

MR J. HANN: Good morning and welcome back to the second day of the public hearing into the Vickery Extension Project. My name is John Hann and I am the chair of this IPC panel. Joining me are my fellow commissioners, Professor Zada Lipman and Professor Chris Fell. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the
5 traditional custodians on the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their elders past and present and to the elders from other communities who may be participating today. Vickery Coal Proprietary Limited, a subsidiary of Whitehaven Coal Proprietary Limited, the applicant, is seeking development consent to extend the Vickery Approved Project and develop a new CHPP and train load out facility at
10 the Vickery Coal Mine.

The project also proposes to develop a rail spur across the Namoi River floodplain and includes a water supply borefield and associated infrastructure. The project is located in both Narrabri and Gunnedah Shire Council areas. In line with the current
15 COVID-19 regulations, we have moved this public hearing online with registered speakers provided the opportunity to present to the panel via telephone video conference or the studio that we have setup in Narrabri which took place yesterday. Today all of the speakers will be presenting either by video conference or audio. In the interests of openness and transparency, we are livestreaming this electronic
20 public hearing via our website. As always, this public hearing is being recorded and a full transcript will be made available on our website.

So what is the purpose of this hearing? The public hearing gives us the opportunity to hear your views on the assessment report prepared by the Department of Planning,
25 Industry and Environment before we determine the development application. The commission is not involved in the department's assessment of this project, the preparation of its assessment or any findings within it. So where are we in the process? This public hearing is one part of the commission's process. We've been briefed by the department. We've met with the applicant and Narrabri and
30 Gunnedah Councils and the commission has also undertaken a site inspection. After the public hearing, we may convene with relevant stakeholders if clarification or additional information is required on matters raised. The transcripts of meetings will be published on the commission's website.

What are the next steps? Following this hearing we will endeavour to determine the development application as soon as possible. However, there may be delays if we need additional information. How will the hearing run today? So before we hear the first of our registered speakers, I would like to outline how today's hearing will run. I will introduce each speaker when it's their turn to present to the panel. Each
40 speaker has been advised how long they have to speak. It is important that everyone registered to speak receives a fair share of time. I will enforce time keeping rules as chair. I reserve the right to allow additional time for provision of further technical materials. You will hear a warning bell at one minute before your allocated time is up and two bells when your allocated time is up.
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I'll also ask that speakers today refrain from making offensive, threatening or defamatory statements as per the guidelines that are available on our website. It is important that all speakers understand that the hearing today is not a debate and the panel will not be taking questions. If there is something that you would like the panel to consider but you don't get the opportunity to completely address that matter today or – the panel will consider any written submissions made up to 5 pm on Friday, 10 July 2020. All written submissions are weighted in the same way as verbal submissions made during the public hearing. Any person making a written submission irrespective of whether they have been allocated time to speak at the public hearing.

If you have a copy of your speaking notes or any additional material to support your presentation, it would be appreciated if you would provide a copy to the commission and please note, any information you give us may be made public. So thank you and now I'll call our first speaker, Grant Batty.

MR G. BATTY: Good morning. My role is president of the Liverpool Plains Business Chamber. The Chamber's role is to assist and promote businesses operating in our community. Consequently, the Liverpool Plains Business Chamber support the expansion of the Vickery Mine, as we believe it will have a positive economic impact on our business community. However, we do have very high expectations that all issues related to the environment as required by law will be strictly adhered to by Whitehaven. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Grant. Our next speaker is Jo Bell from the Boggabri Business Chamber and she's the chairperson.

MS J. BELL: My name is Joanne Bell and I am a resident of the Boggabri community. I am a business owner in Boggabri and I am the president of the Boggabri Business Chamber. We are a diversified town and we welcome all forms of industry to our area. All these industries are crucial to the survival of our town, as without them and the people and the monetary support will dwindle and our town will fade away. Whilst we have great infrastructure for a small town, our businesses have struggled immensely with the drought, the COVID pandemic and small business recession. Without the ongoing support of the mining industry, I doubt that some of our business would exist today. After watching our town fading away, businesses struggling to survive and as the business owners of Boggabri not being heard or represented, we came together to form the Boggabri Business Chamber. We have around 50 members who are all local businesses.

These businesses depend on each other and the mining to keep our town vibrant and alive. My business, for example, is a hardware and rural store which has traditional supplied paint, general hardware, building and fencing materials, animal health, etcetera. Through the business chamber we invited Whitehaven into the group as part of the businesses of our town. We have worked to build a strong relationship with them. We now supply all manner of items to the mines including items such as hand sanitisers, spray bottles, tools, environmental products, etcetera. We have

become one of their search engines and we work together and it helps both our industries. Through unforeseen circumstances my business over the past three years in particular has struggled significantly. It has been this support from Whitehaven that I have been able to survive.

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As Boggabri businesspeople, we want to celebrate Boggabri as a diversified town proud of both our agriculture and mining heritage and we are determined to work together into the future to create prosperity and opportunity, nurturing our businesses and the Boggabri community. In times when Australia is struggling financially the mining industry has gain given employment opportunities to a large number of local residents, support many local businesses and bringing outside money to our town. I believe the benefits that the Vickery Extension Project will bring to the Boggabri area and the local employment will be significant. Boggabri has the chance to continue to grow an secure financial opportunities from this project now and for the future.

I would also like to acknowledge the VPA offer made by Whitehaven as part of the Vickery Project. Based on what the Department of Planning and Environment has indicated, the sum offered is fair, but more importantly, it is all allocated to improvement projects in Boggabri including the Boggabri Chambers Merton Street Project which we consider will provide a tremendous to Boggabri businesses. We want to extend our appreciation to Whitehaven for getting behind the project which will be a potential game changer for Boggabri, making Boggabri attractive to others wanting to relocate and visit our town. I strongly support the Vickery Project and I request it be approved and I thank you for listening.

MR HANN: Thank you, Jo. Our next speaker is Patrick Murphy from the Boggabri Business & Community Progress Association. I'm sorry. I understand that Patrick's not ready to speak at this point. So we have Sally Hunter representing People for the Plains. Good morning, Sally.

MR HUNTER: Hi, my name is – hi, hello. My name's Hugh and I'm 16 and I live 30 kilometres from the proposed mine. This is my mother. So I know you guys have a lot of people to listen to, but I hope this makes a difference. I strongly believe that it is not fair that I've witnessed friends and neighbours pushed off beautiful farms by mining companies. It's not fair that I'll be dealing with the pollution caused by this mine. It's not fair that even though the rules are in place to stop the contamination of our water and land and we hope we will be protected, anyone who knows about Whitehaven's track record knows they will do what they like and it is not fair that this corporation will be profiting off the back of our community. Right now is a turning point for energy and rural economies. I would love to believe that this is a safe mine that will benefit the community, but from where I sit, I see another mine that is full of empty promises and ruthless profiteering. It's hard to grasp all the issues with the approval of this mine, but hopefully will do in her speech. But let me leave you with this. Think about us humble farmers and my future when you make your decision. This mine can and will affect my future and this is my only opportunity to stop it. You hold our futures in your hands.

MR HANN: Thank you, Hugh.

MS HUNTER: Last week, my family said goodbye to friends of ours. They are leaving our area, having been bought out by Whitehaven. They were a neighbour to
5 Maules Creek Mine but were not in a compulsory acquisition zone and were never supposed to be impacted. The reality turns out that the impact zone is larger than was identified in the EIS process, larger than what was identified in the conditions of consent, larger than what the proponent talked about at the PAC public hearing like this one today. They are the sixth family to have been bought out since Maules
10 Creek Mine was approved. None of these six families were identified for compulsory acquisition. Six more families forced out of our area, who were never supposed to be bought out, never supposed to be impacted. Today is a repeat of this exact same flawed process that results in further devastation of our community, except that today you three commissioners have the opportunity to finally do it
15 differently. So we have got a – we would like to access screen share, if we can, to put up a PowerPoint slide. We did arrange it beforehand, so I hope this is not taking up part of our timing.

MR HANN: Okay. We're ready.
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MS HUNTER: Can you try it again, Hughey? So it says the host has disabled the participants screen sharing.

MR HANN: Just one moment and I'll do a double-check for you, Sally.
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MS HUNTER: Thank you.

MR HANN: It would appear that we're not able to get your stream of the screen sharing, Sally. So just
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MS HUNTER: I think it's – I think it is working.

MR HANN: No, we're almost there, Sally.

MS HUNTER: Great.
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MR HANN: If you can enlarge the – perfect. Okay.

MS HUNTER: Great. Whitehaven now owns more than 61,000 hectares in our
40 region, as you can see by the pink area on this map. It's reaching the size of Singapore and they're continuing to negotiate with more people to buy more land, not even including Vickery. You can drive 60 kilometres without leaving Whitehaven country. It has purchased almost 500 land titles from more than 70 local farming families, some of them voluntarily sold, but none without regrets. This has
45 created significant social impacts around Boggabri. If you give the nod for Vickery today, again, we will see James Barlow's family forced to sell. I do not believe for one minute that that will be the last family lost due to Vickery.

There will be more. Some will find the dust and noise unbearable. Some will get bought out for their water. Some will have inconvenient views and evidence on Whitehaven, so it will buy them out. None of them will be happy neighbours to Whitehaven. More families lost. By the way the proponent speaks, you would think
5 that Boggabri would have gilded streets and everyone's quality of life would be through the roof. When my kids were babies, we were seeking childcare options that were not available in Boggabri. My sons are now looking at university options and there is still no childcare centre in Boggabri, despite it being part of the conditions of consent. Since we moved to Boggabri 15 years ago, we have seen it go from five
10 cricket teams to one. CWAs have gone from four to two. Our primary school is half as big. Pubs have halved and we still have no community halls. It sounds different to the stories we hear during the assessment phase, doesn't it?

On reviewing the assessment report, it's clear that none of our concerns raised in our
15 original EIS submission have been addressed. But we would like to bring to your particular attention the Federal Government SEARs request that asked for the environmental record of the proponent to be listed in the EIS. Whitehaven did not list their record in the EIS and have been asked – have not been asked to do so since. Given Whitehaven's inability to fulfil this request in the EIS, you will find our
20 submission provides a detailed list of 26 separate incidences of environmental breaches. This is the list that Whitehaven should have provided. Even Vickery has had two non-compliances and it hasn't even started yet. And just last night the Natural Resources Access Regulator, NRAR, announced that it will be prosecuting Whitehaven for surface water theft. NRAR is prosecuting Whitehaven for diverting
25 billions of litres of clean surface water away from streams and rivers for years.

Is this why the proponent states it needs no new water licences for such a massive new mine? Because it has over 61,000 thousand hectares of surface water from which to take – surface area from which to take water and cop the fine? Last
30 summer was an absolutely brutal time. For us, we weaned calves young to let cows survived, gradually selling down our entire cow herd. Our business slowly constricted. Our neighbours, Whitehaven, did not see any such construction of their business, despite there being a condition of consent that appeared to deal with the drier times. This same cut and paste consent condition has also been recommended
35 to be used by the department for use at Vickery. You will see it here about water supply. Below this, you will see Professor Fell's quote.

Like us, Professor Chris Fell had the same impression of the meaning of this consent condition. As Professor Fell explained clearly to Gunnedah Shire Council just last
40 week, the draft condition says that the mine has to match its production to the available water. So if there is a scarcity of water, they will produce less coal and not use so much water. We appreciate your clarity on this condition of consent, Professor Fell, and we agree that this is how the community reads this condition. However, this is simply not how it rolls out in reality. During last summer, Maules
45 Creek Mine ran close to running out of water. Did we see them, as Professor Fell says, produce less coal and not use so much water? No, we did not. What we saw was Whitehaven build two new pipelines, seeking approval for them afterwards.

From two water bores designated for farming use, also seeking approval for that afterwards. We saw them buy two more irrigation properties that were never supposed to be in the impact zone.

5 We saw them truck water from these properties. We saw them aggressively buy out water in the market, paying three times the usual prices. Never once did they consider producing less coal and not using so much water. Now this new mine, a small size to Maules Creek, requires no new water licences? How can that be? Last month, Whitehaven's sister mine Tarrawonga sought a modification that does have implications for Vickery and should be considered today. It sought to change the consent condition that requires it to build an impermeable wall to stop water leaking out of the alluvium and into the mine pit. It also sought to build a pipeline between Vickery and Tarrawonga mines. This modification is sought from the department, so it does not require any independent oversight. This modification could facilitate the harvesting of alluvial water into the mine pit and the new pipeline could facilitate the easy movement of water back to Vickery. Is this why Vickery requires no new water licences?

20 I know you will say that this out of your responsibility, but I am keen for you to understand how the reality of your decision today plays out for us in the future. If you approve Vickery using the weak, misleading and ambiguous conditions of consent recommended by the Department of Planning, you are leaving the door open for future modifications, with serious and long-term impacts. The most disappointing condition of consent is around water triggers. The cut and paste condition of consent recommended by the department will not provide the security needed in order to hold this company to account in the future when neighbours' bores dry up. I'm sorry if you cannot see the water levels on this monitoring chart on the right-hand side. We can't either. This is how it's presented to the community. How are you supposed to compare that to the water triggers that are listed – that are depicted on the left-hand side in the Water Management Plan?

35 As Maules Creek neighbours find their bores going dry, they increasingly flick to this page of the Water Management Plan, only to be sorely disappointed. The first thing they realise is that they use monitoring bores that are depicted in the Water Management Plan have all actually been completely wiped out by mining, except for one. New monitoring bores have been put in, but they were installed after mining started, so they are not a baseline and they have never had any trigger levels identified for them anyway. Furthermore, they begin to realise that the reporting now uses completely different measurements and completely different scales, making comparisons completely impossible. The triggers identified in the Water Management Plan of 2019, as you can see here, actually stop in 2013, giving neighbours absolutely no idea what water levels should be like and what trigger levels should actually trigger action by the proponent. Simply put, a neighbour cannot at all investigate potentially adverse impacts on water supplies, as the condition of consent requires. The Water Management Plan is totally inadequate and appears most useful in disguising impacts rather than identifying them. I'm sorry

that we do not have time today to detail all our elements of our submission that is still not addressed by the assessment process.

5 Ultimately, the world is moving away from coal. The impacts from taking this
carbon out of the ground, burning it and pumping it into the atmosphere are ones that
we can no longer accept. We cannot further imbed our community in an industry
that is only going to shrink. Please help us to proactively move towards industries
that are sustainable and that create jobs with no expiration date. Please take into
10 consideration the issues we have outlined and reject this new Vickery coal mine.
You can provide the leadership for the government and for the community towards a
renewable future. Thank you for your time.

15 MR HANN: Thank you, Sally. Thank you, Hugh. Our next speaker is Justin
Smith, and he's from the Narrabri Industrial Network. Justin.

MR J. SMITH: And thank you for your time today, everybody involved. I'm
writing on behalf of the Narrabri Industrial Network, which is a recently formed
group in Narrabri of very active businesses and people looking to move forward and
keep Narrabri going and keep – have options there for future generations. So our
20 members are in favour of the Vickery Extension Project. Narrabri – sorry, project.
Whitehaven Coal have been working in our shire for many years now, and our
members only have praise and professionalism into – only have praise and
professionalism, respect – and respect for the environment.

25 Whitehaven employment capacity in the current operation has been the saviour to
our community. Especially throughout the last seven years when we have seen
mother nature cause a massive adverse effect on the agricultural industry. During the
years of drought we have had one major rain event in 2016 which produced the only
30 income for many farmers. These farmers are usually our employment providers
income stream and potential development opportunities. Projects like the Vickery
Extension will only secure more jobs. It will not only secure more jobs, it will create
opportunities for local businesses to grow.

35 With coal mining in our shire we have a balance and the local businesses will have
another income stream. This will allow for future opportunities, sustainability
throughout existing businesses and give the next generation an opportunity – an
option for employment in the bush. Further development with – within the region is
exiting for our members. It gives them vision to grow and offer future employment
opportunities within their organisations. The alternative is we keep following a slow
40 decline and watch regional towns die. If regional areas die the suburban centres will
be massively affected as a result. There will – there is no denying Narrabri has been
on a slow decline for many years.

45 We have lost major retailers, local businesses, parks, clubs and entertainment venues.
All of these businesses were once supported by agriculture and tourism. Both of
these income streams have literally been turned off with no vision for the future and
it's questionable if they will ever recover. Agriculture has been through some recent

time – some recent tough times, however, the industry still has a bright future as a farmer. Science and technology are responsible for this progression. Cotton is one of the major employment avenues providing support and revenue for many local businesses within the region. Due to science and technology, the plant now uses 48
5 per cent less water, 34 per cent less land, and 97 per cent pure insecticides.

The introduction of the Ramboll cotton picker, GPS systems and cloud based telemetry control all have a massive impact on local jobs. This type of technology is only in the early days of development. Within the next 10 years we – we will have
10 very few jobs through this – throughout this process. Our members have many concerns where this will all end up without diversification. Projects like the Vickery Extension can't happen quick enough as we need more options. Regional areas in Australia have a massive impact on the rest – on the rest of the country and the world. We need to keep them alive. We need to keep local retailers and
15 communities turning over.

Without these regional centres we do not have a place for people to live, eat, work and place. The above reasons highlight why NIN believe there is no alternative. There is no future for the next generation with – without diversification. Whitehaven
20 have proven they are capable, responsible and support the surrounding communities. Major supplies for import and manufacturing have a very close eye on this project. They have seen massive downturn supplied into the regional areas. They too are pushing for us local business to look for other avenues for their products. The Vickery Extension is a perfect example of how regional areas can give these larger
25 supplies the turn over required to keep the relationship strong.

Alternatively, we lose power and commitment from these companies which will be the detriment to many businesses in regional areas. If we allow for these projects to move forward we will see massive growth within the regional areas. This growth
30 will allow the small towns to become small cities, once you create an inland city it will feed off itself. Once you have the population, opportunity will follow.

It will allow our health care to improve, our schools to grow, retail shops will open, hospitality will be thriving and tourism will return. We will be – there will be more
35 room in the populated cities and our population will be spread out further throughout the country. Please consider our – what our members have had to say as time is ticking for many businesses in regional areas. Thank you very much.

MR HANN: Thank you, Justin. Our next speaker is Bea Bleile and she's
40 representing the Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining. Good morning, Bea.

MS B. BLEILE: and thank you for allowing me to speak and represent the group. Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining is one of several action
45 groups of Sustainable Living Armidale, or SLA. The group has 113 members on its mailing list and SLA has 585 which would correspond to over 24,000 and 160,000 people in Sydney respectively. While we're not opposed to mining in principle,

supporting farmers to protect the Liverpool Plains and its agriculture from coal mining was one of the concerns which led to the formation of the group in August 2011.

5 In October 2018 SLA objected to the Vickery Mine expansion proposed by
Whitehaven Coal due to the risks and adverse effects of this extension would have on
Aboriginal cultural heritage, the local community, biodiversity, agriculture, climate
change as well as ground and surface water. SLA's presentation to the commission
public hearing in February 2019 was prepared by Dr Kerri Clarke, then
10 environmental representative from the Community Consultative Committee of the
Maules Creek Coal Mine operated by Whitehaven Coal.

Dr Clarke stated the general public belief that there are protection measures in place
that keep mining companies in check. But I have experienced that these
15 requirements are easily changed or breaches resulting in an insignificant fine. It's
Maules Creek I completely understand why members of the community do not
have faith in Whitehaven Coal being able to consider the environment or the
community in which they operates sorry. The assessment report on the Vickery
Extension project prepared by the New South Wales Department of Planning,
20 Industry and Environment fails to allay the concerns leading to our objections in
2018 and 2019.

In paragraph 692 of the report, the Department acknowledges that the scope 3
admissions from the combustion of product coal is a significant contributor to
25 anthropological climate change and the contribution of the project to the potential
impacts of climate change in New South Wales must be considered in assessing the
overall merits of the development application. Now, during the summer of 2019,
2020, New South Wales suffered from actual impacts of climate change. The
Climate Council's reports summer of crisis states:

30 *A long-term drought and sustained high temperatures throughout the years set
the scene for the catastrophic bush fires. The bush fires were followed by
torrential rain fall, damaging gales, hail storms and flooding in many areas,
including Northern New South Wales, Sydney and the Illawarra region.
35 Unfortunately this rainfall did not penetrate inland very far leaving most of
New South Wales still in drought.*

According to an article in The Guardian, the Australian government estimates that if
compared with international emissions, the Australian tempered forest bush fires
40 between September and February would rank 6th on the list of pollution that polluting
nations. While tempered forests used to eventually recover from bush fire and
reabsorb most of the released carbon dioxide rising climate change impacts,
including droughts and more frequent intense fires could have affect the ability of
forests to recover.

45 In short, burning fossil fuels leads to climate change which leads to bush fires which
in turn lead to a more rapidly changing climate. This is one of several feedback

loops which endanger the capacity of the earth's systems to sustain us. Science tells us that we must put an immediate stop to the extraction and burning of coal to maintain a liveable environment for future generations. This must be our highest priority. Consequently, and contrary to the Department's report, the project is not in the public interest and is not approvable. On behalf of our Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining and in solidarity with the Aboriginal custodians, the Gomeroi people, and with farmers and communities across the north west, I call on you to reject the Department's recommendation to approve the project. Thank you.

