

Reply to: Georgina Woods
PO Box 290
Newcastle 2300
[REDACTED]

1 March 2022

Mary O’Kane
Chair, Independent Planning Commission
[REDACTED]

Request for response regarding Glendell Continued Operations Project

Dear Mary,

We write regarding the Assessment Report for the Glendell Continued Operations project and the failure of the Department of Planning to provide the Commission with accurate, unbiased and complete information necessary to its determination of this project. We seek action from the Commission in ensuring that these failures are corrected and catastrophic harm avoided and would appreciate your assistance in providing this letter to the panel convened for the determination of this project.

Glencore’s mining plan would dig up the remainder of the former Ravensworth Estate, a scene of colonial violence and important cultural landscape for Wonnarua people, and to relocate the estate’s historic homestead. The Plains Clan of the Wonnarua People people say the landscape holds restless spirits and unconsecrated graves from a colonial massacre. The Ravensworth Homestead itself has been acknowledged to have heritage value of significance to the whole of New South Wales.

Information provided to Glencore and the Department by the Plains Clan of the Wonnarua People but not provided directly to the Commission in the Assessment Report include findings by an anthropologist that:

There is a deeply held belief within these Wonnarua families that there also exist tangible remains of those tragic historical events on the remaining Ravensworth estate, consisting of numerous “shallow graves” resulting from both recorded and unrecorded killing of local Aboriginal people, their ancestors.

and that

To destroy the remaining Ravensworth estate and to relocate the homestead appears to them to constitute the erasure of the remaining tangible and intangible cultural heritage and history that they associate with this place, and may disturb the physical remains of more of their ancestors, as happened at Mt. Arthur, who were victims of the historical conflict there.¹

¹ Neale Draper. June 2020. Glendell Continued Operations Coal Project, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment: Anthropology Report on PCWP Cultural Values. Appended to Glencore’s Response to Submissions as part of Appendix E.

The Commission can find this information in appendices to Part B of the Response to Submissions for the project.

The Heritage Council of NSW, in both its submission in February 2020 and a letter and associated attachment in December 2020, opposed the removal of the Ravensworth homestead - a position it has maintained despite representations by Glencore and the Department. The Heritage Council's letter included a veiled warning that NSW risked repeating the Juukan Gorge outrage if it ignored the knowledge and pleas of Wonnarua people:

following recent incidents in other States involving mining and Aboriginal cultural heritage, the Heritage Council believes that a precautionary principle should be adopted around areas of contested Aboriginal history and heritage.

Glencore has refused to recognise the significance of the site, arguing in its response to submissions that "the conflicts around Ravensworth were no more significant than those that occurred elsewhere across the Hunter valley, or across the state." This language is reflected by the Department in its Assessment Report, which states that, "whilst the available evidence suggests that the Ravensworth Estate was the site of conflicts between Aboriginal people and early European settlers, these incidents were not unique to the Estate, and that the Estate was not the centre of such conflict."

On the contrary, the independent heritage review commissioned by the Department found that:

Due to particular events within the Ravensworth Estate and events that followed directly from them, the estate has a wider significance than the immediate local area that encompasses the Hunter region and the justice system of the colony. These events, specifically, are: the killing and wounding of Bowman's employees by Aboriginal people; the murder of an Aboriginal man suspected of involvement in the wounding of Bowman's men (within a mile of the original Bowman homestead); the murder of another Aboriginal man, Jackey-Jackey (at Willis Plains), after his alleged involvement in the killing of Bowman's men; and the subsequent trial of Lieutenant Nathaniel Lowe. The historical value of Ravensworth Estate is important to the whole of New South Wales and the Estate is likely, in our view, to meet the threshold for State heritage significance for its historical heritage value.²

It also noted that Glencore's own heritage consultant found that the Ravensworth Estate holds "a moderate to high potential for retaining physical evidence of the history of the use of the land by the Wonnarua people."

The Assessment Report provides the Commission with none of the detailed information provided by the Plains Clan of the Wonnarua People in its many submissions on this project. Nor does the Assessment Report include the straightforward finding of its own independent heritage review, that "The historical record shows that the Ravensworth Estate was a location of significant conflict between Aboriginal people and Europeans."

Further, the Department's insistence that the Ravensworth Homestead must be relocated, rather than being allowed to remain *in situ* by refusing consent for this mine, rests on its assertion that by doing so, New South Wales would forgo the economic benefits that would be realised by the mining project. To this end, we would like to draw the Commission's attention to the Department's

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-9349%2120200907T234106.807%20GMT>

² Hector Abrahams Architects. *Glendell Continued Operations Project – Review of Heritage Impacts*. 30 November 2021.

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=RFI-32759319%2120211130T215535.349%20GMT>

omission from the Assessment Report of findings by its own independent economic consultant CIE which found that in the worst case scenario, the net present value economic contribution of this project to the economy of New South Wales **would be negative \$94 million**. The Department's purported "worst case" economic scenario in the Assessment report is actually the *central* scenario considered by CIE.

The range of estimates of the economic contribution of this project then is -\$94 million to \$1.1 billion (which was Glencore's original estimate). This range is so wide as to make the economic assessment of this project essentially meaningless. This information is crucial to the Commission's consideration of this project since the economic benefits that may or may not accrue from this project are the Department's stated reason for accepting the catastrophic and irreversible loss of heritage that would result from the removal of the Ravensworth Homestead and digging up of the Ravensworth Estate.

Furthermore, the greenhouse gas assessment prepared for Glencore for the Environmental Impact Statement for this project admitted that the mine's development was consistent with the IPCC's high emissions "A2" scenario, which is projected to result in warming by approximately 3.4C by 2100. This would mean catastrophic levels of global warming and subsequent escalating and irreversible losses for the people and environment in New South Wales. Given the seriousness, scale and irreversibility of this impact, it was reckless and irresponsible for the Department to not include this information in the Assessment Report.

We seek action from the Commission in raising questions about these omissions with the Department and in reading and responding on its own terms with the material that was provided to the Department for the assessment of this project, but omitted by it in its Assessment Report to the Commission.

Please confirm that the Commissioners that will consider this project will avail themselves of this information in order to ensure their determination of this project is accurate, comprehensive and unbiased.

Sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Georgina Woods.

Georgina Woods