't see impacts being addressed on the health of people living in close proximity to surface vents. In fact, it is ignorantly downplayed by the company saying that there are only 25 near neighbours.

High Methane, Co2 and noise can be very damaging to health. Are these 25 neighbours not important?

### **My views on the departments Assessment Report:**

**Ground water** - Make good for loss of bore water is a joke, and not possible.  
Contamination and seepage of brine into underground aquifers – unacceptable.

Drawdown of ground water would have a profound and detrimental impact on Stygofauna.

**Surface Water** - Loss of natural springs that support Endangered species like the Koala and other Vulnerable and native species in dry times is like turning the tap off for a thirsty traveller.

If springs are dewatered and lost, then this has a disastrous effect on the entire local ecosystem.

**Biodiversity** – Loss or displacement of Cultural Heritage sites and Artifacts due to subsidence or clearing, does not close the gap with our traditional owners, only widens it.

Destruction by clearing 617ha of habitat reducing shelter and food sources for native animals – should not be happening at a time when habitat loss is so great.

Rehabilitation takes decades, and is never equal to the original native habitat lost due to clearing.

**GHG** – DPIE tells us that there is no clear methodology or guidance to assess potential mitigation measures to assess or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I'm sure that Whitehaven will be pleased, if fugitive emissions can't be measured or mitigated, they prefer no rules or data, then they can use that excuse, just as the Maules Creek mine did when they professed that there was inadequate data to prove that they were the cause of the decline in the health of Riparian communities along Back Creek, after they had been illegally harvesting water that should have gone to the environment.

To extend the life of this 'Gassy' mine will heavily contribute to an even greater burden of greenhouse gases, that cannot be assessed or mitigated successfully.

This mine should not progress further than the already approved 2031 date.

**So, my concerns are:**

**How is this project extension going to be appropriately enforced in regards to?**

1. Effects of near neighbour's health and loss of their water.
2. Ensuring there is no contamination of water sources by reinjection of brine.
3. Displacement or destruction of Cultural Heritage sites and Artifacts.
4. Complying with Like for Like offsets and procurement in perpetuity. (This is questionable at most of Whitehaven's other mines)
5. Managing subsidence, and tension cracking.
6. Measuring fugitive emissions.

Calling this extension, a 'brownfield' is another way to downplay many issues that haven't been properly addressed either by the company or the department, so they can say that it minimises the overall impacts. There are many impacts that haven't been addressed completely, if at all.

This Stage 3 Project extension falls very short of being a safe and environmentally sustainable proposition. This company and DPIE, under the direction of the Minister is facilitating and fast tracking an approval for this extension with an out dated EIS that is not fit for purpose to be used to secure a 'gassy' mine until 2044, were the IESC recommendations have been ignored.

The Department has recommended approval of this SSD project extension with so many uncertainties, deficiencies and unknown outcomes in a sensitive area that forms part of the Great Artesian Basin recharge area, this should not be rushed and approved, that would be negligent.

If you look at the public records regarding Whitehaven's past court history, prosecutions and fines it tells a history of a company that has little integrity or transparency. To trust such a company, who ignore and don't supply further information to government agencies when requested, tells a great deal more.

The community has no chance to hold this company accountable when the department allows retrospective approvals for illegal actions.

In most cases it is the 'community' that calls out these mining companies, who steal water from the environment in droughts, who do illegal clearing and drilling, redirect water through pipelines without consent, and then the department grants retrospective approval and a minimal fine.

The department is seen by many as too close to these resource companies, facilitating and fast-tracking extensions, modifications and new 'Greenfield' project approvals in a time when the rest of the world is working hard to reduce emissions.

Energy companies here in Australia are now closing their Coal Fired Power Stations earlier than previously expected. The time has come to reduce our emissions and reach lower targets by 2030, in line with overseas nations.

This extension should be shelved until 2030 by which time the Narrabri mine will have sufficient time to update their EIS.

- \* Ensure that all offsets are like-for-like, and ready to be secured in perpetuity.
- \* Have appropriate draft Management Plans ready.
- \* Have rehabilitation of their Stage 2 well underway and established
- \* Have the ability to measure and mitigate their scope 1, 2 & 3 emissions.

\* Can assure the community that there will be minimal or no environmental harm to water sources including alluvial aquifers, farm bores, springs and the Namoi River, due to loss or pollution, and no Cultural heritage sites or artifacts moved or destroyed.

There is still 9 years left for the Stage 2 extension, plenty of time for training employees and diversifying away from mining to other industries and jobs which both our local community is lacking and our nation needs. Scare mongering about job loss is promoted by these companies knowing their time is numbered.

There is no hurry for this approval, more time for consultation is needed, but there is great concern of the outcome if this Stage 3 extension is rushed through and approved while all outcomes are still hinging on 'Reasonable & Feasible' or ratcheting down measures, whatever that is supposed to mean, instead of clear concise plans and outcomes that the community know about.

Please make a wise decision, listen to those that will be most impacted by this extension, not just DPIE & the Proponent and their empty promises. It is not in the public interest.

Commissioners, please recommend that more time is needed for this project to fit in the category of 'Fit and Proper' so it can be reconsidered in 2030.

Then make the only safe and ethical decision possible at this time and deny the approval of this Stage 3 extension.

Thank you  
Roselyn Druce