10 MR HANN: Thank you, Bea. Our next speaker is Andrew Garratt. Good morning, Andrew.

MR A. GARRATT: Good morning Chairman Hann, Professor Lipman and Professor Fell, and good morning listeners as well. So my name is Andrew Garratt. I recently joined Whitehaven Coal as a general manager community engagement. I have four children, and up until early this year, had been based in Albury, New South Wales. So this morning, my perspective is quite a different one from many of your other speakers. It's from the lens of a new employee who was seeking a new employer. My story is about why I chose Whitehaven Coal, why I chose to relocate to this region, and why I proudly wear the Whitehaven badge.

So what was it about Whitehaven Coal that was attractive to me? A twenty-year veteran in community relations who in the interests of my love for communities has established tourist mining trails, festivals, events, playgrounds, kindergartens, accident and emergency facilities, kept rescue helicopters in the air, built health precincts, trade training centres, supporting business communities during the GFC and made sure that our regional airline stayed in the air, that seafarers felt welcomed and those who have no one have someone who cares. I'm a man of strong principles. I believe in working openly, honestly, and cooperatively, and I think I will aim – I'd like to think that I'll leave a positive legacies in the communities all that I have served and I look forward to serving in this current community.

So what were the Whitehaven foundation pillars, their culture, the way they work, that was attractive to me? Could they meet my expectations in safety, in all operations, in social and environmental responsibility, in continuous improvement, in operational excellence and sustainable growth, in openness with customers and partners, in professionalism with integrity, in the way they spoke to their people and did the management team walk the talk? What was the product? High quality thermal and metallurgical coal contributing to our regional and national economy, and what about their community investment? Very, very important to me.

One-point-five billion dollars invested in the northwest New South Wales economy in the last five years. Twelve million dollars in salaries to indigenous workforce annually. Seventy-five percent of the workforce locally based. Approaching 10 per cent in Aboriginal employment across the group. Three hundred and thirty-four million dollars spent with local suppliers annually and \$515,000 in local sponsorships and donations annually across our entire region. And what about their

environmental credentials? A comprehensive approach to environmental management, rehabilitating and restoring of disturbed areas, and what about health and safety? The of our workforce should expect to come home safely to their families and loved ones at the end of each day.

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Then the question for me, how could I contribute? What different could I make, could my family make, and would the company listen to me? And after five months, it's a resounding yes. Whitehaven is the company that I've chosen to hang my hat on. It's the company that I like to think will be here when my four children are ready for employment opportunities, and it's why I believe that the Vickery Project should be approved to ensure an extension to Whitehaven's positive legacy throughout the great northwest of New South Wales. I respect that there has been a range of views about Whitehaven Coal from the first day and almost a half of this hearing, but my experience has been a very positive one. Thank you for your time and good morning.

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MR HANN: Thank you, Andrew. Our next speaker is Andrew Hope.

MR A. HOPE: Yes.

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MR HANN: Good morning, Andrew.

MR HOPE: Yes. Good morning. Good morning, panel members, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. I speak on behalf of the company that own Country Mile Signs Pty Ltd. My – my journey with Whitehaven Coal and many other mining companies has been 15 years ago when Whitehaven Coal decided to start a coal mine in Werris Creek. I sat in the pub and I spoke to one of the community liaisons persons, who assured us that they'd give local contractors local work, and they've been, as far I'm concerned, been very true to their word. Almost from that day until present, I still work for the company across all their sites from their underground, their open cuts, their biodiversity offset sites.

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We work everywhere. So we get the – the distinct advantage to see, you know, the mining side of it, the rehabilitation side of it. We get to interact with their environmentalists, with their passionate projects around microbats and birds and watch the hollow logs go up for the animals to live in and it's quite amazing to see after mining's been what they can do and how they can return it and bring some wildlife back that we haven't seen for a long time. It's also given my company – when I started with Whitehaven, I was a one-man show working on my front veranda from home. I now own a factory in Quirindi and I employ six full-time people and several contractors. We've successfully trained an apprentice who has now left and started their own business. We've had two school-based trainees who have done office management we've put through. One is now working for another company and one remains with us.

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Through working with Whitehaven over the years, as they grow, we got the opportunity to grow our business with their help around occupational health and

safety systems and processes. Always found that it was an ear that could be heard or a system or process they were prepared to share. This allowed my company to grow and return money through my local community, as everything's manufactured here in Quirindi at our base. The other opportunity it's given us because we've grown our
5 business to work in this industry where occupational health and safety, the environment and your work practices, your health – your regular health checks, it's allowed us to diversify into other industries. We now work for State Government departments, councils, schools. Very diversified across large industry because we're now geared up to be able to do it. It's allowed us to grow, invest in the latest
10 technology, be ahead of the curve and we're still growing.

Constantly for the last 10 years we've had a growth rate. We've just been through COVID, drought, some very terrible things and I'm very proud of the fact that because of diversification we have had to not put off any staff and we have been able
15 to maintain our levels without any assistance from the government and the diversification of going into the mining industry and related industries has allowed us to do this. I have personally seen the hurdles that we have to jump as a company to be environmentally friendly and work on their sites and the cleanliness and those sort of things and it's a welcome thing to go to a work site where you know you're safe,
20 you know the environment's important and you know where the goal posts are. Whitehaven, as far as my company's been, has been a very good a corporate citizen to us and it's allowed us to also put many back into our community through the sporting groups and the organisations.

25 Because of the scale of the company that I now own I'm able to give back to our community and this is, you know, participation with all the mining industries across Australia. We now work in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and broadly across New South Wales throughout the entire mining industry and the associated industries and this all started with a humble conversation in the pub with
30 Whitehaven when they started off at Werris Creek. So, yes, I'm a supporter. I agree we need to have diversified businesses across our communities and they need to coexist with other industry. Farming and the environment and our normal way of life is very important and I believe with people working together these things can be achieved hand-in-hand. From what I have seen on-site and working on other things
35 they do this very, very well.

They're also very good at putting money back into our local communities and looking after our local sporting groups and people and also whenever asked seem to be keen to help. I have personally seen their Indigenous employment strategy and I
40 think it's great. I think it's good to see opportunity given and they take that very seriously. So I would recommend that this project be approved. We need the employment, we need the diversity and it will make our community grow and make it stronger. Thank you very much for your time today and I wish you luck. Thank
45 you.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Andrew. Our next registered speaker is Mitch Kelaher. Good morning, Mitch.

MR KELAHER: Morning, guys. Thanks for your time. So I, obviously, am Mitch Kelaher, and I'm here to speak fully in support of the proposed build for Vickery Coal Mine. My support probably varies a lot from the normal, as I've been born and raised on the land in this region. Growing up, my family was strongly opposed to mining. I inherited that belief from a young age. But as a – as the years went on and I was looking for full-time stable employment and it become harder to find, I ended up making the move into the mining sector which I was – was only going to be for a short time to get ahead. Then the intent was to get back our soon thereafter. The more I learnt about the mining industry and worked in it I met more people from the same area I was. A lot of these people actually were also from the land I never knew worked in the mining industry.

I've since come to learn since that point actually the mining in our area, Whitehaven Coal in specific, give locals a real opportunity. There's a lot more experience outside of our region which would be easier to call on, but they always give us guys first crack. We've actually learnt from Whitehaven and we've taken this approach with our businesses, Kelaher Industrial and Kelaher Instrumentation & Electrical. We – at the moment we've currently grown to have 20 full-time staff, all local to our region. Out of those 20, 13 of these staff either live on the land locally or families have farms in our region. We pride ourselves on our ability to be able to service the agricultural industries and mining industries with the same respects with what we do. If Vickery is approved, it will allow us to not only train and employ more staff for our region, but we'll also be able to expand and invest in ourselves to grow the businesses and become a greater asset to the area, like a lot of the other guys have spoken about.

Our businesses have grown with the help of Whitehaven Coal to where they are today. As I stated earlier, we are proof that the mining and agricultural industries can work together because that's exactly what we've been doing. Vickery – the Vickery Project, I believe is an exciting opportunity for our region as a whole as it provides ourselves, families – a guarantee of future employment for long into the future. Whitehaven Coal has shown a lot of faith in myself and our businesses, giving us a go to prove what local companies can provide. I'm sure it would be sometimes easier for Whitehaven to go with the larger financial companies, but in my experience, Whitehaven always gives the local guys first opportunity. The Vickery Project, I believe, is a great opportunity for our region and I'd like to fully pledge my support moving forward. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Mitch. At this juncture we're just going to take a short break.

ADJOURNED

[10.43 am]

45

RESUMED

[11.00 am]

MR HANN: Good morning. Welcome back to the Vickery Extension Project public hearing, day 2. And thank you for bearing with us, Patrick. It's Patrick Murphy and Patrick is representing the Boggabri Business & Community Progress Association. Welcome, Patrick.

5

MR MURPHY: Hello. I might have to unhook – can you hear me, please?

MR HANN: We can see you and we can hear you, Patrick. Thank you.

10 MR MURPHY: Promise the world and then hand out second-hand atlases and expect people to be happy. We believe this sums up the very – two very different parts of the approval process. In the lead-up to an approval, we have seen solemn promises made time and time again by Whitehaven, only for Whitehaven to renege after. A case in point is the Whitehaven office. It was in Boggabri, with the promise
15 it would never leave Boggabri. They obtained the approval they wanted at the time and shifted it to Gunnedah. G'day, commissioners and viewers. My name is Pat Murphy and I speak on behalf of the Boggabri Business & Community Progress Association.

20 I feel our association is well-placed to speak on the proposed greenfield mine that this hearing is discussing. Our association was formed in 1980 and has seen the highs and lows in Boggabri during that time. Our association is made up of individual people, businesses, organisations and schools from within the area, all with a common goal and that is a sustainable, positive future that Boggabri and the
25 local people can proudly call this the little town with the big heart. A home they can enjoy for generations to come. This new greenfield mine will not help us achieve that. Our community has been hollowed out by families who once shopped, played sport and were involved in Boggabri. Our trust and respect for Whitehaven has diminished completely through broken commitments and a very poor environment
30 track record and the seemingly contemptful way that they treat the landholders, through no fault of the landholder who are unlucky enough to be lumped with Whitehaven as a neighbour.

This was not always the case. Years ago, Whitehaven's business plan focused on
35 working and living in the community. Sadly, that's not the case now. Our association is not anti-mining. We have an extremely strong and positive relationship with Boggabri Coal. I note in the Narrabri Shire submission on your website that it appears the council enjoys good relationships with other state-significant development operators in the Narrabri shire, but has trouble dealing with
40 Whitehaven's attitude and having their confidence in what Whitehaven stipulates, especially when they provide no supporting documentation to back up their argument.

45 After viewing yesterday's proceedings, we feel that this lack of trust in what Whitehaven says and does is a very common theme. It's simply not good enough. The Department of Planning has to also shoulder some of the blame for the subsequent breakdown in the relationship between the community and Whitehaven.

Their mundane approach to not enforcing the commitments made by Whitehaven have left impacts being borne by the community. Likewise, there has been no attempt by the department or Whitehaven to address the concerns we raised in our submission last year. It's not good enough. The only good thing in our favour is the professional way the Narrabri Shire Council has gone about its work, with exhaustive community consultation and going in to bat for its residents. It is comforting to see a government body taking its duty of care seriously. Sadly, the same can't be said for Whitehaven or the department. It appears, sorry.

As an association, we are very concerned that the department has not – has only told the IPC what it wants to hear. I can remember a meeting held in Boggabri at the Boggabri Golf Club in 2017, organised by the department's Mr Mike Young and Mr Stephen O'Donoghue. Mr David Ross chaired the meeting. Approximately 50 or 60 locals attended. At one stage, a show of hands was called for to show who was against the building of a new greenfield mine on the banks of the Namoi River. It was a unanimous show of hands against this proposal. Is the IPC aware of this?

We feel that the department has a pecuniary interest in this project. Historically, the New South Wales Premier's priority notes have explained that one of the department's performance criteria is the number of projects approved and the time it takes to get approval. For us, this explains a lot in regards to the way the department seemingly picks and chooses what policies and advice from the other expert departments it deems important and doesn't seem to listen to us. I'll move on, as I'm mindful I've only got 10 minutes. To be very clear, our association objects to the proposal to build a new greenfield mega-mine on the banks of our beautiful Namoi River. We have consistently said we are at saturation level from the impacts of mining at present.

When you consider how badly the worst case modelling used at other Whitehaven sites reflect the real time, then we consider the risk to Boggabri's beautiful water is too great. We acknowledge Whitehaven has an approved 4.5 million tonne mine which is further away from the river. There is no railway line. It's less of a visual eyesore on our landscape and we believe that is enough. In years to come, when other mines in the Leard Forest run out, we can reassess this project then. This will provide job certainty for a longer period of time. This scenario will help provide certainty and confidence for the landholders in our community moving forward, instead of leaving them stuck in limbo.

Listening to the independent expert advice provided yesterday to the commissioners by Dr Alistair Davey, if current and relevant coal prices were used instead of outdated prices, then this project is not viable. It's not good enough not to use the most recent in investigating any so-called net social and economic benefit justification. When you consider that local mines have to employ a large number of drive-in drive-out workers, I fail to see how another new mine won't be reliant to a degree on out of area workers. If the IPC is planning on rejecting the proposal, the following is irrelevant. However, if you plan on approving, then we respectfully

request the following. Excuse me. We feel the below requests are not negotiable to us as a community.

5 Firstly, a 10 kilometre buffer zone, consistent with other large scale coal mines around the project, paying particular attention to the south-west and the western side of the project. All negotiated agreements need to be in place prior to any approval. These agreements can be tailored to suit each individual property owner's needs and to allow confidence moving forward. Effectively, we feel that Whitehaven and the department haven't followed the VLAMP to date and it's there for a reason, to try
10 and resolve disputes before they occur. We request a real-time dust monitor in Boggabri available to the public to view. We request that all real-time noise monitors be available for the public to log in and view, with all TARPs clearly marked. This is consistent with mining projects operating in other parts of New South Wales.

15 We request the IPC assess this project under the Aquifer Interference Policy of New South Wales, using the same interpretation as it did in the Bylong determination. We request that Whitehaven enter into a VPA with the Narrabri Shire Council that mitigates and manages the impacts to the Narrabri Shire Council's approval, not the
20 department's. We also request that it is condition in the consent the number of workers to reside in the Narrabri Shire for council's approval. All ambiguous wording in any consent is to be defined. We request any approval is conditional on an employee incentive scheme being developed with the Narrabri Shire Council, focusing on encouraging families to relocate to the Narrabri Shire. We request any
25 approval is conditional on all non-mine hire coming from the Narrabri Shire.

Scope 3 emissions must be considered consistent with Rocky Hill and Bylong. The law hasn't changed. The current legislation must be applied, not expected or
30 proposed legislation. And lastly, we request that the condition, the EPL cannot be not – cannot be inconsistent with the project approval be removed. In finishing, we as an association are sick and tired of seeing environmental assessments and project approval conditions being turned into a risk transference mechanism. That is not what they were designed for. It surely is in breach of the New South Wales
35 ecological sustainable development policies. I know it is contrary to the Australian fair go. Lastly, on behalf of our association and community, we respectfully would like to remind you of the heavy load of the responsibility that you as the IPC carry. The duty of care you hold is sacrosanct and outweighs any memorandum or understanding with the department or request from a Minister who lives in Sydney. Likewise, it outweighs correspondence from a Canberra federal minister relating to
40 scope 3 emissions. Correct me if I'm wrong, but your independence is cemented in the laws of this state for a reason. Thank you very much. Is there any questions?

45 MR HANN: Thank you very much, Patrick. Our next speaker is David Syphers. David, good morning and welcome.

MR D. SYPHERS: Morning. Yes. I'm here on behalf of first of all business, retail sector, and I believe that for mining with, you know, it – things have changed over

the years, like, in the – in the eighties and nineties, we had an abattoirs in Gunnedah, and that abattoirs provided plenty of work, plenty of money, plenty of income, everything for that retail sector and employed over 500 people. We lost the abattoirs in the mid-nineties due to some bad management, and after that, the town
5 deteriorated. As the retail person, we've seen the good times and the bad times, and I believe that the abattoirs was – the end of the abattoirs was the baddest time I've ever seen.

10 You know, there was – there was a lot of empty shops. We probably had over 20 empty shops in the main street, and – and that was a big decline. Now, since then, like, we've relied on farming, and farming alone helps the town, I admit. That's a big thing. But when we have drought, we have no money. So without – without mining, I believe, well, the town would – town would die in the drought, and that – that – that's a fact coming from my experience, which is we've had three years of
15 terrible drought. So for me, mining helped save us through the drought and Whitehaven, they spend their money in the town. You know, they spend their money different things.

20 Sporting activities, sporting groups, you know, and they did help us, you know, not a major help, but they helped us. You know, without Whitehaven, things could have been a lot different. So in that – that regard, I believe Whitehaven's saved Gunnedah and not just Whitehaven, mining itself. Without mining in this area, the – I think our area would be a lot worse off, and that – that's coming from fact. I've been in family business for over 65 years. My father started the business. My family has been in
25 this area for over 120 years. So we've seen the changes and everything changes. Technology changes. So today, you know, I believe that mining, you know, we need mining. Everything needs mining.

30 We've got a lot of people employed in the mines here. We've got a lot – lot of things happening, lot of indirect companies that are working for the mines. You know, a lot of people are working for the mines. Now, that all spends money in the town. That creates the economy in the local town, you know. So to me, we need mining and this – this proposal, like, if it's going to create more employment, more opportunity for people, I believe it's a good thing. Now, the second thing I have is a
35 boxing gym and a youth centre. Whitehaven themselves have – have supported us for the last five years. I do a lot of work with indigenous people. I do a lot of work with the non-indigenous, the people who are less fortunate, and true that, we've – we've had to find money somewhere.

40 Whitehaven have been generous enough to support us over the years, and we try to bring boxing promotions and we – we do that probably twice a year with Whitehaven's support, and we do that in a town like this. We have up to 600 people come over, 300 people come from out of town. They bring money into the economy. Now, without Whitehaven supporting us, we cannot do this. So to me, I believe it's
45 – it's a big thing for us to – to go forward with mining because that's the only answer we have at the moment. You know, we have no abattoirs. We have – have nothing. We've lost the timber mill as well in the last three years.

We lost the timber mill that provided 150 jobs. So we've been deteriorating in one area, and we've been going forward in another, and the area we're going forward in is mining. Whitehaven, to me, is – is what we need. So I'll – I'll end here and say yes, I'm for mining. You know, I'm not anti-mining and I'm not anti-farming, but I'm
5 for mining because I believe it's for the future of our town, and thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, David. Thank you for your submission. Our next speaker is Katherine McKenzie. Good morning, Katherine. Welcome.

10 MS McKENZIE: Good morning. As the Vickery Extension Project is a state significant project, I want to object to it because, as a resident of New South Wales, I want my family to know that I tried to stop this and other projects that will have a long-term effect on their lives. Even the name is a lie. It's no extension; it's a new mine. I grew up in the north-west and, therefore, learnt early in life that water
15 doesn't just flow out of the tap. When will our politicians wake up and realise that Australia is the driest continent on Earth, and water, not coal or gas, is our most precious resource?

A huge amount of water is used to wash down coal. Then it lies contaminated with
20 heavy metals in ponds, risking pollution to the surrounding area and beyond. Pond walls break, as they did at Tarrawonga on the 19th of April this year. The proposed Vickery ponds will be located on a floodplain within close proximity to the Namoi, a river already being drained and polluted by coal production and cotton growing. In 2019, towns and coalmines ran out of water, and the Namoi River was dry. One
25 thing is certain: there will be another drought. However, for this project and other proposed mining and manufacturing projects in this area, I see no evidence of accumulative effects on water resources being taken into account.

Real-time monitoring of the air pollution in this area was promised three years ago.
30 Air pollution not only impacts the area around the coalmine but also the many towns and open – the open coal trains passes through on its 400-kilometres journey to the coast and from the coast, as well. Approving a new coal mine in this time will prove that the mining industry is running the country, that Australia has no intention of cutting emissions and reducing climate change, and will further lower our
35 international standing, especially with our neighbours in the Pacific, where the effects of climate change are very apparent. Intergenerational inequity will be felt by our children and our grandchildren. They will be left with another ugly hole in the ground that can never be truly remediated. In the future, they may need this productive agricultural land just to feed themselves.

40 Whitehaven Coal have had a series of breaches of compliance and risk advice measures have been ignored. Isn't it time someone said no more? Whitehaven Coal owns the former Mackellar family property, Kurrumbede, where Dorothea Mackellar wrote, "I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains." If the Vickery
45 extension is approved, a coal loader and a railway line would come within 300 metres of this heritage homestead, shaking its foundation. Aboriginal and European sites of cultural heritage should be protected and, in some cases, opened up for

tourism. This enables people to embrace and be proud of their heritage while people of different cultural backgrounds can learn and understand others promoting tolerance.

5 The recent destruction of an Aboriginal cave by a mining company in WA provoked as much international outrage as the destruction of the Bamyán Buddhas by the Taliban, and so it should. The Vickery extension should never be approved. The decision is yours, and our descendants will have to live with the consequences of that decision forever. Thank you.

10 MR HANN: Thank you very much, Katherine. Our next registered speaker is Alison Ziller.

DR ZILLER: Good morning, Commissioners.

15 MR HANN: Good morning.

DR ZILLER: My expertise is in social impacts assessment, which is what I'm going to talk to you about today, and I am always concerned when the social benefits of a proposed resource extraction process are said to be jobs. This is partly because the need for employment in an area hides a host of social issues that the extraction process will bring with it, masculinisation of the town, loss of other forms of livelihood, social conflict and division and the continuation of the gap for Aboriginal people despite the extraction activity on their traditional lands. But in this case my concern is with the claim – the jobs claim itself. This is because the basis for the projection of the number of jobs to be delivered, particularly operational jobs, is unclear. It's an estimate and we are asked to rely on the applicant for this estimate and Whitehaven says that this project will deliver 450 operational jobs. As you will be aware, a number of reliable public agencies such as the ABS advise that employment in mining is declining. One of the reasons for this is the automation of the industry. I note that Whitehaven advised the department earlier this year that "it has no plans to introduce an automated mining fleet into the project". But I also note that Whitehaven advised its shareholders in its most recent annual report that it had already introduced six automated haulage trucks at Maules Creek and that it was likely to do so at the approved Vickery Mine with an estimated operational saving across the life of the mine of \$4 trillion. This is not only a lot of money, but a lot of jobs.

It is not reasonable to suppose that Whitehaven was misleading its shareholders. It is also not reasonable to suppose that automated haulage would be introduced to the approved project but not to the extension. In my opinion, the fact that automation is now proceeding in this industry and in mines owned by the applicant means that the projection of 450 operational jobs is, to say the least, doubtful. In the absence of these jobs, the case for a social benefit to the local community evaporates. A loss of social benefit is not a small matter in an area with a serious – with serious public health issues. I have detailed these in my submission and I would merely say here that on many health, social and crime indicators Narrabri and Gunnedah Local

Government Areas have a public health profile which is poor compared with New South Wales as a whole.

5 The fact that this profile is for a cluster of indicators, that is, not just one or two is
what matters. I believe that the public health of the resident population has not been
adequately considered in the documentation before you. Public health is not an issue
that it is appropriate to overlook and public health determines quality of life and
social wellbeing. I would not accept that 450 jobs would remedy the public health
10 profile of the area, but an absence of employment benefits certainly will not remedy
it and it is far more likely to exacerbate many of the serious elements of that profile,
in particular, rates of assault, domestic assault and high-risk health behaviours. Not
only does this application and its social impact assessment fail even to mention this
issue, there is not one proposed mitigation in the social impact assessment which in
15 my opinion would go anywhere near addressing the sense of exclusion and
exploitation likely to be experienced by this disadvantaged local community.

The hallmark of this project is distributional inequity, that is, a lack of social benefits
for the local community. A resource extraction project should be in the public
interest. The wellbeing of the local area is a critical element of the public interest. I
20 do not believe that test has been met in this proposal. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Alison. Just a question. Would you like to comment on
the role of mining in the region generally in regard to social wellbeing in your view.

25 DR ZILLER: That's a very big question. The role - - -

MR HANN: You may take that on notice and perhaps add that to your submission.
That's perfectly all right.

30 DR ZILLER: Yes. Because the role of mining – mining has multiple roles and if
you're just talking about the previous speaker – two speakers ago who was talking
about the donations that the companies have made, that's one thing, but there's a
large area of other impacts. That's a very big question you've just asked me.

35 MR HANN: All right. Well, look, if you could perhaps take that on notice and feel
free to put that in your submission or an addendum to your submission if you would
like provided we receive it by Friday the 10th.

40 DR ZILLER: Okay.

MR HANN: Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thank you.

45 MR HANN: All right. Our next registered speaker is James Barlow.

MR J. BARLOW: Good morning.

MR HANN: Good morning, James.

MR BARLOW: How you going? Good morning, Commissioners. My name is James Barlow, member of the Boggabri Farming and Community Group, owner and manager of Mirrabinda, 127(a), (b), (c). The only one with the – that has acquisition rights and no limit supply to my farm. Despite all the local rumours I have not sold to Whitehaven Coal. As I said in my last presentation I have no intention of selling my family’s land and water at this point in my life. And no one should be forced to. That my family and myself have spent more than 50 years growing and making it successful – successful and sustainable agribusiness it is today. I would not replace it in this district.

Only myself, my fellow neighbours and my own mine affected people really understand the torment we have suffered over several years. If only our critics could walk in our shoes. We only fight to protect community, livelihoods and the land we cherish so dearly. Nobody wants to live next to a coal mine. If you place this proposal next to Gunnedah everyone would be up in arms. My point is just because we are a few doesn’t mean our lives don’t matter. For years now that is exactly how we have felt. So much wasted time with the DPIE, listened to but ignored. There is much wrong with the process that has led us to this point today.

If the process is wrong, I fear the outcomes could be disastrous. So I continue to fight for what I believe is most important and do what I can to convince you, the IPC, of the many reasons why this mine should not be approved. Environment. As well know, this mine is located extremely close to the Namoi River. I recognise our government’s desire for wealth and jobs, which is mirrored all the way to the bottom. Especially by my local council Gunnedah. I’m not against mining and recognise its place at the moment in our society. But world sentiment is changing rapidly.

With the long term sustainability of coal, sketchy at best. So with that in mind, you the IPC have to huge responsibility of deciding if this really is the most intelligent location for a large greenfield mine with associated infrastructure in 2020. We have seen how vulnerable and sensitive civilisation is in recent months with COVID-19 bringing the world to its knees. Just prior to this epidemic we had witnesses a record drought in most of Australia, and let’s not forget the devastating bushfires only last year. Hotter and drier than we’ve ever seen before. As farmers, we are seeing the changes first-hand on the ground, as the environment is our life. It is our livelihoods. It will only get harder to grow crops in extreme weather patterns. That is a fact. Our crops, everyone’s food.

Climate change isn’t a debate anymore. Governments all around the world recognise the serious implications on humanity if we continue on this trajectory of fossil fuel consumption. Why add to the firestorm with a brand-new mega mine on the banks of the Namoi River? Blind Freddy could see even if we were desperate that it should be a complete no go zone, yet we are not desperate as we have existing mining that is further away from our river and our people, mines that are extending, keeping people in jobs, sustaining a part of our community into the future. At some point, a line in

the sand must be drawn where the imbalance in a community and the detriments outweigh the benefits.

5 This is exactly what will happen if this mine is approved. Narrabri Council
recognise this, whilst Gunnedah continues to be blinded by short-term vision and
personal wealth. This divide is representative of a huge divide in the community
that's a – the community surrounding this mine. Gunnedah is thriving and will
continue to thrive without this mine, remembering there is an approval for a smaller,
10 more sustainable, less intrusive mine ready to go. The DPIE recommends approval,
yet has failed to address flaws in the proposal that factions of its department are not
supportive of. An overburdened dump, 200 hectares in size over the Namoi alluvium
with the potential to leech toxic contaminants into our underground water.

15 Still no railway design that spans a massive 14 kilometres across the floodplain that
the DPIE deems will have no impact on flooding. Without a design, I am perplexed
at how this conclusion is made. To many, koalas hold little significance in the grand
scheme of things when it comes to state significant projects. To me, they are a
symbol of the state and health of our environment. A report came out recently, as we
20 have heard, forecasting extinction of koalas by 2050 if our government keeps
approving projects that threaten their habitats. There are so many koalas around this
mine than stated in the EIS. How do I know? Because I live here. I see them on a
regular basis.

25 Gunnedah is, as it proclaims, koala capital of the world. So many koalas reside
along the river, especially in dry times. It's time we start protecting some of our
natural assets from projects that are simply just in the wrong place. Economics.
Some will argue that the price of coal is similar to commodity prices, that it
experiences ups and downs across a period of time. Like food, if something is
30 deemed unhealthy or bad for you, people tend to move away from this particular
product. As farmers, we diversify and grow the products that there is a demand for.
I was taught by my father and it's common business knowledge that you must
manage risk and never put all your eggs in one basket, never plant the whole farm to
one crop.

35 Unfortunately for Whitehaven, this is exactly what they are doing with no strategy of
diversification in the foreseeable future, only coal. Very high risk. Everyone knows
coal is bad, unhealthy for the planet, whether they choose to admit it or not. It's
scientific fact and common sense. So with that said, it's only a matter of time when
the world will stop consuming it for the sake of the world's health as a whole. The
40 long-term sustainability is just not there for the coal industry. Our communities will
be placed at a higher longer-term economic risk if projects like these are approved
and collapse.

45 Water. It is our most precious resource. With scientific evidence of longer, hotter
climatic conditions, water is the single biggest issue surrounding this mine. Whilst
the company holds significant river licences, in recent times we have seen that it
can't be relied on as a consistent source of water. I understand this well, as I also

own river water, and in times of dry I adapt operations or stop. People will lose jobs in mining in this situation. The notion of jobs is false security in times where availability of water is non-existent. This became evident only last year with the frantic purchase of land and water to keep operations running at Maules Creek.

5 Investigations by NRAR for theft of water are serious allegations given all the sensitivity surrounding water state-wide in recent times.

10 It's not sustainable for the proponent to continue to pay well over the market dollars for zone 4 underground water, essentially taking more and more water away from food production in this extremely productive valley. So in closing, it's obvious why I don't want this mine to proceed. No one wants to live next to a coal mine, particularly one that is fraught with so much risk to our environment, livelihoods and economy. This process has taken a huge toll on myself and many of my fellow community members, yet the last six years has changed my outlook on the whole world as a collective. What doesn't break you really does make you stronger. That money is only money and the pursuit of it can do long-term damage in some cases. Legacy is the most important thing. Like my grandfather handing the farm to my father and my father to me.

20 Being passed down in a better, more sustainable, environmentally friendly state than it was before. I dream of one day passing this legacy to my daughter, but the future looks very hazy and very noisy if this mine is approved. It's the same as the planet. It's our responsibility as humans to pass it to our children and so on in a better state than we found it. It's imperative we make decisions to protect the long-term sustainability of Earth which in turn protects all civilisation long after we are gone. It's hard, I know, finding the balance between economics and health. Health of our communities, health of our environment.

30 Just like COVID-19. If our government had focused on economy, many more people would have died. It's obvious our government favours coal. Who could forget our current Prime Minister waving a piece of coal around like a cigarette saying it's good for you. Our job, your job, commissioners, is to push back. We must find a better balance. Striking that balance is crucial in providing our children with a legacy we can be proud of. Approving this mine is a step backwards for our children and humanity. Thank you.

40 MR HANN: Thank you, James. Just a few questions. You confirmed that your farm is property referred to as 127 in the application and also in the assessment report of the department and I think you referred to the fact that there are three residential buildings there which are occupied, I understand, A, B and C.

MR BARLOW: Yes.

45 MR HANN: Could you just give us some guidance as to the approximate distance between those residences and the areas of disturbance proposed.

MR BARLOW: So property C and the young lady and partner, she'll be speaking a little bit later. She's working in the ag industry. It's about 800 metres from the coal handling facility.

5 MR HANN: Thank you.

MR BARLOW: They're talking 48 decibels. That's in the modelling, I think. It will be pretty well an unliveable house, I think. I've been told that. So the property, the main homestead is about two kilometres away from the pit itself. Same thing.

10

MR HANN: Which property is that? A or B?

MR BARLOW: That's A and the cottage is B. But we've obviously been given acquisition for rights and I'm the only one with acquisition rights with basically no limit supplied from what I can tell. So the concern is that it will be risky to my health let alone the noise and sleep disturbance. I just – logic tells me it won't be a pleasant place to be at, let alone live and try to sleep.

15

MR HANN: Thank you, James. Zada, do you have any questions?

20

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. Just one question, thank you, James. I wanted to ask you, when you have a water shortage, as you mentioned just now, where do you source water? How do you go supplementing your supply?

25

MR BARLOW: Well, if I don't have water, I don't use water. So I've got a river licence. So at the moment there's no allocation from Keepit Dam, and we haven't had that for a few years now. I have got an aquifer licence, but it's – it's a set megalitre, so once you've used all your water, it's metered. You just – you – you either turn into a dry land farmer. I have spent a fair bit of money on irrigation infrastructure that saves water, but in times that we've seen recently, it gets to a point where you either just rely on the environment or scale back operations and adapt and diversify to crops that use less water, basically.

30

So it's just part of living – living in this environment where – where water's availability can be very up and down and cyclical, and – and we just adapt, and if it means growing less crops and scaling back operations, it's just part and parcel with life on the land.

35

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you. Do you actually buy water on the market?

40

MR BARLOW: No. Certainly not underground water. Six and a half thousand dollars meg I think the last – got a text the other day. So we are completely priced out of the market when it comes to underground water, so farming is kind of – coal, definitely, they've got more money than us. Deep pockets. So I – we would if I think it was more sustainable and we could grow food with – with water that is traded that we can justify paying that kind of money for. But no, the water I use is water I own, basically.

45

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you.

MR HANN: Chris, do you have any questions?

5 PROF FELL: No. I'm fine. Thanks.

MR HANN: Okay. Thank you very much. Our next speaker – thank you, James. Our next speaker is Will Steffen.

10 PROF W. STEFFEN: Thanks.

MR HANN: Good morning, Will.

15 PROF STEFFEN: Thanks. Yes. Good morning. Thanks very much for inviting me to speak to the commission. Much appreciated. So basically, I want to talk about the fundamental science behind climate change and the role of – of coal in that. The first thing, obviously, that's on everyone's minds – minds are the recent impacts of climate change. Obviously, in New South Wales, that was hardest hit state in terms of the 2019/2020 bushfires. These were absolutely unprecedented, 10 times more
20 area than had been burnt before, 10 times more than the average area that's burnt in eastern Australia, and so on.

Perhaps a little bit more in the background, though, at the same time, the Great
25 Barrier Reef suffered its third mass bleaching event in over five years, and for the first time, the entire length, 2300 kilometres of that reef suffered bleaching, and that was because of record high sea surface temperatures that we hadn't seen before. And I could go on. The rest of the world is also experiencing impacts of climate change, and the point is, the evidence, the fact that this is climate change as the primary
30 driver of these impacts. The evidence is simply getting stronger and stronger the more we in the scientific community learn about how the climate system is changing and why it is changing. And the answer to that second point in my comment why it is changing, there is absolutely no doubt that by far the – the dominant driver of climate change – climate change is the burning of fossil fuels and that, of course, has three main sources, coal, oil and gas are the primary sources of carbon dioxide. The
35 basic physics of this has actually been known for about 200 years. That's when the first green – that's when the greenhouse effect was first understood.

So to put it – put it very simply, these gasses are heat trapping gasses. They're
40 trapping heat that emanates from the earth's surface as it heats up from the sun and they raise the surface temperature and, of course, that shifts the climate system and all of its facets including atmospheric circulation, ocean circulation, extreme events and so on. So all this is very well known. The dangers, of course, of climate change are also very well known and they've been written about and communicated by climate
45 science for at least three decades. What do we do about this? Well, the world's countries have gotten together and said we need to control climate change to stabilise the climate system well below two degrees of Celsius and aiming for 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial.

That, basically, is – is the Paris Climate Agreement. Australia is a signatory to that agreement and virtually every country on the planet, I think, at last count, 197 countries which comprise virtually the entire human population have agreed that this is what we need to do. So what science can do, then, in terms of giving advice on what's required to meet those Paris targets is to use what we call a carbon budget. And that's like any other budget, you have a limit to how much carbon dioxide we can emit if we want to have a reasonable chance – and we define that as two-thirds chance, 67 per cent chance – of meeting these targets. To cut this – cut right to the quick here, 1.5 degrees Celsius is now impossible. We're not – we don't have a chance of making that, and that's because of since 2015, the five years since then, we would have had to get emissions capped and heading downward. They have actually risen since 2015.

Second of all, we do not have yet in place the policies required either here in Australia or most countries around the world to hit the deep emission cuts we need for 1.5. The upper Paris target of well below two, which I take as around 1.8, is barely possible but only if we make immediate and deep emission cuts aiming to cut our emissions in half by 2030 - that's a 50 per cent reduction – and eliminate them by 2040. Net zero by 2050 is too late. And, obviously, missing the Paris targets will lead to far worse impacts even than the bushfires we've just experienced and the bleaching of the reef and so on. So that's the dilemma we face, is that if we do want to meet the Paris targets, we have to get emissions down extremely rapidly and extremely quickly.

When you crunch through the budget, as I just mentioned – and we can give you numbers for what those emission reductions need to be – we come to the conclusion that, already, on the books, we have far more reserves of fossil fuels that are under development or being used now, coal, oil and gas, than the budget allows, so that means, obviously, we have to get existing fossil fuel facilities phased out ASAP. The obvious conclusion from that is you cannot open up any new facilities or extensions of existing facilities. They will put the nail in the coffin for the upper Paris target really fast. So if we want to give our children and grandchildren even just a chance to have a planet they can live on, we have to get emissions down really fast by 50 per cent by 2030.

Australia is an important player. If you look at just our domestic emissions, we rank about 15 out of 197 countries. We're equivalent to many of the European countries like France, like Britain, like Spain. When you consider our exports, we would rank fifth or sixth in there with China, USA and so on, so we have a major role to play in stabilising the climate system. So just in conclusion, that's a very quick summary of what the science is saying. The science is saying that any new fossil fuel development, or an extension, like the Vickery Extension Project, is simply incompatible with stabilising the climate system at the Paris targets.

This really is our last chance coming out of COVID-19 to get on the right pathway. If we don't do that, I just hate to think of what future my daughter is going to have and what future her children is going to have. We're basically - if we keep investing

in fossil fuels, we're basically throwing our children and grandchildren under the bus. So that's my comments on what the science is saying. Happy to take any questions from any of the panel.

5 MR HANN: Thank you, Will. Much appreciated. Zada, do you have any questions?

10 PROF LIPMAN: Yes, I do. Thanks very much for your presentation, Will. Let's focus a little more on the current application. Looking at what this extension is trying to achieve, it's largely getting diesel trucks off the road. In fact, it will lead to a reduction in – of a million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per annum, as opposed to what has already been approved and is, one would say, in the carbon budget. How does that factor into your equation?

15 PROF STEFFEN: Look, I think we need to get emissions out of transport just as fast. So it's not really substituting one set of emissions for another set of emissions. It's cuts that are much rapid – more rapid than that million tonnes, so I focused only on the direct fossil fuels sector here, but transport is very important. The thing we need to do it electrify that transport, and that's happening very fast, not substitute one
20 type of fossil fuel for another. I should also say that here in the ACT, we provide a bit of a model because we have legislated for a 1.8 degree target, and that means that we need to electrify our transport ASAP and get virtually all fossil fuels out of transport by 2030, which we're pretty much on track to do. So – so the point there is, you need to go across all sectors and look at the deep emission cuts and not substitute
25 one sector for another.

PROF LIPMAN: So what you're saying is that one has to look at the – the rail transport as well?

30 PROF STEFFEN: Yes, and electrify the rail transport.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

35 PROF STEFFEN: Absolutely. Absolutely.

PROF LIPMAN: Just one other thing that I'd like to ask you about. The applicant in this proposal has set out a commitment to sell to countries that are – are parties to the Paris Agreement, with one exception, Taiwan, who has domestic legislation to conform with the requirements. Does that alleviate the situation somewhat in
40 relation to scope 3 considerations?

PROF STEFFEN: No, because virtually no country is on track to meet their Paris targets. So countries like us are signatories to – to the Paris Agreement. But if you actually look at the commitments these countries have made, that would take us to a
45 3.2 degree Celsius world, which is in – in my view, an world. It will trigger a lot of feedbacks in the climate system, melting of permafrost, burning of the Amazon Forest and those sort of things. They're high probability events at 3.2 degrees. So

there – there’s a huge gap, the credibility gap, between countries that are signatories to the Paris Agreement and what their commitments are, and there’s a second gap between what their commitments are and what they’re actually doing.

5 For example, we’ve made commitments to reduce our emissions nationally by 26 to
28 per cent by 2030, our 2005 levels. We are not on track to meet that, and that’s
true for other countries as well. I don’t want to pick out – pick on the Australian
government only. There are other countries that are not even meeting their
10 commitments, which means that we’re probably headed for even more than a 3.2
degree world, so that really doesn’t play any role because there are – I don’t think
there are any countries that I know of that are actually doing what needs to be done
yet to meet the Paris targets.

PROF LIPMAN: Right. Thank you.

15

MR HANN: Any further questions, Zada?

PROF LIPMAN: No.

20 MR HANN: Chris, do you have any questions?

PROF FELL: Yes, just one on coal. Could you give us your opinion of carbon
capture and storage and Healy technologies in terms of making coal a less polluting
product?

25

PROF STEFFEN: Yes, look, CCS has been around for a long time. I know the
Australian Government, about 10, 15 years ago – I think it was under the Howard
Government – actually had a big research project on CCS. It hasn’t gone very far
here and hasn’t gone very far anywhere because it’s very expensive, and now it’s
30 been economically undercut by renewables and storage systems which are far, far
cheaper than any fossil fuel development with CCS and even now cheaper than fossil
fuel developments with – without CCS. So basically, as far as I can see, CCS is dead
in the water because it’s yesterday’s technology and it’s already being undercut by
zero technology energy systems.

35

PROF FELL: And Healy?

PROF STEFFEN: I don’t know. What do you refer to about Healy?

40 PROF FELL: A very high temperature combustion of coal so you get a higher -
much higher efficiency of power generation.

PROF STEFFEN: Yes, I mean, that certainly helps cut emissions, but it certainly
doesn’t reduce them anywhere near what needs to be reduced, so I think the point is,
45 in terms of thermal coal – I’m talking now about thermal coal rather than
meteorological coal – thermal coal is being bypassed really fast by the technological
developments in renewables, so that’s not only true here in Australia, where for new

power generation, renewables are definitely cheaper than coal or gas. That's true now in most other parts of the world.

PROF FELL: Thank you.

5

MR HANN: Chris, any further questions? Thank you, Chris. Thank you very much, Will. We appreciate both your submission in presentation to us and also responding to our questions. Thank you.

10 PROF STEFFEN: Thank you

MR HANN: Our next registered speaker is Pete Brien.

MR BRIEN: Morning.

15

MR HANN: Good morning, Pete.

MR BRIEN: Morning. Everything all good there?

20 MR HANN: Thank you very much. Indeed it is.

MR BRIEN: My name's Pete Brien. I'm a qualified plumber and director of Petonna Service. I'm in support of the mining industry in our area. I've been a Boggabri local landholder since 1991. I commenced working as a plumber at a business that was outside of Boggabri. I then permanently moved to Boggabri in 1998. During the late nineties and early 2000s in this area there were periods that there was limited work within my trade. At the time I worked in the agricultural industry. I had to travel outside of Boggabri to work in my trade. In 2006 I commenced running a retail and plumbing service business from the main street in Boggabri with my partner. With the mining industry setting up in the Boggabri area, demand for our services increased and as a result my business has expanded from its humble beginnings. We now employ – we now provide employment for 11 people in the fields of plumbing, roofing, poly welding and scaffolding. My staff live within the Narrabri, Gunnedah and Tamworth regions and, as such, we support all three communities.

Due to the growth in our business, we now employ three administrative staff which is virtually important as there was very limited work 20 years ago for women in that field in Boggabri. Prior to the mining industry arrival employment was often on a casual seasonal basis. There is now work out there which has enabled more people to be employed on a full time or more permanent arrangement. This stability has given me as an employer the confidence to engage in career advancement, training my employees. I have also trained over 10 local apprentices. I have one current apprentice at this time. We still provide services to residential, commercial and agricultural customers. I feel that Boggabri is a great community and I support local organisations like the football club etcetera.

I feel that the mining industry provides employment for a large number of people in a wide variety of areas of expertise on a regular basis and, as such, I support this project. Thank you.

5 MR HANN: Thank you very much, Pete. Our next registered speaker is Lloyd Finlay. Good morning, Lloyd.

MR FINLAY: Yes.

10 MR HANN: Welcome.

MR FINLAY: Hello, how are you? Hello? How are you going?

MR HANN: Very well, thank you.

15

MR FINLAY: Not good. Right. Okay. I'll start, I suppose.

MR HANN: Yes, please.

20 MR FINLAY: I just wanted to thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Vickery Extension Project. I'm Lloyd Finlay. I've lived in the Maules Creek for nearly 40 years as a farmer and, yes, I've worked for DPI, Department of Primary Industries for nearly 24 years while I was still at Maules Creek. But, generally, I'll just give you a quick overview of what I do. I'm a member of the Narrabri Pony
25 Club, the Narrabri Riding for the Disabled, the Maules Creek Campdraft Club, the Maules Creek Reactional Trust, the Narrabri Clay Target Club. That's just to show you that I do get across a fair broad range of the community and I listen to a lot of views. So, yes, that's about – that's my general background. I lease country from Whitehaven, directly in front of Tarrawonga. I'm one of the closest neighbours
30 there.

I've had a great relationship with the mine and I'm a – at the moment it'll be about four kilometres from this extension project and I've never seen – I haven't seen any bad effects in the last three and a half years since I've been over on that side because
35 I actually live in Maules Creek. It's about five kilometres from the Maules Creek Mine. But that's generally an overview of that. I'd just like to say that Whitehaven they've helped us a lot of Maules Creek. A lot of the younger generations. We've got younger families in the area now and they've helped us out a lot with the recreational grounds.

40

We're actually holding dog trials there at the end of the month which wouldn't – all this wouldn't have been possible without the support of Whitehaven over the years and Boggabri Coal as well. I believe that we can all work together. Really, well, I'm a classic example of that, especially, the last three and a half years. Our agriculture
45 and mining can work together. That's – yes – Whitehaven has enabled me to fulfil a dream of mine. I've got a young family. I've got a 19 year old daughter and a 12 year old son and he's made on the farming side of it and what – the deal I did with

Whitehaven has enabled me to expand and hopefully my son and daughter will have a future with agriculture. If not, maybe the mining.

5 That's where I really do think we can all work hand-in-hand and that's about –
there's not much more I can really say. It's – yes. I've just enjoyed a good
relationship with the mines and we need employment. Without the mines, I don't
know where Boggabri, Gunnedah and Narrabri would be at this very point in time. I
really don't know where we'd be if it hadn't been for the mines. So in closing I just
feel the project should be approved. That's about all I can really say, but – yes.
10 Okay. Have you guys got any questions?

MR HANN: Not from me. Chris, do you have any questions?

15 PROF FELL: No, thanks.

MR HANN: Zada?

PROF LIPMAN: No.

20 MR HANN: No. Thank you very much, Lloyd. Much appreciated.

MR FINLAY: Okay. Thank you.

25 MR HANN: Our next registered speaker is Simon Nicholas.

MR NICHOLAS: Yes.

MR HANN: Good morning, Simon.

30 MR NICHOLAS: Good morning. Can you hear me okay?

MR HANN: Yes, we can.

35 MR NICHOLAS: Great. So, yes, my name's Simon Nicholas. I am an energy
finance analyst at the Institute for Energy, Economics and Financial Analysis. In my
role, I follow the electricity markets in Asian nations that Australian coal is exported
to and I would like to bring some of the recent developments in those nations to your
attention, as they have a significant – they have significant implications for
40 Australian thermal coal exports and question the financial impact of this proposed
extension. Major companies that produce or consume fossil fuels are increasingly
coming to the conclusion that the economic impacts of COVID-19 are accelerating
the energy transition and this is perhaps most starkly seen in oil giant BPs recent
decision to write off US\$17.5 billion of assets on the assumption that COVID-19 will
accelerate the shift away from fossil fuels.

45 In addition, Shell announced asset write downs of up to US\$22 billion earlier this
week on a bleaker long-term fossil fuel outlook and Italy's NL, one of the largest

operators of coal-fired power plants in Europe is planning to accelerate the closure of its coal generation assets in the expectation that worsening economics of coal power will persist beyond the pandemic. Nations are also accelerating their transition. A good example is South Korea with its recently announced \$62 billion new deal
5 designed to refocus its post-coronavirus economy. The plan is based on two pillars: a digital new deal and a green new deal with the latter intended to move the nation away coal-fired power and towards renewable energy. Now, South Korea is, of course, one of Australia's big four thermal coal export destinations.

10 The New South Wales Government's recently published Strategic Statement on Coal Exploration and Mining accepts that in the long term exports to the big four destinations – that's Japan, China, South Korea and Taiwan – are set to decline and only this week it was revealed that Japan is intending to shut down 100 coal power
15 units by 2030. However, the statement very optimistically maintains that Australian thermal coal exports will be protected from falling shipments to the big four destinations by rising demand from South and Southeast Asia. This idea fails to take into account the growing risk that India will move away from thermal coal imports and that a significant rise in exports to places like Bangladesh and Pakistan will
20 never happen.

In India, significantly reduced demand for coal amid the COVID-19 downturn has mobilised the Indian government to step up its efforts to reduce thermal coal imports. State-owned Coal India, the world's largest coal miner, has been mandated by the
25 government to permanently replace at least 100 million tonnes of coal imports with domestic coal in the current fiscal year. India is not a major destination for New South Wales thermal coal and it's starting to look increasingly likely that it never will be. The same is starting to look true for Pakistan and Bangladesh as well.

In its most recent long-term power capacity addition plan, Pakistan will expect its
30 coal power plants, that a fuelled by imported coal, will be operating at a utilisation rate of just 14 per cent by 2030. So in other words, those coal power plants are stranded. They can't possibly operate commercially at 14 per cent utilisation. Pakistan is clearly shifting towards domestic coal and renewable energy with its new significantly enhanced draft renewable energy policy. And Bangladesh's power
35 Minister revealed only last week that it is reassessing its plans for a coal-fired power development in the wake of COVID-19 and is intending to significantly curtail planned coal power build-up.

40 Finally, Vietnam's national steering committee for power development recently recommended that plans for coal power expansion should be scaled down advising the government 15 gigawatts of long-planned coal plants be scrapped as coal finance is increasingly difficult to obtain. In summary, the potential growth markets for Australian coal exporters increasingly have no chance of replacing the big four
45 markets. The energy transition is closing out the opportunity for large increases in exports to countries like Vietnam and India and COVID-19 is accelerating the transition not slowing it.

Declining long-term demand means there will be little opportunity for substitution of coal from other supplies if this extension doesn't go ahead. Opening further coal supply in a market that is declining in the long-term will only push down prices, profits and royalties. Thank you for listening.

5

MR HAHN: Thank you very much, Simon. Do we have any questions? Zada?

PROF LIPMAN: No.

10 MR HAHN: Chris? You're okay?

PROF FELL: Yes.

MR HAHN: Thanks very much, Simon. We appreciate that.

15

MR NICHOLAS: Thank you.

MR HAHN: Our next speaker, if he's available, is Richard Gilham. Hello Richard.

20 MR GILHAM: Hello.

MR HAHN: Hello Richard.

MR GILHAM:

25

MR HAHN: Yes. We're having a little difficulty with - - -

MR GILHAM: Are we there?

30 MR HAHN: - - - your line.

MR GILHAM: Hello.

MR HAHN: Hello Richard. Can you see us, hear us?

35

MR GILHAM: Right. No, I can see neither. I can see myself. What have we got to do?

MR HAHN: That's okay. We've got a good audio. Just talk to us.

40

MR GILHAM: Okay. Right. I'm Richard Gilham, one of the few farmers that own property between the mining areas at Maules Creek, Boggabri Coal and Vickery. I guess that I was born to live here because this is where I was born, along with the generations of Gilhams before me. My family has had a good working relationship with the mines since they started in our area. If we ever had any issue, we would go
45 straight to the mining company to sort out the issue. We have always found the mines to be very approachable and issues have always been resolved.

As our children came to be young adults, they decided that they would like to be in the farming and agriculture industry as well. As our property was not big enough to support all four children in this industry, we were able to lease some mine-owned land next door to our property. I think this is an important way of keeping young
5 people in the area that would have otherwise had to leave the area to find farming properties.

It is also very important to make the coexistence of mining and agriculture work. This has to work because both industries are here side by side. I have a lot of friends
10 working in the mines in this area that would have never owned their home or farm if it hadn't been for mining. Some have drought-proofed their farm by working in the mine earning extra income. If it hadn't been for mining in our area in the last three years, three towns would have had rolly-pollies blowing down their main streets. Mining has helped keep the local economies going especially in times of drought.

15 On the other side of the coin, I do think that water is one of our most valuable commodities. It needs to be protected. We have not only a lot of livestock and crops relying on bore water in our area, our town of Boggabri's existence relies on bore water, of which the source is not far from the Vickery site. This has to be preserved
20 at all costs.

The other issue, dust, the like of which comes from local roads, this is not an only unsightly and unhealthy but it is also very dangerous, with a smashed-up car on the side of a gravel road not an uncommon sight these days. With the amount of people
25 using these roads, I do think that every road east of Boggabri should be sealed before any more lives are lost.

In closing, I might say that none of our farming practices have had to change since mining started in our area. As a farmer, I think our mining/agriculture coexistence is
30 very important as these are both industries that are as important as each other and can create a lot of economic benefits. If Vickery was to go ahead I think that strict guidelines need to be adhered to to protect our local farming industry and water quality is maintained. Thank you very much.

35 MR HAHN: Thank you, Richard. Our next registered speaker is Rhonda Bourne. Hello. Good afternoon, Rhonda. Rhonda, you might need to un-mute. Rhonda, can you hear us?

40 MS BOURNE: Yes, I can hear you. Can you hear me?

MR HAHN: Yes, perfectly well, thank you.

MS BOURNE: Good.

45 MR HAHN: Talk to us. Good afternoon.

MS BOURNE: Good afternoon. Look, thank you very much for this opportunity to speak today. I strongly object to the Vickery Coal Mine. We have a duty of care to the present generation of children and to all future generations to protect our arable land and our water resources. And we have a duty of care to leave future generations a climate that sustains life. If we fail then we are leaving them to struggle with the clean-up of the mess and the destruction we have created.

This proposed Whitehaven/Vickery open cut coal mine is huge. It will permanently change and damage the Liverpool Plains which is often referred to as New South Wales' food bowl and is counted amongst the best and most expensive agricultural land in Australia. Most soil in Australia is ancient. It is weathered, it's eroded, it's infertile. We have relatively little arable land. Already there are four huge open cut coal mines in the Liverpool Plains. Prime agricultural land should be protected for its vital role in producing food and it is essential for our nation's food security. We should not put our food bowl in jeopardy for the short-term benefit of a coal mine, in this case for only 25 years.

Australia is the driest continent on earth. We need to conserve our precious water resources. The Namoi River, the groundwater system and bores that sustain local communities and agriculture need protection. The mine and coal processing plant will use huge amounts of water. Whitehaven has already pushed the water prices out of the range of a lot of farmers. The Vickery mine is just 400 metres from the Namoi River. This precious water is going to be used to wash coal. And when the rainfall exceeds 38 millimetres over five days, it has permission to pump that polluted water straight into the Namoi River.

Whitehaven have a shocking history of groundwater problems, alleged damage to an aquifer, alleged illegal harvesting of stormwater, sediment dam collapse and pollution of the Namoi River, air pollution and not meeting rehabilitation commitments over 13 years. The mine will use water from the Namoi, from bores and from passive intake through the walls of the mine which of course is unmeasured.

The recent drought brought the Namoi River – we saw the Namoi River dry up and the town of Boggabri had to truck in water. There is too much uncertainty in water security to allow another mine, Vickery, in the area. The needs of humans and stock for water should have priority. This mine will destroy farmland for ever, water resources, risks polluting the Namoi River. The impact of dust and noise will make the land unliveable and will impact the quality of crops. It will pollute the air and have negative health impacts on residents.

By buying up vast tracts of land around the mine, and already 90 farming families have moved out, they are decimating the community. The piles of mine waste sediment will sit above the Namoi alluvial aquifer, potentially contaminating it with heavy metals. Now, when Whitehaven walks away from this mine in 25 years they will leave the void, the mine pit as a toxic water sink. That is the plan. Who will monitor that toxic sink for many years to come? Who will manage it, fence it and

remediate the damage, if indeed that were possible, is toxins move into the groundwater and the aquifers? It will be New South Wales taxpayers.

5 Whitehaven Coal has a very poor record of biodiversity preservation. The footprint of this mine includes koala habitat and koalas are predicted to be extinct in 30 years. That's on our watch. All remaining koala habitat must be preserved otherwise we will not only be witnessing koala extinction, we will be participating in it.

10 Coal is an industry in decline. Technology is rapidly changing and, as we've just heard, markets are changing. There is massive pressure from cheaper renewables. Renewable energy electricity generation is taking off. Thermal coal is being replaced by cheaper renewable alternatives and coking coal can be replaced by direct reduction to remove oxygen from the ore using carbon monoxide and hydrogen. Low emission steel could be a new form of Australian industry.

15 Research shows that there are three times as many jobs in renewable technology than in fossil fuel industry. There are renewable projects already in the pipeline which will set Australia up for prosperity in a world hungry for low carbon emissions. This Vickery coal mine is not the answer for regional jobs nor is it the answer to the
20 COVID-19 recovery. Both the UN and the EU have urged renewable-led economies recoveries.

25 Finally, there is the existential threat of climate change due to global warming which is driven largely by the burning of fossil fuels. This Vickery mine will help accelerate global warming and it must not be given approval. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

30 MR HAHN: Thank you very much, Rhonda. Any questions, Chris? Any questions, Zada, at this point? Thank you. Our next registered speaker is Keith Blanch. Good afternoon, Keith. Welcome.

MR BLANCH: Good afternoon. So I'm right to go, am I?

35 MR HAHN: You are right to go. We are listening.

40 MR BLANCH: All right. Good afternoon, Chairman and panel. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My wife and I have lived in the Nandewar Valley for the last 32 years and raised three beautiful children. Our property has no irrigation. We run sheep and cattle in conjunction with our minimum farming.

45 For many years Boggabri/Gunnedah has relied on cotton for employment and for the town businesses to survive. In the early days cotton farming had many issues. There was high water usage, users of pesticides, herbicides, the earthworks on the property, to channel water to the paddocks, tailing drains and storages. Many properties that grew cotton were on the flood plain right next to the river. I recall planes spraying crops, cotton, early in the morning and late in the afternoon. At picking time in the

evenings, the valley was covered with a layer of dust from trucks transporting cotton along our dirt roads to the gin.

5 Cotton Australia estimates the average grower uses 3744 megalitres. It takes six to seven megalitres a hectare to grow cotton. Cubbie Station in Queensland takes water from the coal goer to grow cotton in a dry, arid climate with a rainfall of 14 inches. Its storage capacity when full is equivalent to Sydney harbour. Cotton has come a long way in the last 10 years. They have round roundup ready trucking which does not require a big labour input cotton chippers. They have irrigation with pivots, 10 laterals, cutting labour/watering costs. They are going away from the old pickers to round pickers, no longer needing boll buggy drivers or multi makers. I roughly estimate, you know, they cut their requirements of labour by 70 per cent. And this has had a big effect on our small towns.

15 This is where mining has helped keep people employed. People are saying Vickery is going to kill the Namoi River. Sorry people, that started 40 years ago when it was decided to use a pipeline to irrigate from Lake Keepit to Walgett, 400 kilometres away and all towns in between. I'm not against using water. We must produce. But it has changed the beauty of the Namoi River. In the western division, the 20 government, in 1990, made owners cap their artesian bores and use poly because the open bore drains lost too much water to evaporation. It was taking a toll on the artesian water levels. Now, towns like Tamworth are thinking of using pipelines from the dams to the town because of this issue. 400 kilometres of Namoi is a lot of water loss through evaporation.

25 In 2019 Whitehaven announced it would abandon the Blue Vale site due to community concerns, taking the mine exploration one and a-half kilometres away from the Namoi River. In 1992, I remember Rio Tinto mining in this area further to the east with the dragline. It was very close to the river. When Rio Tinto was 30 mining, they left a hole and did the rehab at the end, leaving a couple of kilometres of white mountain ranges which might be concerning to others but at the time didn't worry me. When they finished the rehab they locked it up for 20 years.

35 I can understand why people are against Vickery extension and find it hard to come to terms with having this mine in their backyard. I suggest we get a drone shot over old Canyon mine, Vickery mine. They more or less join each other and both mines that were there have been put back to nature. There are two bores, one 50 metres from the end wall of the old Canyon mine, does a thousand gallons an hour. That's all the pump can do. There is a windmill supplied, 200 metres from the end wall 40 there is a well on Bungalow which joins Canyon Mine, five feet in diameter, 80 feet deep with 30 feet of water that you can drink.

In my last submission I mentioned Werris Creek Mine has only a lifetime of five years, Tara six, Rocglen and Sunnyside one. Now, Rocglen and Sunnyside are shut. 45 By the time Vickery gets into full production, Tara and Werris Creek will be getting close to shutting down. Narrabri, Baan Baa, Boggabri have benefitted from the Narrabri underground, Maules Creek and Boggabri coal. I say to the Gunnedah

Council and all the councils in the Namoi Valley that rely on coal for employment and their local business to be put on notice, to attract new industry and business to their towns. Maules Creek, Boggabri Coal and Vickery will give councils breathing space to do this because fossil fuels days are numbered. With the advance in
5 renewables in the last 10 years, it will put us in a good place in the next 20. Thank you.

MR HAHN: Thank you very much, Keith. Our next registered speaker is Sharyn Anderson. Good afternoon, Sharyn.
10

MS ANDERSON: Good afternoon. Would you like me to begin?

MR HAHN: I would. Thank you very much.

15 MS ANDERSON: Yes. All right.

MR HAHN: We're ready.

MS ANDERSON: Good afternoon. My name is Sharyn Anderson and I am a PhD
20 candidate at Charles Sturt University. The topic of my thesis is the life and work of Australian poet, Dorothea Mackellar. I was briefed to provide this independent expert advice by Lock the Gate. I produced an expert's report on Dorothea Mackellar and her connection to Kurrumbede which was tabled to the commission in February 2019.

25 In speaking to the commission today, I base my comments on an update of that report. My concerns have not changed. Today I will briefly discuss the significance of the Australian poet Dorothea Mackellar to Australian literature, culture and world heritage. I will also discuss the relationship of the writer and her poetry to the rural
30 property formerly held by her family called Kurrumbede.

Dorothea Mackellar wrote one of Australia's best known and loved poems, My Country. First published in 1908, it has proven to be an integral part of Australian culture, being anthologised, recited and quoted widely to the present day. This poem
35 is the source of her enduring fame for over 100 years. Kurrumbede was bought by Dorothea's father, Dr Charles Mackellar, in 1905 for Eric and Malcolm, Dorothea's brothers. They lived and worked on Kurrumbede and Dorothea was a frequent visitor there.

40 Dorothea loved visiting the property and being involved in farm activities as evidenced. She based a number of her poems on her pastoral experiences there and reaction to the natural environment which she found beautiful and unique. The importance of this place, Kurrumbede, to our best-known poet cannot be overstated. This is a place she loved, lived in, worked and wrote about as somewhere special, a
45 peaceful retreat and a place she identified as being especially Australian.

In my opinion Kurrumbede bears witness to the Australian literary and historical record. Its preservation, which includes maintaining the integrity of homestead, farm buildings, garden and environs must be preserved. It is my opinion that the expansion of coal mining and its infrastructure will severely impact the visual,
5 aesthetic and cultural importance of this property closely associated, as it is, with Dorothea Mackellar's life and creative work.

The poet chose to express her deepest appreciation for the land of her birth, Australia. She came to adulthood following federation in 1901 and celebrated the
10 land and newly-formed nation, Australia. She examined what it meant to be Australian, of what was to be valued as being unique, of what was to be treasured. The best of literature in any language, in any culture is universal. The enduring worth of My Country was given international recognition when it became Australia's first literary work and Mackellar the first female writer recognised by UNESCO with
15 a manuscript copy added to the Australian Memory of the World Register in 2017.

This award demonstrates to all that the love that Dorothea Mackellar expressed for her homeland is universal. It is a sentiment shared by people all over the world for the land of their birth. It is an emotion felt which makes life worth living and it is
20 part of humanity's connection to their environment. The words of My Country have passed into our language. It is part of the everyday expression of Australian life. It is regularly quoted in the daily press and invoked by our leaders in times of trouble and stress. We can all identify with the Australia Dorothea Mackellar depicted. The land of rainbow gold was also the land of beauty and terror. But despite this we
25 know that, beyond the flood and fire and famine, the land does pay us back threefold when good times return and the natural balance is restored.

It has been said that a cynic knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. However Dorothea Mackellar knew the true value of the land and loved its
30 landscape. She valued the environment of the Liverpool Plains, the Namoi River, Gunnedah and treasured her life at Kurrumbede. Core of my Heart, wrote Dorothea, Core of my Heart/My Country as she watched her sunburnt country and land of sweeping plains unfold about her, beautiful, sustaining, timeless. Australia should value our most treasured of poets and show their respect for Dorothea Mackellar, her
35 family, her poetry and her country at Kurrumbede. Values are what define a nation. It is incumbent on us to preserve her home and property for Australia and future generations so that they should know and value their country too. Thank you.

MR HAHN: Thank you very much, Sharyn. Just a question, yesterday, on the first
40 day of the hearing, we heard from Philippa Murray from the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society where she indicated that she didn't feel that the Kurrumbede Homestead should be a museum but rather that it was better to be maintained as a residence which is what the applicant for Vickery Extension is intending. I just wonder whether you would like to comment on that.

45 MS ANDERSON: Well, we have a similar situation here in Victoria, if you don't mind me drawing some analogy. It's a property called Mooramong at Skipton near

where I live in Victoria's western district. And the former owners of Mooramong, which is a two and a-half thousand heritage listed property, left the property to the National Trust. And the National Trust – Victoria National Trust run the property as an income-producing land and the homestead, Mooramong, is open to the public at various times and is maintained as a heritage homestead. It isn't actually lived in but the property is worked and the property produces income which sustains both.

However, I think for Kurrumbede, Kurrumbede certainly needs some nurturing and it certainly needs some regular interaction with it to preserve it and also to restore it because when I saw it three years ago it was in a fairly neglected state, that and the garden. So my feeling is not strong in either sense except that it needs to be safeguarded. And whether it's lived in or it becomes a museum, I guess that is for the future to decide but it certainly needs to be taken care of.

MR HAHN: Sharyn, thank you very much. We appreciate those comments.

MS ANDERSON: Thank you.

MR HAHN: Our final speaker, before we take a lunch break, is Amanda King. Amanda, good afternoon. Welcome.

MS KING: Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

MR HAHN: We can, thank you.

MS KING: Great. I've just got a choking thing so excuse me for a minute.

MR HAHN: Take your time.

MR HAHN: Thank you, Commissioners, for the opportunity to speak. I would like to first acknowledge and pay respects to the Gamilaraay people as the traditional custodians of the land on which the Vickery Mine and Extension will directly impact. I have never before participated in this process to this extent. I am moved to do so and I am in complete despair about the state of the climate, the state of our natural world, the devastating rate of biodiversity loss, the pollution and warming of the oceans, the bleaching of the reefs. I am afraid, I am terrified.

I lived a privileged life. I grew up on Norfolk Island where they recently experienced the worst drought since records began, so serious in fact that the federal government flew in a desalination plant - - -

MR HAHN: I'm sorry, we seem to have lost Amanda King's transmission. Bear with us for just a moment and we will see if we can get you back. We just had a brief break but please proceed, Amanda.

MS KING: Okay. Great. I will just go back to the beginning of that section, if that's all right. So I've lived a privileged life. I grew up on Norfolk where they

recently experienced the worst drought since records began. It was so serious that the federal government flew in a desalination plant for water – drinkable water for humans, animals and agriculture. I now live in Lismore where, at the end of last year, I was sitting outside with my then three year old daughter, under a weird orange
5 sky and ash began to fall on us. This happened for days. We had three bushfires within 30 kilometres. I think it was then that I became truly terrified. I am terrified of what is to come. I am terrified when I think about the one billion invertebrates that died in the fires. I'm terrified, I'm so sad.

10 Ash falling in Lismore is unthinkable. That is my privileged reality of climate change and I'm a lucky one. For so many others it is much, much worse. The changing climate is evident for us all to see and all to feel. The science is long settled. We know why, we understand the causes. We understand the role of fossil
15 fuels and emissions. We have been told for decades now what to expect with the change in climate. We all understand the cost of our continued commitment to coal and the archaic fossil fuel industry. We can no longer plead ignorance.

So at this point, after what we have lived through this last summer and to avoid what scientists around the world refer to as climate catastrophe, surely it would be nothing
20 more than common sense to redirect funds and energy away from fossil fuels immediately to the renewable energy space and the transition we also desperately need. Funds and energy to protect the remaining natural environment, the water, the habitat, the wildlife that is left, to preserve all arable land to ensure we're able to feed, grow in population but mostly to do all that we can to provide a liveable planet
25 for our children.

I have listened yesterday and this morning to the verbal submissions. I have heard the emotion in the voices, I have seen the stress on the faces on the people who live near the Whitehaven Mines. I found it surprising after hearing Whitehaven yesterday
30 state that they are accepted and viewed positively within the community of the north-west. For the most part, that isn't the impression I get. Throughout the day yesterday I also learned that Whitehaven has acquired more than 80 family farms in the region and now owns more than 61,000 hectares. It kind of sounds to me like they have engineered the community in which they operate and this fact probably
35 helps with their polling.

Whitehaven and others who have spoken in support of the project seem primarily focused on jobs when it has been established time and time again that there are way more jobs in renewable energy and those jobs will be created without risking the
40 Namoi River, without the destruction of wildlife habitat, without the need to buy farmers out of their property and desecrate arable land, without the need to use our most precious resource, water, to wash coal. Whitehaven wants to be trusted by the community when they have repeatedly demonstrated that they operate without respect for the farming community in which they operate, without respecting the
45 natural world and without respect for the regulations placed on them by the New South Wales government.

This has been shown time and time again. Most recently the announcement overnight that NRAR will be prosecuting Whitehaven for water theft at their Maules Creek Mine. Another prime example, just last year in Gunnedah, Whitehaven bid \$930 for a megalitre of water. The under bidder was Boggabri Coal. Farmers
5 dropped out of the groundwater bidding at 300 megalitres. How are the farmers that grow the food we eat supposed to compete with that? Essentially, Commissioners, you are being asked to consider the expansion of a coal mine that not yet exists by a fossil fuel company with a truly repugnant reputation. I ask you Commissioners, if Whitehaven was a person going for a job, would you employ them? I think not.

10 Commissioners, you find yourself in the very unique position of power where you can really make a difference. I urge you to be brave, to be sensible, to take a long-term and sustainable view, to prioritise the farmers, the communities, the heritage and ultimately the future and refuse this project. To do anything other would be
15 unconscionable. Thank you.

MR HAHN: Thank you very much, Amanda. Much appreciated. We are going to now adjourn for lunch break and we will resume at 1.30. And I just want to remind
20 you that we do welcome your written submissions. If you could please return them to the Commission by 5 pm on Friday the 10th. That would be greatly appreciated. Thank you and we will see you again at 1.30 pm today.

ADJOURNED [12.32 pm]
25

RESUMED [1.29 pm]

30 MR HANN: Good afternoon. And welcome again to the Vickery Extension Project second day of the public hearings, and I'd like to welcome Louise Somerville. Good afternoon, Louise.

35 MS SOMERVILLE: Good afternoon. Thank you, commissioners, for the opportunity to speak today against the Vickery Coal Extension Project. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are all upon and pay my respects to the elders, past, present, and future.

40 Commissioner Hann, Professor Fell, and Professor Lipman, science has revealed a global climate imbalance that requires urgent action from all nations to transition away from coal to a safer future of sustainable energy industries. To build another water hungry polluting coal mine in the parched Namoi region of New South Wales would be flouting solid scientific evidence that our planet is indeed in turmoil. As a
45 mother of four, I am asking you all to reflect upon the needs of my family, your own families and our future generations, as you consider the disasters recently witnessed throughout New South Wales and other states across Australia. Our family of six people ask that you categorically reject the Vickery Mine Extension.

Farmers depend upon bore water in the Namoi region and the water issues facing our farmers out of the northwest have just become water wars. Coal companies are outbidding farmers and paying higher prices for precious water that is needed by these farmers for crop irrigation and livestock. I personally have family who farm at
5 Blackville on the Liverpool Plains growing wheat, sunflowers, sorghum, chickpeas and raising beef cattle. Unlike coastal landscapes with dependable higher rainfall, their farming methods rely upon a secure supply of bore water.

10 Coal mines have encroached further and further upon this region and have dropped bore levels and polluted water sources. Whitehaven's nearby Maules Creek coal mine has taken water illegally, outbid local farmers for water at auction, and built pipelines from nearby farms to divert farming water for mining. The district of Boggabri and surrounds is farming land, not mining land. It has some of the richest farmland in Australia that needs, now, to be preserved for future generations, because
15 much of our nation is arid land and unsuitable for growing the quantities of food we need as our population grows. To think that Whitehaven Coal owns land nearly the size of the country of Singapore in one of our most arable food and textile regions is just shocking.

20 Who will grow our food if farming families are continually marginalised and pushed out? Local farm depopulation and a rapid loss of food growing land and plentiful water supplies is a serious threat to our future food security in Australia. As a proud member of Knitting Nannas Against Gas, the Country Women's Association of NSW, and a daughter of a farming family, I ask you to, please, prioritise future
25 farmland, water sources, and the local environment in the Namoi region above outdated dirty coal mines. Inappropriately placed coal mining divides and destroys communities.

30 When my children were small, I would read picture books to their primary school class. I vividly remember reading the poem 'My Country' by Dorothea Mackellar and seeing the small children emotionally affected by the pictures and words of this iconic Australian poem. The historic Kurrumbede Homestead that inspired Mackellar's poem in 1908 sits in the map of this proposed coal mine. It would be an outrageous decision by bureaucrats if a corporation was given the green light to
35 destroy this entire landscape and such a valuable part of our heritage, only to the magnificent homestead of Kurrumbede to take in the vista of an ugly mine pit. I would like to finish today with a piece of that poem in honour of Dorothea:

40 *Core of my heart, my country, land of the rainbow gold. For flood and fire and famine, she pays us back threefold. Over the thirsty paddocks watch. After many days the filmy veil of greenness, that thickens as we gaze. An opal-hearted country, a wilful lavish land. All of you who have not loved her, you will not understand. Though earth holds many splendours wherever I may die. I know to what brown country my homing ports will fly.*

45

Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Louise. Our next registered speaker is Nic Clyde. Good afternoon, Nic. Welcome.

5 MR CLYDE: Good afternoon, commissioners. I'm just going to attempt to share my screen. Okay. Now, does that – can you guys see that okay.

MR HANN: We can. You might enlarge it. Thank you. Yes, we can.

10 MR CLYDE: Excellent. Thank you. Thank you very much for letting me speak today. I, too, like the previous speaker, wish to object to the Vickery Extension Project, and I want to do that on the basis of 30 years experience that I have working on environment, climate and energy issues for NGOs in New South Wales, a stint in the New South Wales parliament, and also as five years as a senior policy officer in the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change. So in that – over that 30
15 year period, I have become frustrated that we've known that climate is a serious issue that needs to be dealt with, but we keep approving new coal mines in this state and export coal is our biggest contribution to the global problem.

20 So to illustrate my point, I just want to share a letter from the State Government's own Climate Change Council that was leaked to the Sydney Morning Herald in February of last year, where the Climate Council wrote to the premier asking for a meeting. In that letter – it's a very interesting letter – they said a bunch of things. But one being that, in their view – and these are eminent people, including the former New South Wales scientist of the year, an IPCC lead author – they said that New
25 South Wales remains one of the most at-risk states from climate change, including from bushfires, extreme rainfall, and increased summer heatwaves and heat extremes. So we're very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

30 I thought I'd just check in a year and four months after that letter was sent to the premier and see how we're going with just three of those risks: bushfires, extreme rainfall, and extreme heat. So in terms of heat, well, we know from the Bureau of Meteorology that last year was the warmest year on record for New South Wales. In terms of extreme rainfall, in February of this year we saw the highest multiday rainfall event that Sydney has seen for 30 years, with flood warnings up and down
35 the coast. In terms of the bushfire risk that the Climate Change Council warned us of, well, no one watching these proceedings, nor you commissioners, would not be aware that we've just had a horrific summer of bushfire, with the largest fire front in Australian history ripping through New South Wales.

40 I just wanted to share one personal example of what that means for our community. A friend of mine lives in Kangaroo Valley. They had a catering business there called Caterina. They had 78 weddings booked for this year. They spent 12 years building up that business. Here is Caterina in front of her business in Kangaroo Valley on the 4th of January this year; the entire thing destroyed, no business this year, 12 staff laid
45 off. And that is just one story of what people in our state are living with as a result of more extreme weather exacerbated by climate change, in turn, exacerbated by approvals of new export coal projects.

The premier in June of this year, commenting on a 1.5 per cent shrinkage of the New South Wales economy said, “Look, we can’t attribute that at the moment to COVID. That’s not reflected in these figures. What we should attribute to those figures is the impact of bushfires and storms.” So my back of the envelope calculation is that
5 that’s about an \$8 billion hit on the New South Wales economy. So we need to put the economic benefits of new coal projects in perspective. Eight billion dollars wiped off the value of our economy as a result of those bushfires and the floods, according to the premier.

10 Commissioners, I believe you’re in the majority if you reject this proposal. Only 14 per cent of the Australian community think that governments should focus on coal and gas. Fourteen percent of the community. I think you should join the Land and Environment Court; follow their lead consistent with New South Wales government
15 Council was sending their letter to the premier.

And, finally, commissioners, I’d just like to leave you with an observation that, you know, we really have known for 30 years that we need action. Here’s a former
20 premier of New South Wales, all the way back in June 1990. You can see that Keeling Curve there of global carbon emissions. There’s about 350 ppm back in 1990. And to quote the former premier, “the potential” – and this was in his greenhouse strategy from 30 years ago:

25 *The potential global warming caused by build-up of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere is perhaps the most challenging environmental issue to be faced in the years ahead.*

So look up that curve. You can see that’s no longer the potential global warming. That’s another 60 ppm to today. And, commissioners, I would encourage you to take
30 action where so many have failed to protect this state from the ravages of climate impacts and to reject the Vickery Coal Project. Thank you for hearing me out.

MR HANN: Thank you, Nic. Our next registered speaker is Roderick Campbell.

35 MR CAMPBELL: Thanks, commissioners. And it sounds like my new son would like to similarly express his opposition to the Vickery Coal Project. Sorry about that.

MR HANN: We can hear loud and clear.

40 MR CAMPBELL: I’m sorry?

MR HANN: We can hear loud and clear.

45 MR CAMPBELL: Excellent. I’m an economist by background. I’ve been the research director at The Australia Institute for about six years. I’ve presented at numerous similar hearings over the last 10 years. I’ve been an expert witness in most of the Land and Environment Court cases around coal in New South Wales and

Queensland over the last 10 years. And I was closely involved in the consultation around the economic – around guidelines for economic assessment of coal and coal seam gas projects in New South Wales.

5 I'm very disappointed in aspects of – with that background, I'm very disappointed in
aspects of the assessment of this project. I'll prepare a more detailed written
submission, but the key problem around the economic assessment and the later
department's assessment report – and I also include an economic peer review process
10 that has been undertaken here. The key problem with all of these assessments is that
they ignore the Paris Climate Agreement and the International Energy Agency's
sustainable development scenario on what happens to coal consumption and the
international coal trade and New South Wales coal exports when the world acts on
climate change, as the New South Wales government, Australian government and
governments around the world are committed to doing.

15 By failing to address what will actually happen to coal markets over the next couple
of decades, all of these – all of these assessment documents overlook the huge
uncertainty around the ability of the project to proceed in the medium to long term
and to provide any of the estimated benefits. A lot of the benefits around jobs,
20 incomes, royalty payment, all of these are presented in the assessments as having a
reasonable degree of certainty around them; whereas, in fact, they're highly
uncertain. If the world acts according to our stated policies, most of those benefits
are unlikely to be achieved.

25 It's incredibly uncertain that in a future where New South Wales coal exports decline
rapidly, that the Vickery Coal Project would be one of the projects that remains
operating through the remaining life of New South Wales coal exports. And by
ignoring that uncertainty, the – most of these assessment documents make it very
difficult for you to make a decision around the size of the benefits of the project
30 relative to the size of the costs. This is a key factor is my – almost all of the
assessment documentation overstates the benefits of this project and understates its
potential costs.

35 While none of these documents really assess the future under the IEA's Sustainable
Development Scenario, I do note that the recent New South Wales coal strategy in
similarly ignoring the IEA's Sustainable Development Scenario. But while it
ignored it, it did at least acknowledge that thermal coal exports will need to be
phased out in the future for particular regions of New South Wales over time. And
it's entirely unclear how approving a project like the Vickery Extension, surrounded
40 by such uncertainty, helps this process of adjusting the New South Wales coal
industry to phase out over time.

Moving on – I guess, staying on climate for one moment, one thing I'll certainly be
highlighting in our written submission is the context that the department's
45 assessment report places greenhouse gas emissions in. It states that the – where have
I got it – here – that the project scope 1 emissions would contribute about 0.028 per
cent of Australia's current annual greenhouse gas emissions. I haven't

doublechecked those figures, but that may well be the case. But it's curious that the department doesn't put any other figures in similar national context; for example, the calculated net present value of the project represents just 0.0006 per cent of Australia's GDP.

5

So despite being presented by the department as a small source of greenhouse gas emissions, relative to the size of the project, it's a large emitter of greenhouse gas. Make no mistake that per dollar of GDP, per job created, per anything, this is a highly polluting project. And that's even before consideration of scope 3 emissions, which, as I'm sure you're aware, you are still obliged to and never – or are unlikely to be prevented from considering under current and likely future legislation.

10

I'll just touch on a couple of other topics that I'll go into more detail in our written submission. There's a considerable value placed on tax payments as part of economic benefit calculations within the department's assessment report. This seems to ignore the reality that Whitehaven, according to available ATO data, has never paid company tax. The estimates that I think it's at around \$60 million net present value would be paid, flies against this fact that Whitehaven has never paid company tax and appears unlikely to do so in a future where the world acts on climate change.

20

MR HANN: Roderick, I'll ask you to wrap it up shortly, if you could, please.

MR CAMPBELL: Sure. Other points I'll highlight in our written submission are the treatment of incremental income. This has been a big problem in economic assessment of coal mines in New South Wales for many years. This – the assessment documents overstate this. The treatment of external costs are understated. And it's incredible, I guess, finally – it's incredibly disappointing that after a decade of making similar submissions that we're still having the argument within planning documents and economists related to these processes; we're still having the argument around input/output modelling and multiplier modelling. The department's assessment report merely notes the problems with these forms of modelling before repeating the proponents estimates verbatim. Input/output modelling fundamentally overstates employment creation and other benefits of projects. It's not suitable for this kind of decision making. It was never designed for this kind of decision making. This was the decision of the Land and Environment Court in 2013 in Warkworth and - - -

25

30

35

MR HANN: Thank you, Roderick.

40

MR CAMPBELL: Yes.

MR HANN: We'll need to get you to wrap it up now, please.

MR CAMPBELL: Thanks – and numerous PAC and IPC decisions since then. It's ridiculous to be still relying on figures like this, and I'll expand on all of these points in our written submission.

45

MR HANN: Thank you very much. We look forward to that. Thank you, Roderick. Our next registered speaker is Errol Darley. Good afternoon, Errol. Welcome.

5 MR DARLEY: Yes. Good afternoon, John, and good afternoon, commissioners. I am Errol Darley, and I reside at 144A. I hope you had a pleasant lunch. We watched another blast at Maules Creek; large dust cloud, and took over 30 minutes to clear. A reminder of what we may be in for. The following are extracts from my written submission, run off from the western embankment.

10 I have supplied to you a video showing the water flowing from the emplacement area into the river. This will happen again. The mine is just too close to the river and cannot be approved. I've continually questioned the rail spur. There are no plans, or no release plans at the rail spur. I'm particularly concerned about how you can drive 15 400 pylons into the aquifer and whether that will then contaminate the aquifer. The Independent Expert Scientific Committee say that the railway line should be built six times the annual exceedance probability of flooding. This is not the proposed case. Also, during your site inspection - - -

20 MR HANN: Yes. I think you might have – you need to unmute your computer, Errol. We don't have any audio.

MR DARLEY: I'll start back at rail spur.

25 MR HANN: Thank you. We can hear you.

MR DARLEY: Yes. I will start back at rail spur. As I am aware, there are still no design details of the rail spur. My interest is is how 400 pylons can be driven into the aquifer and whether this will contaminate our water supply. Also, the 30 Independent Expert Scientific Committee say the rail line to be used should be built six times the annual exceedance probability. Also, during your site inspections, did it include the length of the rail spur, and were our buildings identified? Automation: a previous speaker spoke a lot about this, so all I will add is, trucks at the moment are being fitted with automation, as I speak, and I believe all trucks are to be connected 35 and ready.

Water shortage: the DPIE planning and assessment has recommended, prior to determination, the proponent is required to ensure it has adequate water supply prior to production, then clearly says:

40 *Clearly detailing which project each water access licence supplies to –*

and following:

45 *and where a water access licence is being counted against multiple projects, how much of the total is allocated to each project.*

The aquifer interference policy then requires the proponent to hold sufficient water entitlements prior to approval. The proponent shall ensure that it has sufficient water for all stages of the project. How can the Planning Department recommend approval before this critical requirement is even commenced?

5

It is now public knowledge that charges of water theft by the proponent are to be brought before the court. Those before the court are given a presumption of innocence, however, it is extremely disturbing that the offences, if proven, have actually occurred over three years. This brings to doubt if the proponent is a fit and proper person to be granted a mining licence.

10

The desperate shortage of water for their current mine was never more evident than in November and December last year. B-double trucks were using a small country road to deliver water to the Maules Creek Mine. Soon after, road trains were added to the fleet. How can approval be given for road trains while farmers are being charged for carting hay around on much wider roads. With one lane of the road – then one lane of the road is excavated to lay a pipeline to the mine. When was approval given for this work to actually happen? Was the replacement bore the same depth and diameter of the old bore, as is a requirement for all irrigators?

15

Methane: nobody seems to count methane, which is emitted by the coal once exposed. Why is this continually being ignored? It's because governments don't want you to know, because these emissions have to be accounted for in Australia. Additional coal resources: the question was raised, additional coal resources to the south and north of the mine and why these are not included in the project.

20

Whitehaven doesn't answer that question. The answer, or what Whitehaven tells investors, there's 735 million tonne of resource at Vickery, and at Tarrawonga, another 110 million tonne, taking the resource to 845 million tonne. This is why the proponent is so determined for this expansion and rail spur to be approved, and it is just the starting point of development in this vicinity.

25

Noise level limits: why do residences close to the rail overpass have to endure more noise than those who live elsewhere. Why do I have to endure 52 decibels and at Brandy Hill, residents only have to endure 45, and that's from 5 am in the morning. Are we being discriminated against? Also, in the Whitehaven submission report, they measure the noise levels at the viaduct at Boggabri for the Maules Creek Mine. Readings are between 71 and 86 decibels 400 metres from the viaduct. Our property at 114B is 450 metres from the rail line, and we are expected to endure a sleep disturbance level of 52 decibels. How will the levels of 41 – 71 to 86 decibels be reduced to 52 decibels in just a mere 50 metres. As I wait, listening to the train 5.7 kilometres away, I know that someone is being – I know someone is being dishonest about the expected noise levels.

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Overburden and placement impacting water quality and consolidation: I know this has been talked about a lot yesterday. Will Whitehaven – if this is to proceed, will Whitehaven test for acid forming material, redirect autonomous trucks, and comply with the water quality objectives. These directives are just meaningless

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words which will never be complied with and are just there to gain approval. No department will even be there, present, to ensure compliance. This is merely hocus pocus which will be replaced with a minor modification. And what will be the final height of the western embankment overlying the alluvium. Well, the embankment at
5 Maules Creek, with minor modifications, has grown from an AHD 280 metres to 420 metres.

Zone of affectation: the Department of Planning has shown no regard to any of the lessons that they should have learnt with the development of the Maules Creek Mine.
10 Mines of this size, after a period of operation, show a zone of affectation of at least eight to 10 kilometres. Breaches are generally reported by the public and acted upon later, well after the breach has occurred. I've seen photos of the dust along haul roads when water was in critical short supply. The impact of the mine will be worn by a few residents, unfortunately, near this development. And if approved, I appeal
15 to you, commissioners, to ensure that the conditions to operate give us protection. It's disappointing that those who will be affected by this proposal weren't given some time during their last visit to the mine site.

The mine needs constant inspections from a locally based government department,
20 including noise, dust and water meter inspections, without prior knowledge of their visit. The VLAMP policy has to be rewritten to give a fair outcome for impacted landholders. The valley now has three mines, four if you count Werris Creek, and five if Shenhua becomes operational. The local workforce has been exhausted. Ninety farms are now owned by the mine, reducing the permanent population of the
25 area. Mines co-existing with agriculture is a contradiction. Farms undergo intergenerational development. Mines only offer short gain by extraction and leave a final void with an ever-increasing salty lake at approximately sea level. The mine will do nothing except extract water to wash coal and water roads, while polluting the air with dust, carbon dioxide, methane, and create noise, and transect the
30 floodplain with the no-plans rail spur.

It is no coincidence that those who propose the mine and have recommended approval just happen to live a long way away from the proposal. The community has not been supported by the department's presence. This has allowed the proponent to
35 disregard planning compliance. And the Department of Planning has allowed this and seems to accept what Whitehaven tells them. I have no trust in Whitehaven, the Planning Department and in government, so I am relying on you to reject this dirty, dirty proposal. Thank you.

40 MR HANN: Thank you, Errol. Just a couple of questions. You mentioned 144B, the residence there is 440 metres from the proposed rail spur. Earlier on you mentioned, I think, that your residence is 144A. I just wanted to clarify if that's the case, but also, what your estimated distance from 144A is to the rail spur.

45 MR DARLEY: Well, we're approximate – we live at 144A, and that's about 600 metres. And 144B is 450 metres from the railway line.

MR HANN: Thank you.

MR DARLEY: You can see, we haven't looked in the map yet.

5 MR HANN: Yes. No, I just don't have the map in front of me, but I just wanted to hear from you, your estimate. Zada, do you have any questions?

PROF LIPMAN: No. No.

10 MR HANN: Chris?

PROF FELL: No.

MR HANN: No. Thank you very much, Errol. Much appreciated.
15

MR DARLEY: Okay. Thanks, John.

MR HANN: And our next speaker is Jennifer Darley who just swapped seats.

20 MS DARLEY: We do.

MR HANN: Thank you. Welcome.

MS DARLEY: Good afternoon - - -
25

MR HANN: Welcome.

MS DARLEY: Okay. Thank you. Good afternoon, commissioners. I'm Jennifer Darley, also from property 144A and B. And I believe my family will be greatly
30 affected by Whitehaven's application for the Vickery Mine extension. We've been dealing with the mining industry since Coalworks first contacted us back in 2009. And we were told, then and there, that we'd have to leave our farm, as we were going to be impacted. We are now dealing with a different company, Whitehaven, and lucky for us, this time, unbelievable, we were told that we will not be affected at
35 all.

Firstly, I'm concerned about the original mining licence granted to Coalworks in 2009, Vickery exploration licence 7407. The then Minister for Mining was the infamous Ian Macdonald, and we all know how he operated, eventuating in jail time
40 for illegal deals. Coalworks were granted this licence. It was quickly sold on to Whitehaven. No one has ever questioned this licence, who really benefitted it, and was it really investigated, or again, was this just a sweet deal for certain stakeholders. I believe this first licence should be thoroughly investigated before any decisions is
45 made on this project.

Back in December 2019, the Department of Planning organised a meeting with affected landholders in Tamworth. I knew then we were planning – they were

planning to agree with this application. Independent water, noise and dust experts were present, giving us an explanation of their findings and, at the same time, trying to convince us that we would not be affected. A very worrying point was when I asked these independent experts how they arrived at their conclusion. Did they visit
5 the site, talk to any of the landholders, or was it just a desktop analysis? They all confirmed it was definitely a desktop analysis, and I was told they could not possibly visit the site. It would be too time consuming and impractical.

Given this is a state significant project, it is disappointing that the government did
10 not feel it necessary to thoroughly investigate, but rather, gather documentation to pass the project. Why then did it take the department that long to announce their approval? Because on meeting the approval by the department, they've now changed certain criteria, such as baseline, noise level from 35 decibels to 40, and ordered the sleep disturbance levels as well.

15 Further, I'm appalled that the government, as well as the proponent, and even our local council, are using COVID-19 as an excuse to get this project over the line. This is not and should not be about jobs and how much money everyone will benefit from. It is really about how the environment will suffer, and will it be sustainable in
20 the future when mining has finished raping our land. If this mine doesn't go ahead, it will not stop jobs, as they will still be able to mine, and current employees should maintain their jobs, unless, of course, Whitehaven are going to implement autonomous vehicles, unless employees are needed. But we are assured by the ES – by – in the EIS that Whitehaven are not going to do that. But in different documents,
25 they boast about the introduction of these autonomous vehicles.

Mining in this district has a span of – a lifespan of, I've been told, 25 years, but agriculture is here forever and should be here for many generations. My family and I
30 and many other farming families are expected to carry on our lives as if it is normal. No way is this possible. We have continual meetings. We have immense reading to do, to keep up with new information. We have to employ our own experts to help us to oppose any large company; it's practically impossible, otherwise. We produce valued and correct documentations on faults that we found and why the mine should not go ahead, only for our planning department to use this information and change
35 restrictions that were originally in the EIS. I've mentioned this earlier.

We have been told that Whitehaven intend to build a railway line across our floodplain, which has a very good aquifer that's not very deep. We still haven't seen a completed plan of this railway, but we've been informed that it is on raised pylons.
40 This will be the longest raised railway in Australia, and we've estimated that 400 pylons will be needed to be drilled, again, on this wonderful productive land. What is more alarming, the railway, which was quoted by our last project officer has been underestimated by a considerable amount, which makes their economic forecasts so much better. Their main reason for going west, to travel across the floodplain, than
45 to go north, with the rail line, saying it would be cheaper. Amazing what companies can do with their numbers to help their cause.

I've had two children who have both completed their degrees in agriculture at university and decided they like the future on our farm. It's a great concern to myself and my husband, will our farm be viable for them and their families. It's fabulous that the Federal Government is halving the cost of agricultural degree, but what good would that be for the youth if there are no suitable farmlands for them here in the Boggabri district. Will my children have to keep fighting against every new application that Whitehaven put in, as I know there's another extension being in the Narrabri district at present. This is unfair and a great demand on one's own wellbeing to keep fighting against companies that seem to be able to say and do anything to get approval.

At present, Australia is supposed to be a democratic country, but the more we are aware of what's going on in politics and big business, the general public have no say whatsoever. This needs to change and I ask you here today, commissioners, to really look at the grievances and the real evidence of the landholders and not get caught up in the glossy pictures and the words that are presented by Whitehaven, and help us to forge agriculture into the future, as in Boggabri, it is looking to be completely forgotten. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Jennifer. Our next registered speaker is Sue Higginson. And she's representing the Boggabri Farming and Community Group. Welcome, Sue.

MS HIGGINSON: Thank you. Good afternoon, commissioners. I'm a public interest environmental lawyer. I'm the former CEO and principal solicitor of the Environmental Defenders Office. The Boggabri Farming and Community Group is made up of family farmers and members of the Boggabri community. Some of its members are the closest neighbours to the proposed mine site. From where they stand, this mine is objectionable on its merits and should be refused. And from where I stand, commissioners, I see some significant legal problems, particularly, in relation to water.

We have three preliminary matters to raise. Firstly, reasserting what barrister Robert White imparted to the Commission yesterday, the department's assessment report is not the starting point for your determination. In Mr White's words, that is bad law. Like all administrative decisions, the starting point for the Commission's determination is the written law; in this case the EP&A Act, and it does not say the assessment report is the starting point of your determination.

Secondly, this proposed mine is properly characterised as a greenfield mine on lands where there is currently no mine whatsoever. There's no contention that there's an existing instrument of approval on part of the same lands as the proposed mine. And while legal commencement has meaning for the existing approval, it has no meaning or operation for the proposed new mine.

Thirdly, back to the assessment report, the entirety of the assessment report assesses the new mine in the context of the impacts of the paper approval as if those impacts

exist and are already experienced. It's this narrative that has provided a large part of the basis for the department's ultimate evaluation that the proposed Vickery Coal Mine, on balance, is approvable. This is a fabricated balance. From a planning law perspective, unfortunately, the report is an assessment exercise, which is at best
5 unhelpful and, otherwise, misleading and disingenuous.

You will receive a comprehensive submission from the Farming and Community Group that details each ground upon which it objects. The economic justification for the proposed mine is redundant, speculative, unreliable, and because we are well and truly on the path of structural decline of the industry, it's far too risky. You've heard
10 the evidence from the independent experts to support this contention. Whitehaven's CEO recently said, and an investor meeting, coal prices would have to rise for the Whitehaven board to make a financial decision on Vickery.

The social impacts of the proposed mine are far too significant for the communities of Narrabri and Boggabri. The Boggabri – in fact, Boggabri will die a certain mining town death. You've heard it. The doubtful claimed 450 jobs amount to around 1.2 per cent increase in job availability for the region, and evidence shows, there's no translation of these jobs to the main communities of impact, Boggabri and Narrabri.
15 You've heard real evidence from the communities of impact that they are experiencing saturation from mining. The Narrabri council's mayor's testimony on behalf of her community is very significant. There's currently not a healthy existence – coexistence between mining and long held traditional agricultural base to be seen in the local environment and community. There is a coexistence of sorts, but
20 it's currently hanging in the balance. This mine is certain to tip that balance in the wrong way too far.
25

The – as you've heard from Cotton Australia yesterday and others before you, the proposal poses a serious risk of harm to the alluvium, a water source of great
30 importance to this region. The issue hasn't been dealt with; it's been brushed aside on the basis that the will be placed on the Maules hard rock formation. The problem hasn't been addressed. The group's submission will deal with this in more detail, including the fact that actually only half of the risk has been identified. There are greater risks. The Farming and Community Group submission addresses further
35 important matters, such as the coal quality analysis, and questions whether it can in fact still be relied upon, given the testing laboratory used is ASL, who is in the midst of a fraud scandal. It addressed koalas, climate change. I simply have not got the time to touch on that. The landholders to the southwest – I'm just going to share my screen, if I can. Let's see if this works. You've seen this map. Can you see this,
40 commissioners?

MR HANN: Yes, we can. If you can enlarge it. Thank you very much, Sue.

MS HIGGINSON: I will give that a go. I'm not that brilliant on the I'm going
45 to keep talking, because – I'm sorry, I've got 10 minutes, and I'm going to go two minutes over. Hopefully – look, you have seen this map before. It was sent to you in a letter in March, and it was shown to you by one of the landholders yesterday:

Janet, the young farmer, mother and teacher, who, with her husband, runs a successful mixed-cropping family farm business. Janet and Dave Watt are the face of everything good about farming. Along with James Barlow and the rest of these landholders, they are farming these lands for us and for our future. Family farms
5 are the backbone of sustainable agriculture, because they are more adaptable and diverse than crash and burn large scale enterprise. And in turn, they're an essential guarantee in a local and regional economy. You really need to understand their value. I ask you to please look carefully. We're talking about the green identified lands on this map, that I hope you can see.

10 MR HANN: We can. Thank you.

MS HIGGINSON: I ask you to please look carefully. You've heard from some of these landholders. All, but one, has been told consistently by Whitehaven Coal, they
15 will not be impacted. One will be provided voluntary acquisition rights. You must see something wrong here. As a lawyer, I've worked with farmers on the edge of mines for over a decade. This is a setup for disaster and the infliction of serious land use conflict and inequity. Models are and can be flawed, and it's unreasonable to accept promises from mining companies to stay within noise and dust limits in
20 circumstances like this, where there is absolutely no margin for error. The problem here is not in the detail, it's right here in front of us. There are discretions, standards and models, but there's basic geography and the experience of the impacts when an open cut coal mine, a CHPP, and a rail line for coal trains is constructed within one, two, three, five and seven kilometres away from your home.

25 The insult to injury in the assessment report is that there is a conclusion that the noise and dust impacts of this new greenfield mine are somehow acceptable because they are not much greater than the existing mine. Remember, there is no existing mine. There are currently no such impacts being experienced by these landholders. It's just
30 not fair or reasonable to compose such unmitigated impacts on these landholders. Whitehaven Coal has had six years to try and redress this. The VLAMP provides what best practice to entail in such circumstances, and honest, good faith open negotiation to seek to come to an acceptable agreement. Not one of these landholders has a negotiated agreement in place. The Commission can't ignore this
35 like the department and Whitehaven have. I've asked the Commission on two occasions to visit these landholders and to discuss this predicament with them directly. That invitation is open.

40 But, commissioners, water is where the line needs to be drawn. This is one of the most constrained water resource areas in New South Wales. There is not enough water for this mine. The Farming Group submission provides you with the technical detail about the water balance, and Dave, who will speak after me, will spell it out in some detail. I won't do that here, but I will tell you is that we are in the order of
45 around 4000 megs short.

So what does that actually mean for the task at hand for you, the commissioners. Firstly, it doesn't mean what the department suggests; that is, that it is a mere

consideration – a mere – sorry. What it doesn't mean is that it's merely a commercial miss for Whitehaven, which would be regulated under the Water Management Act. This is not correct. And, commissioners, respectfully, be very careful. DPI Water correctly contended that the proponent needs to confirm that it
5 has enough water entitlement for the project, including, arranging for an impact assessment of the proposed borefield in zone 4. Whitehaven responded, "No, under the aquifer interference policy, we just need to show, during the planning assessment, that these licences can be acquired if development consent is granted." Well, Whitehaven's correct to the extent that this is stated in the aquifer interference
10 policy, but the aquifer policy provides much more, and Whitehaven has not – sorry – I'm getting a message from your technical people. I hope everything's all right.

MR HANN: No – no. We can see you and hear you. Thank you, Sue. No
15 problem.

MS HIGGINSON: Thank you.

MR HANN: Please proceed.

20 MS HIGGINSON: It's terribly distracting. Okay. So – sorry. Whitehaven basically has contended, "No, under the aquifer interference policy, we just need to show during the planning process that we can acquire these licences." They're correct to some extent, but their policy provides much more. And Whitehaven Coal has not satisfied the requirements to the extent needed by you, the commissions.

25 The policy requires Whitehaven to make an accurate prediction of the total amount of water that will be taken on an annual basis. Properly interpreted, this is to understand whether the proponent is able to hold sufficient entitlements so that the determining authority can properly assess this impact. Whitehaven hasn't done this.
30 It's consistently underestimated the total water that would be required. And absolutely, while the aquifer interference policy provides that, on an accurate prediction, if you still fall short, you may supplement your shortfall by heading to the market. But what is clearly stipulated in the policy is that it requires that the costs and ability to undertake this sort of trade, ie, market depth, is properly understood,
35 and that the impact of this is considered. So the proper interpretation to be applied by the Commission is that it does provide for shortfall contingencies, only on the basis that (a) an accurate prediction of total amount of water has been provided, and (b) market depth is properly understood.

40 We're very concerned about what Mr Flynn said to you on the 18th of June. He – firstly, while he admitted that Whitehaven does not have enough water and it will need to rely on licenced groundwater to meet its demand and additional licences in the open market, he then explained that records show that between five and seven megs of zone 4 alluvial groundwater has been traded in the market. And he says,
45 "this is much greater than our need". He also said – and this is very concerning, commissioners – he also said that the borefield has been modelled on rates exceeding 2000 megalitres from that borefield.

I'll tell you why this is very concerning, because, firstly, we don't – we haven't seen any of that modelling. We haven't seen that balancing. But really importantly and fundamentally, the water sharing plan actually prohibits that type of extraction. I refer you to clause 47(2)(b) of the 2019 Sharing Plan and 45(2)(b) of the 2003
5 Sharing Plan. It stipulates a dealing is limited to 600 megs per year per square kilometre. So compounding the seriousness of this late revelation – because we've been questioning for a long time, commissioners, where will the water come from. And compounding the seriousness of this late revelation is the ill-informed and grossly misleading references to market depth in zone 4.

10 It is the fact that trades within zone 4, to which Mr Flynn refers, have taken place. But, commissioners, these are mostly inhouse peppercorn trades between the same businesses trading over properties. The members of the Farming and Community Group are players in this water market. They guarantee to you, commissioners, that
15 Mr Flynn's assertions to suggest that there is depth in the market and all that connotes around water availability and security for the proposed Vickery Mine is misleading and is unreliable. If the Commission has any doubt about this, we strongly suggest, call a water broker; verify how this market is actually working and has been working. Market depth - - -

20 MR HANN: Sue, I'll have to ask you to wrap it up. We're a fair way over time now. But if you could please finalise your presentation.

25 MS HIGGINSON: Thank you. I've just got one more paragraph.

MR HANN: Thank you.

MS HIGGINSON: I will close on this: even if there is some scope in that market, commissioners, the average licence entitlement is 127 megs. For Whitehaven Coal
30 to procure the sort of deficit we calculate, they'd be required to obtain somewhere in the order of 30 of these licences. That's up to 30 farmers who would have to either sell their water from their farms or more likely, their farms as a whole. You can't detach water from a farm. It drastically reduces all value.

35 In the unlikely event that some of this water became available – it's a serious matter for the Commission – this water would be taken from the state's agricultural production. This is the impact, commissioners, that remains unassessed as part of this project. The Commission can't reasonably let this significant impact remain unassessed. It's a requirement under the policy, and it's a requirement under 4.15 of
40 the Act. To fall into the legal erroneous path the department and Whitehaven suggest is open, and for this impact to remain unassessed, it's not just legally risky, it would lead to a state-imposed land use conflict of a dangerous nature.

45 And I finish here, commissioners, the evidence of this warning is what we have already experienced in relation to Whitehaven Coal's Maules Creek operations. You heard it from the community representatives made sick by what happens when Whitehaven Coal runs dry. It becomes a warzone. The perverse inflation of the

market, outbidding of farmers with the little supplementary water that's available, and leaving farmers out to dry when they can least afford it, overnight acquisitions of entire farms to get access - - -

5 MR HANN: Thank you, Sue. We need to wrap it up now, because we've got some – quite a number of speakers to follow. But we appreciate your presentation.

MS HIGGINSON: Certainly, if you have any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

10 MR HANN: Chris, any questions?

PROF FELL: No.

MR HANN: Zada?

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PROF LIPMAN: No.

MR HANN: No, we don't. Thank you very much, Sue.

20 MS HIGGINSON: Thank you for your time.

MR HANN: Thank you. Our next registered speaker is David Watt. Good afternoon, David.

25 MR WATT: Afternoon, commissions.

MR HANN: Welcome. We're ready to go.

MR WATT: Can you hear me?

30

MR HANN: Yes, we can.

MR WATT: Good afternoon. Thank you. Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to present here today. My name is David Watt. I'm a farmer and a member of the Boggabri Farming and Community Group. At the onset, I would just like to point out that every farmer that has spoken at this hearing in favour of the Vickery Coal Mine has a lease agreement with Whitehaven Coal, and they are compelled to speak favourably of the mine.

40 My wife Janet presented yesterday and highlighted our personal situation, so I won't go over that again. There are so many reasons why you shouldn't let this mine go ahead in this location, but due to time constraints, I'm going to focus on water and, more particularly, the site water balance for the mine. Please refer to my written submission and that of the Boggabri Farming and Community Group for more information that I am unable to present to you today. I will go through some simple calculations on some slides, so please stay with me. I think it's crucial that you understand just how dire this is.

In February this year, I submitted a report to the DPIE to demonstrate just how far out the predicted water budget for the mine was. I don't claim to be a water expert, but I have a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the University of Sydney, and I've spent the last 18 years working with water. It was obvious to me through the recent drought that the proponents had grossly overestimated the availability of water on their licences and underestimated the volume of supplementary water required to keep the mine operational through dry times. I've now updated this report, and it's based on data and comments and conditions from the DPI assessment report. I'm just going to share my screen here. Can you get that?

MR HANN: Yes, thank you. You might like to enlarge it for us. That would help. Yes, that's good. Excellent.

MR WATT: That's all right.

MR HANN: Yes.

MR WATT: Okay. The site and water balance provided in the EIS uses 98 climate sequences over 26 years to produce a range of probability graphs and tables, which are used to present the case that the mines external water demands will not exceed the current water licences held for the Vickery Project. This approach to assessing water demands fails to assess recognise the correlation between increased mine water demands, increased evaporation, reduced inflows and low or zero allocations that commonly occur under dry conditions. It incorrectly assumes that the river allocation, or the AWD, will be 76 per cent every year, as this is the long-term average. They have failed to consider the worst-case scenario, one that seems to be increasingly common in the current times.

August the 7th this year will mark three years of zero allocation for general security licences in the Namoi River. I'll just work on this slide. There we go. The estimated water demands for the mine are exceptionally low and are almost impossible to quantify on a yearly basis from the information provided in the surface water assessment. It does, however, provide a total demand over the life of the mine, so we can work out the average yearly demand of 1617 – and seven megalitres. When this is compared to the predicted water demands for the nearby Boggabri Coal Mine, it highlights just how low it is. And even more so when we look at Maules Creek consumption from last year. As you can see, they used a total of 5550 megalitres last calendar to produce a total of 9.7 million tonnes of ROM coal.

One thing to note here is the amount of water used through the washery. Last year, Maules Creek used a total of 3428 megalitres to produce their 9.7 million tonnes of ROM coal. This equated to 353 litres per tonne, yet the site water balance provided for Vickery uses a figure of 120 litres per tonne for their models. This is only 34 per cent of the actual experienced usage at Maules Creek, and they have stated that – sorry – and they have stated that water consumption in the coal handling plant is not determinant on climatic conditions. Based on these figures, Vickery is more likely to

require almost 4600 megalitres for their coal handling and processing plant alone when at full production.

2019 was the peak of the drought here at Boggabri, following two years of below
5 average rainfall. So really, it's the best year to assess the demands of the mine under
a worse case scenario. So if we now take into consideration the climatic conditions
of 2019, with the mine at full production, which it is important to note is something
the model in the EIS can't actually do because 2019 will be at the end of their 26-
10 year climate sequence and forecast production will have gone down to 1.1 million
tons. If this was my project and I wanted to accurately assess water demands, rather
than to rely on a forecast model which, as we've seen, is obviously inaccurate, I will
look at the demands of actual operations which are currently running under the same
climatic conditions.

15 In my original submissions, DPIE, I looked at the water budget for Boggabri Coal.
However, the proponent objected to this on the grounds that it was unclear what
climate scenarios Boggabri's demands were based on and that the site water demands
will vary each year due to climatic conditions. However, we now have the benefit of
hindsight and we can look at the water demands of one of the proponents' own mines
20 producing the same amount of coal in the same area and under the exact climatic
conditions of 2019.

So, now, to look at the inflows for the Vickery site water balance. We have 175-
megalitre harvestable right. This is the maximum legal volume of out of pit rain
25 capture. With only 235 millimetres total rainfall for Boggabri in 2019, it is very
unlikely that they would have received this much in the inflows, but it is difficult to
calculate as it is dependent on infiltration rates, soil moisture and rainfall intensity, so
I have given them the best case scenario, 519 megalitres is the pit capture. Again,
hard to calculate so we assume 100 per cent runoff, also the maximum pit area, 518
30 megalitres is the pit intercepted groundwater inflows. This is the maximum amount
modelled over the life of the mine so, again, best case scenario for the mine water
budget.

This gives us a total of 1212 megalitres and it is very conservative, as I haven't even
35 factored in losses in evaporation and seepage here. Therefore, if this mine was
approved and running in 2019, it would need a further 4338 megalitres to operate.
That is a deficit of 4338 million litres. Paul Flynn stated in his presentation
yesterday during drought when water is short that they can save water by bypassing
coal and other measures. Well, these figures are from his mind using his water
40 during the worst drought we have ever experienced. As I mentioned previously, the
Namoi River allocation is zero, so all of the external water will have to come from
the zone 4 borefield. This is more than 11 times what the proponent estimates their
worst case zone 4 requirements would be.

45 This slide here represents – is a representation of zone 4 groundwater requirement
provided by the proponent in the EIS. The size of the dot is relative to the volume of
the groundwater – of the allocation. Sorry. If this mine was operational last year,

this is what it would've looked like. The DPIE in its assessment report acknowledges that the available volume of water may not be sufficient to satisfy demands in periods of dry conditions. DPIE's recommendation that the proponents commercial risk if they are short of water and that they can just go and buy water on the open market like any other commercial enterprise is actually offensive. It was
5 their job to assess this project on its merits and since they have failed to do so, it is now yours, Commissioners.

10 Realising the full water demands for the project has impacts that will affect the net justification of the project. Increasing the volume pump from the bore field for this project by up to 4000 megalitres will exceed the minimal drawdown thresholds of the Aquifer Interference Policy, especially on the high potential groundwater dependent ecosystem directly east of the bore field and potentially on the Boggabri town bores. As Sue has just explained, it will also exceed the 600 megalitre per year per square
15 kilometre rule under the water sharing plan and it will multiply the impact of this project on the surrounding agricultural industry.

20 My irrigated crop production has already halved this year because of Whitehaven Coal. Previously, I've bought temporary water to top up production, but I'm now priced out of the water market by the mine. As Sue has also just explained, the zone 4 water market is very small and tightly held. Whitehaven entering into the market has seen prices I pay for water more than treble over the last couple of years to a point where it is no longer viable to grow a crop.

25 Condition B39 is a quasi-condition. To expect the proponent to scale back production and put employees out is unrealistic and unreasonable. It is also unfair on the agricultural community and others who are trying to protect the resource and we have seen time and time again that it doesn't work. It merely serves as a justification for the approving body to approve a project without considering the peak water
30 demands under the increasing likelihood of extreme droughts. It is cruel to, again, impose this condition on this community.

35 Finally, I would just like to add something very important about the project justification. The proponent and the DPIE have continually said that this mine is predominantly metallurgical production. Mike Young said yesterday it will be 70 per cent metallurgical, 30 per cent thermal. To date, we have seen absolutely zero evidence of this. It appears to be a spurious claim. As you can see from this slide presented to shareholders in 2018, Whitehaven Coal describes the quality of coal at
40 Vickery as similar to Maules Creek, as you would expect.

45 This final slide shows the actual mix of thermal coal and met coal sold by Whitehaven Coal from its other mines in the same basin, most of which are only a few kilometres from Vickery. Why then should Vickery be any different? I urge the IPC to disregard any suggestions that the quality of coal will be any better than any other mines in the Gunnedah Basin and don't let the proponent use this for justification of the project. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, David. Just a request, if you haven't already, if you could please send through that slide presentation and any additional supplementary submission that accounts for your - - -

5 MR WATT: Yes.

MR HANN: - - - presentation to us, that would be very helpful.

10 MR WATT: Absolutely. We will be submitting that. Yes.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, David.

MR WATT: Thank you.

15 MR HANN: Just one second. Sorry. I think we've got a question from Chris Fell, if you could just wait a moment, David.

PROF FELL: Sorry, David.

20 MR WATT: Yes.

PROF FELL: Does your analysis make any allowance for water reuse around the site?

25 MR WATT: The assumptions we've made here are that there's been, you know, little to no water stored based on the previous two years of, you know, serious drought conditions. I think we had – it was in the 300 millimetre rainfall for 2018 so, you know, the – we calculated there was a deficit of over 2000 megalitres in 2018, so we are assuming there that there's been no carry on water, if that's what you're
30 talking about.

PROF FELL: Okay. Thank you.

35 MR HANN: Any questions, Zada? Thank you very much, David.

MR WATT: Thank you.

MR HANN: Our next speaker is Eric Hannan. Good afternoon, Eric.

40 MR HANNAN: Good afternoon. Can you hear me all right?

MR HANN: We can.

45 MR HANNAN: Right. Look, I'll start. My name is Eric Hannan, my wife, Carol, and I wish to thank the IPC for the time to listen to our statement and the impacts of this new Vickery mining extension that will have on our lives. Nothing has changed since the first time that I've addressed you at the public hearing in Gunnedah except

the disappointment and the disgust has grown a thousandfold in the way that Whitehaven have approached this proposal mine. We own Lanreef Horse Agistment for 25 years. This is our retirement. The proposed railway line will be 350 metres from us. They still say that we won't hear it or see it.

5

Thirdly, despite the impact noted in the EA report, they don't care about lights, noise, coal dust or pollution. Continuously, we have said to them, whilst we are not happy about the 4.5 million tons per year mine, we acknowledge that they have the right to mine it. However, we are totally against this massive greenfield mine which will affect us, our homes, our retirement, our business, our legacy to our children, our beautiful river and river flats, our neighbours and our community. The list goes on and on, but what? We don't need this at the moment. There are plenty of mines north of here wishing to expand. Why destroy Kurrumbede?

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Four point five million tons to 13 million tons per annum. It's purely by the most unethical, incompetent company in the North West. We have continually said to Whitehaven that if they're going to proceed, then we require a negotiated agreement between them and us prior to the approval is granted. We cannot and should not be expected to subsidise a multinational company prior to its pursuit for wealth. That's not Australia. Fifteen times they came to our – came to us to get us to sign a confidentiality agreement. Once a month they come to our house, disrupting and annoying us. The day my wife came out hospital, they were here. All the stress over 12 months, so we signed it. We both are in our 70s. They said that we would – they would talk to us after we signed the confidentiality agreement. We never heard from them again until recently. They've had years to come to an agreement that would satisfy both parties, but they have made no genuine attempt to listen and address all our concerns or negotiate.

20

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30

After a great deal of thought and money, we have provided Whitehaven with a heads of agreement based on the expert advice and we felt gave us the confident movement forward that our rights as Australians were protected. Whitehaven simply ignored it. Why is up – why is it up to us to come with a way to reach an agreement with Whitehaven? It is their project that is going to destroy us, not them. If having to reach an agreement with the Hannans make this project unviable, then how the hell can it be classed as a state-significant project?

35

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45

I'm not going into Whitehaven's social environment track record today. I think it speaks for itself. Everyone said how bad it is. It makes the Bando Biking Club look like beginners. But I implore you, if you're going to grant this project approval, then you, as the approved body, put the onuses back where it should lie and insist to Whitehaven that they reach a negotiated agreement with the Hannans prior to approval being granted. We have been trying for years to reach an agreement. Whitehaven just ticked the boxes. This must stop. We feel this is non-negotiable. Just look at the record with the public. The EPA fined Whitehaven at Maules Creek on noise: 30 per cent and plus. A few dollar fined, and they continue on. I'm sure there's another one or two big ones coming up. They just don't care.

I have it in writing 132, which is us – or our place – will exceed the noise level. God knows about the dust. We have told them if a horse gets out on the road because of the light shining on them and kills someone in a car, then what? There is houses in town near the railway line. Their rooves are black with coal dust. They can't use
5 their rainwater tanks. This railway line is six and a half metres in the air, 83
carriages long and three diesels pulling it. They have got rid of the two men that
came out here and told us nothing. Two new blokes are on the books now. At least
they talk and treat us like people, not like dirt. We gave them the same heads of
agreement which we gave to Whitehaven on the 20th of March 2019. 20th of March
10 2019. I – they don't take as long to do something. We want this in writing before
they get the go-ahead. Please help us, IPC. Don't leave it until after it starts. Look
at what they did to the people at Maules Creek. They still don't have solutions.

I'm not against mining, but I am against killing our rivers, our birds and our koalas.
15 Four and a half kilometres along our river, two kilometres across river flats, of
course they'll cause damage. They can't even look after 400 metres where they cross
our main road. Here's the coal that falls off their covered trucks, and, if you would –
if you could just pull the slide up. Here – now, here's the guideposts that are on the
main road. You can't even see any reflector. On the other side of the guidepost,
20 which is the white one, you can see the reflector. Have a look at the sludge just
down the side of the road. This is 400 metres. That's what runs into our river. Do
they care? Not a bit. They don't care. They will kill our water, because look at
Maules Creek. It's a disgrace. They're buying water from other mines and pinching
water for Maules Creek, and now they want to start another mine with no water.

25
Once this mine is finished, it will leave 250 hectares of open hole, which is 10 times
the size that's our place. 617 acres of pure sludge for the sludge to go, and
anything that drinks that could probably die. This is Kurrumbede. Dorothea
Mackellar the poem-writer, she would turn in her grave if she knew what was
30 happening. Just please look at their record. That's what I'm asking. Help us all stay
here. 48 years we've been here with no railway line and no mine. I've worked on
Kurrumbede for 40 years. Eric and Carol Hannan. Thank you. Is there any
questions?

35 MR HANN: Do you have any questions, Chris? Zada? Thank you very much,
Eric. Much appreciated.

MR HANNAN: Thank you.

40 MR HANN: Thank you. Our next speaker is Ron Campbell. Good afternoon, Ron.

MR R. CAMPBELL: Good afternoon. Thanks for the opportunity to speak today.
I'm a local business owner, and I'm a Narrabri Shire councillor. I've lived in the
Narrabri Shire all of my life. I was born here. My dad was born in Pilliga. My
45 grandfather was born in Pilliga. My mother was born in Coonabarabran. Up until a
year ago, we had five generations alive and well in the Narrabri Shire, until the
passing of my 101 year old grandmother at the Narrabri Hospital. I've been in

business in the Narrabri Shire region for about 30 years. I've mown lawns. I've dug graves. I've had an earthmoving and concreting business. I've worked in the agriculture sector, worked in the local government sector, worked in the business sector, and I've also been heavily involved in the local community.

5

Nearly 20 years ago, I started a company called Namoi WasteCorp, where we currently employ 17 people in full-time positions plus provide work for local subcontractors. 10 or 12 years ago, we started working for the mines, servicing some of their waste needs. In August 2018, we won a contract across a number of different mines for the provision of waste services. We had to compete against several multinational companies and won the contract on our own merits. This was a long process, and we're very proud that the money stays local. It didn't leave town. It didn't leave on the coat-tails of a large multinational organisation. We shop locally. We invest locally. We employ local people, and we contribute to almost all local not-for-profit organisations.

We're all well aware of the economic benefits mining brings to our communities. This has been exemplified through the worst drought in living memory and now COVID-19. We are a country community. We have been able to survive largely due to the opportunities mining has brought to our region. I want to talk about a few other significant benefits mining brings to our region, though. Firstly, in Narrabri – and I see it in Gunnedah as well – families like mine are able to keep their children in town. Normally, they would leave for the regional capital cities to find meaningful work, and they probably would never return, but now the kids are staying. There's more opportunity for them. This is rare in country towns these days.

Country towns are dying across Australia, largely because of the lack of employment and meaningful opportunities, but in Narrabri and Gunnedah and the wider region, we've reversed that trend, not because of the great – of the great work of local councils, not because of some local or state government initiative. It's because mining came to town, but it is, though, local government and state government's responsibility to build on the opportunities that mining brings to our shires so that when it's all over, we've built a community that's sustainable and that can stand on its own two feet.

The other point I'd like to make – and I've seen it right across our region – drugs are a major problem in country towns, largely, in my opinion, due to the lack of meaningful employment. It certainly is enforced in our workplace and other businesses across our shires – and that is no drugs and lower your alcohol consumption if you want a job in the mining industry. This is a prerequisite to be working in a company that works for mines or to be working for the mines directly. This is a tangible difference within our community. I see it with my own eyes. I talk about it within our community – and others agree – that this is a difference that mining has made in our shires and our lives.

The other difference has been work health and safety. It's often spoken about in the media and on state and national levels that the rural sector has high incidences of work-related injuries and deaths. Since mining came to our area 10 or 12 years ago,

you can hear and see the difference within our communities in and around the conversation about work health and safety. I see it in my workplace and other workplaces and that has a snowball effect as people come and go from different businesses the conversation continues about work health and safety. This then
5 reflects back to the homes and the daily lives of people in our communities. A whole industry in work health and safety has been created locally because of mining. Mining has been the catalyst for huge improvements within our shires in regard to work health and safety. Has that saved lives; I'm sure it has. Can it be measured; I'm sure there's a way to do that, too.

10 The Vickery Extension Project will be of great economic benefit to the region, but the points I've made in regard to our children staying in our town, and the fact that many of them are not taking drugs any more and the awareness of work health and safety throughout our community are a direct benefit of mining in the region and will
15 only be reinforced by the Vickery Extension Project. Thanks very much for your time. If you have any questions about some local content I'm more than happy to talk to you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Ron. I'm not sure whether you already have but please put
20 in a written submission if you can.

MR C. CAMPBELL: Sure.

MR HANN: Do you have any questions, Chris?
25

PROF FELL: No.

MR HANN: Zada? No. Thanks very much, Ron.

30 MR C. CAMPBELL: Thank you.

MR HANN: Now, our next speaker before we take a short break is Jack Campbell. Good afternoon, Jack. Welcome.

35 MR J. CAMPBELL: Good afternoon. First of all I would like to thank the Independent Planning Commission for holding this hearing with the intention of assessing the local communities' and stakeholders views on the Vickery Extension Project since the issues report that has been released. My name is Jack Campbell, and my family has been local to the Narrabri Shire for generations. I work together
40 with my father to run our family business, Namoi WasteCorp, which started in Narrabri 19 years ago. He just spoke before me. Due to the strong agricultural industry and in particular the mining industry in the area, our business has seen and found opportunities that would have been unthinkable for many small businesses based in small communities.

45 Namoi WasteCorp has provided waste collection services to all industries in the Narrabri Shire since its inception but now, thanks to recent contracts awarded to us

from mining companies, we've provided services across Narrabri, Gunnedah and Liverpool Plains shires. We currently have 17 employees, 13 trucks and supply a substantial amount of work to subcontractors local to the region. Our situation is not unique. We work with a broad spectrum of industries in the region and there are numerous local businesses that get a considerable portion of their income directly and indirectly from the mining industry that surrounds us.

10 Mining and agriculture have worked side by side in the region for as long as living memory. I think that this alone is the reason why Narrabri and Gunnedah remain thriving communities. Over the years, farming has provided less and less direct employment. As a result the community benefits from farming now reside in local suppliers that facilitate goods and services required by agriculture. More often than not these suppliers can diversify to offer goods and services to the mining industry as well. Considering the drought that has hit the region hard, farmers are not the only ones feeling the pinch. A lot of these suppliers I've spoke about would not be able to keep their doors open if they were solely relying on farming production to provide them with work.

20 Major agricultural distribution and research facilities are downsizing – are shutting down resulting in significant unemployment locally. Other industries locally are suffering from this and now the economic downturn that COVID-19 has brought on us. Mining has kept our local economy afloat, not to mention our federal economy. The Vickery is an existing mine and the extension project is propositioned to re-establish production as other mines are reaching the end of their viable lifespan. It's surrounded by other coal mines such as Boggabri Coal, Maules Creek Coal and Tarrawonga, Rocglen to name a few. So to me this just seems like the ideal scenario for further coal production, minimising invasiveness to the community and the environment. Vickery would effectively be a replacement for the loss of production in those mines that will be undergoing rehabilitation into the future.

30 Agriculture will always be the backbone of our community, but let's not forget the key to survival of country communities is employment. As farming practices become more streamlined young people are met with less opportunity regionally and need the professional job prospects that the mining industry can provide. From the perspective of a local business person, the Vickery Extension Project is an opportunity that we cannot knock back. In an area where small communities are dying off, locals want to attract business to town and encourage growth. Business does not just come to town without a catalyst. Growth does not just happen without opportunity, and small towns do not just survive by saying no when opportunities like this come knocking. Thank you.

40 MR HANN: Thank you very much, Jack. At this juncture, we will take a short break and we will resume again at 3.15. Thank you.

45

ADJOURNED

[2.55 pm]

MR HANN: Good afternoon and welcome to the final session of day 2 of the
5 Vickery Extension Project public hearing. I'd like to welcome Matthew Currell.
Welcome, Matthew.

ASSOC PROF CURRELL: Good afternoon; how are you going?

10 MR HANN: Very well, thank you.

ASSOC PROF CURRELL: Right. So I've been asked to examine possible
groundwater impacts related to the Vickery Extension Project, and in doing so I've
analysed the environmental impact statement, the advice that was put out by the
15 IESC, Vickery's response in their submission report, the work of the hydrogeology
peer reviewer appointed by DPIE, as well as DPIE's assessment report. In doing this,
I've identified some pretty major deficiencies that are there in the groundwater
impact assessment that have yet to be properly addressed through additional work
that needs to have been done by the proponent of this project.

20

I've outlined these - there are seven major areas - in a written report that the
commission should have access to. But just briefly now while I've just got five
minutes, I'll go over some of the really important of those considerations. The first
one is about inter-aquifer connectivity and about aquifer hydraulic parameters. So
25 the predictions of how much effect there will be on water levels and water
availability in aquifers surrounding the mine are strongly controlled by the hydraulic
parameters that are used in groundwater modelling. And there are some doubts - or
at least there's remaining uncertainty about the veracity of those parameters.

30 There are two important areas where this is significant. Number 1, the mine pit
which going to be dug within a geological formation called the Maules Creek
formation, and the extent to which that might be connected hydraulically with the
Maule alluvium which is obviously a very important aquifer and is in very close
proximity to the mine pit in this case. And this is controlled by the level of
35 heterogeneity and the level of hydraulic conductivity between those two units. I
believe that the data that has been used to actually understand this is not sufficiently
detailed and not sufficiently adequate that we can be confident that those drawdown
predictions have actually been made in a way that fully considers possible risks of
drawdown to the alluvium.

40

The second is regarding the borefield. Now, the IESC pointed out in their advice
some time ago that there's a chance that the storage coefficients which mediate the
relationship between how much water is extracted from the borefield and the level of
drawdown that will be experienced may have been over-estimated in this work and
45 as a result it may be that the drawdown has been underestimated, that in fact it may
propagate further from the borefield towards other water users and towards the
Namoi River.

The second major area is looking at groundwater/surface water interaction and the effect of the project on groundwater-dependent ecosystems. There has been some limited attempt to address the advice or the criticism that the IESC had of the assessment of GDEs and of groundwater/surface water interaction, but very little –
5 nothing that I can see in terms of actual on-the-ground detailed field surveys to understand what is the degree of dependence of ecosystems along the riparian corridor of the Namoi River on groundwater, and how this might be affected at different times of the year, differ possible rates of groundwater extraction and different possible climatic scenarios. So this is another major issue.

10 The third is looking at water quality impacts and geochemistry. The company were given advice by the IESC on the need to do additional geochemical characterisation of the waste rock material, and also to look for a much wider range to analytes in its groundwater monitoring program, and as far as I can tell, that work still has not been
15 done. And so I think that there's some really serious questions about what are impacts that remain unresolved. I note that the DPIE appointed an expert hydrogeology peer reviewer to look at these issues, and I respectfully disagree with the peer reviewer's views on these particular points. They definitely raise some valid points, but I think the particular concerns that I've outlined in my written report show
20 that there is yet to be sufficient characterisation of these impacts.

The final point is that the additional concern that I have regarding this issue of the water balance, which has been raised by Mr Watt both in a written submission that I reviewed as well as in his evidence earlier this afternoon. Serious questions about
25 the, you know, ability of this mine to actually source these sufficient quantities of water that it needs. The issues that I've just talked about with aquifer hydraulic parameters and connectivity make that potential issue of the water balance and the possibility of requiring further groundwater extractions from the bore field even more concerning. You know, if the rates of extraction from the bore field are going
30 to need to be bigger or additional licences are going to be required and these hydraulic parameters have not been accurately estimated in modelling, then we could be really seriously underestimating the drawdown impacts and wider impacts of the aquifer from this mine extension project. And I will wrap it up there. Thank you.

35 MR HANN: Thank you very much, Matthew. I think we've got some questions. Chris.

PROF FELL: Yes, Matthew. Thanks. I'm quite interested – the applicant in their response to submissions commissioned more work on the groundwater model, and
40 you looked quite deeply at sensitivities on the parameters. Have you got any comments on that work?

ASSOC PROF CURRELL: Yes, indeed. Look, it's nice to see that a sensitivity analysis has been done to see how the predictions of drawdown change when
45 hydraulic parameters are modified in the modelling. The way that that work has been presented, though, is probably, I would say, not ideal. When you're doing a sensitivity analysis of this kind, you have the ability to actually produce maps that

show a whole range of envelopes of different possible drawdown scenarios that come from your model. In this case, we don't have access to that because those maps were not provided. So to get the envelope of changes in drawdown, if we, say, tweak one of the storage coefficients by, say, an order of magnitude, to actually see how that would affect drawdown is something that I think is really important to communicate, especially given the inherent uncertainties we normally have with groundwater modelling. I will just note that based on that sensitivity analysis that changing those storage coefficients as the IESC had flagged or recommended leads to some changes in groundwater drawdown predictions that are somewhere, you know, in the order of five to 10 metres in some of the monitored bores, which I would think is a pretty significant effect depending on sort of proximity to other water users and ecosystems.

PROF FELL: Thank you for that. I have one other question, and that is to do with water quality. In fact it's planned that the spoils, waste spoils will be put on the waste and placement area which in part is above the alluvium. What's your analysis of that situation?

ASSOC PROF CURRELL: Yes, look, just didn't have time in the five minutes to go into that in-depth, but I have talked about it in the written report, but I think that the concerns that, you know, rainfall leaching through that waste material and then recharging the alluvium and causing a water quality impact such as sort of mobilising some of the trace elements and, you know, metal contents that might be there in the waste is a valid concern. The peer reviewer has sort of argued that, well, the water that, you know, infiltrates through the waste rock is going to make its way back towards the mine pit because we're going to create a great big void. However I don't think that it's all that simple and easy to predict the flow path that water from, you know, a big pile of overburden is going to take, and I don't think it can be ruled out that some of that poor quality water might actually make its way in the other direction back towards the Namoi River and the rest of the alluvium.

PROF FELL: Just a follow-up on that one – it's also said the compaction of or the weight of the waste material would compact the top layer of the alluvium and probably make it fairly impermeable. What would your comment about that be?

ASSOC PROF CURRELL: That's a pretty tough one to verify without a bit of sort of site-specific data to show how the material responds. Yes, really hard to comment. Just depends on the sort of compressibility and the matrix characteristics of the alluvium and how that relates to the sort of load that's going to be put on top.

PROF FELL: That's a very careful answer. Could I get you to speculate?

ASSOC PROF CURRELL: I will decline to speculate on that one, I think.

PROF FELL: Okay. Thank you.

MR HANN: Zada, do you have any questions of Matthew?

PROF LIPMAN: No. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Matthew.

5 ASSOC PROF CURRELL: pleasure.

MR HANN: Thank you for responding to our questions.

ASSOC PROF CURRELL: Cheers.

10

MR HANN: Our next registered speaker is Gemma Viney. Good afternoon, Gemma.

15 MS VINEY: Good afternoon, Commissioners. So this presentation is based on a report that I submitted with the support of the Boggabri Farming and Community Group regarding the social impacts of the current voluntary land acquisition and mitigation policy on both landowners who have sold their land and on the communities they leave behind. I phrase it this way because the most consistent finding in this research was that every interviewee who participated in this study had
20 left the region following the sale or were planning to leave as soon as they were able. The implications of this policy and of the presence of mining have left a clear and lasting impact on the Boggabri community, socially, economically, and in the very infrastructure required to keep a community alive.

25 This presentation will explore, in brief, some of these impacts as they have been described by the participants in this study, however, I would like to draw the commissioners' attention to the report itself as it contains valuable statements from the participants which most effectively articulate the extent to which people's way of life has been fundamentally altered and what further stands to be lost should the
30 project be approved.

To reiterate, all of the participants indicated that they had left the Boggabri region following the sale of their land, with four indicating that the decision to leave was explicitly related to the presence of mining within the region. Six of seven
35 participants described the land acquisition process itself as difficult, and five of seven described experiencing significant stress and anxiety throughout. The voluntary land acquisition and mitigation policy as it currently stands disempowers land owners, forcing them to choose between leaving behind livelihoods, relationships and community or having the endure the impacts of mining, noise, dust and light
40 pollution, to name a few.

On the issue of community, all but two participants indicated that since leaving the region, they had limited to no social or professional connection with Boggabri. All participants stated that before leaving, they predominantly shopped locally and used
45 local health and education facilities as required.

This was raised in contrast to concerns about the prospective workforce who would hypothetically replace Boggabri families and longstanding community members and who was a transient workforce, have no need for long-term investment in and engagement with local infrastructure, and hence will not be able to fill the gaps left
5 behind by the approximately 90 family farms who have been bought out of the wider region.

Another key issue identified by participants has been the impacts to the cultural atmosphere of Boggabri and the extent to which the presence of mining and policies
10 such as the plan not only disrupt the feel and way of life within a community fracture community bonds. All seven participants identified a shift in the culture of Boggabri, and when returning to the region, interviewees described feeling alienated as the town had lost its rural community. Social impact research undertaken in
15 Australia has already demonstrated the extent to which mining contributes to the death of small rural communities, and that is what is at risk for Boggabri.

I would also like to highlight the extent to which participants in this study almost universally described personal losses, both economically and in health and
20 wellbeing, as a result of their experiences with the voluntary land acquisition process. One respondent described the sale of their land as “easy and straightforward” while the other six viewed the process and policy itself as difficult, at times distressing, and ultimately unjust.

Social impact literature recognises access to decision-making systems as a key
25 impact that ought to be considered in the assessment of any prospective development. The responses from interviewees in this study describe an overwhelming sense of lost agency and an explicit interpretation of the government’s decision-making thus far as a clear prioritisation of mining interests and profit over individuals and communities impacted by this industry.
30

There are more impacts explored in the report, but the last thing I would like to convey to you today is that the triggers for these aforementioned impacts are not isolated. They are the cumulative impacts of largescale land buyouts associated with
35 a number of mines across the region, and your decision must take these cumulative impacts into account. This project cannot be evaluated in isolation. Approval of the Vickery Extension Project under the current policies will only exacerbate these impacts and allow the cycles of disempowerment and mistreatment of land owners to continue, and may ultimately lead to the death of the Boggabri community. Thanks very much.
40

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Gemma. Our next speaker is Amy McAllister. Good afternoon, Amy.

45 MS McALLISTER: Hello. How are you going?

MR HANN: We’re ready to hear your presentation.

MS McALLISTER: Good afternoon, commissioners and chairman. Thank you for allowing me to speak against the Vickery Extension Project. My name is Amy McAllister. I grew up in southern New South Wales on a family farm. I studied a Bachelor of Agricultural Science in Wagga Wagga. In my final years of study, I
5 moved to Muswellbrook to be with my now-fiancé. I lived within two kilometres of four coal mines. I have firsthandly experienced the dust, noise and light pollution that comes with mining. It is only getting worse every time we go back down to visit his parents.

10 Now, I currently reside on the property Mirrabinda, or 127C. My house will be within less than one kilometre of the proposed extension. I will not be able to reside here any longer if the project is approved, but this is not the only reason that I object to the extension. I moved to the Gunnedah area to follow my passion of sustainable agriculture. I could not fulfil this in the Hunter Valley region due to the majority of
15 the profitable and – profitable land being bought – farming land being bought by mining companies and the water licences being removed.

I have been an agronomist in the area for five years. In this five-year period, I have worked with many of my growers through one of the worst droughts in history. We
20 have – they have been able to survive this drought through sustainable farming practices, which is – one of them would be in retaining stubble, increasing their carbon to increase their soil structure, which then entail – increases water-holding capacity. Many of these growers irrigate these crops. Many – we’ve – I’ve had countless discussions with many growers to find out which crop would be the best
25 return on investment per megalitre. This can be anything from sunflowers, cotton, wheat during the winter. We have a large diversity of production here, though in the last two years I have firsthandly seen the reduction in production areas due to the – being – many of the farmers being priced out of the water market.

30 Looking at gross margins, many of my growers cannot run a financially stable business when water – temporary water exceeds \$350 a meg. This has happened in the last 12 months with Whitehaven buying temporary water in the market of – in excess of \$900. This also raises concerns for succession planning. Many of the farming businesses in this area are family businesses. They would like to have the
35 longevity of being able to pass down onto their children. With these external prices increasing production cost, I don’t think that this could be a sustainable area if the mine is approved. In my closing statements, I object to the Vickery Extension Project on the grounds that I feel that the agricultural industry in this area has the potential of going down the same path as it has in the Hunter Valley. Thank you.

40

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Amy. Our next speaker is Kerrie Matchett.

MS K. MATCHETT: Hello.

45 MR HANN: Good afternoon, Kerrie.

MS MATCHETT: Good afternoon to you all. Thank you for allowing me to speak. I'm a little nervous, so - - -

MR HANN: Take your time.

5

MS MATCHETT: So my main concern is many of the things that previous speakers have touched on objecting to the mine. I live in Moree, so it's much further away, but I understand the ramifications that it has on those farming communities. Many of us have family and friends that are interconnected across the region, and I myself, I have a business in Moree. It's a custom framing business, and I often have people come through for framing wedding gifts, things for family, and I've seen an increase – it's not significantly huge, but it's enough to notice – that when you have people who have had to sell farms in those regions that we're speaking about and how it fractures their decisions about what they're going to do, and it affects our culture and our way of life.

My main – I have some concerns for the local people, particularly how close this is to the Namoi Valley River. Coal dust and other contaminants – you know, that's an important water source for a lot of people in that region. Significant concerns about how it's going to affect Siding Spring Observatory and the light issues, that they need dark skies for that to remain an internationally significant conservatory. They're already having increased problems with light because of other mines that are increasing in the area, so I think that if it does go ahead you really need to make sure that there are very strict conditions on how that mine reduces the amount of light that it has for Siding Springs and the dark skies around Coonabarabran.

Water is an important issue, and you've heard a few people already touch on water, and my main concern – which is where it's difficult for me because up in Moree I feel like it's an indirect issue, but it's also a direct issue – is the fact that we're potentially opening up another coal mine. This is a fossil fuel, and we're at a time in our history of humanity where we really need to be working towards zero emissions, and we've reached nine of 15 known tipping points. Sorry. Sorry. Was that the panel that was asking me a question, or - - -

MR HANN: No. I think you've just got some feedback, but for the moment - - -

MS MATCHETT: Okay.

MR HANN: - - - we can hear you. That's clear.

40

MS MATCHETT: Sorry.

MR HANN: No. Please proceed, Kerrie.

MS MATCHETT: Yes. So across the globe we've reached nine of 15 of our known tipping points, and we really need – if we want to be minimising the kind of climactic effects on our communities and across the globe, we really need to be not

opening any new fossil fuel projects any more, and, of course, this is a new one. The loss of biodiversity in our region from the opening of this mine – obviously, you have to get rid of it, and even though people talk of rehabilitation, it takes thousands of years to get the same kind of productivity and biodiversity back from what you
5 lost when you dug it up. In our own area here, we've got – so, for example, we've just come out of a really significant drought. We've got a very warmer than average winter. Last year was a warmer than average winter. In fact, the last 12 months across the globe have been record-breaking warmer than average across the globe for each month.

10

So we've got barley crops at the moment that people have dug really deep into debt to be able to plant, and a number of other crops, but they're not getting the right cool in our winter yet to be able to slow down their growth rate, so people are having to spray retardants on them. So these are the kind of things – our cotton also, you know
15 – we have heatwaves in some of the – just the way they grow. You know, there's all these ramifications economically on how our plant cycles are shifting and our seasons are shifting, and it's making it very difficult for agriculture. It's making it difficult for tourism. It's making it difficult for even just people to live, and another coal mine is just going to add to that problem. Thank you.

20

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Kerrie. Our next speaker is John Quiggin. Good afternoon.

25

PROF J. QUIGGIN: Thank you. Thank you. Good afternoon, commissioners. So I want to comment on the issue of carbon dioxide emissions arising from new coal mines and particularly so-called – these are the scope 3 emissions which arise when the coal produced from the mine is burnt. The decision of the assessment has been that we can disregard these effects on the basis that the importing countries are the ones named – South Korea, Japan and Taiwan – at nationally determined
30 contributions, which – within which they will fit these emissions. I want to make the point that that's a misreading of the Paris Agreement, to which Japan and South Korea are signatories. Of course, Taiwan isn't because of its particular status.

30

35

These – the signatories, including Australia, have committed to policies that will reduce global warming, at most to two degrees and ideally to 1.5 degrees. It's clear that the nationally determined contributions for Taiwan – Taiwan – for – say, for South Korea and Japan are totally inadequate, and, indeed, this was what was envisaged when the agreement was made, namely, that people would begin with much less ambitious commitments but ones they thought they could deliver. Those
40 would be ramped up over time. Now, I think the evidence that this is going to take place is already very strong and it has been mounting even since the assessment was prepared. We've seen, following the South Korean elections in April, the government's commitment to agreeing a new deal, which entails the substantial reduction in reliance on coal, particularly domestically. The policy for that is still
45 playing out and I think the inevitable consequence recognised, for example, in the recent report of the Office of the Chief Economist is that we will see overtime a decline in that market.

45

In Japan, we haven't seen a radical change in government policy but we have seen major moves in divestment from the leading Japanese finance houses and those engaged in the export of coal mining technology. So, I think, once again, the idea that all those countries are going to on their quite inadequate nationally
5 determined contributions as of 2018 but they won't increase them on this view in 2021 or anytime in the future, I don't think that view stands up and I don't think it's a tenable position to simply ignore it and say, "We'll work on that assumption." I think the implication has to be – and, again, this is backed up by the Office of the Chief Economist – that these markets are going to climb over the proposed life of
10 this coal mine and that the only serious contender – the only serious contender to take their place is China.

Now, that's complicating in all sorts of ways. I think, overall, it raised substantial concerns about economic dependence on China but it's also true that Chinese policy
15 has fluctuated very substantially. At different times, the Chinese government has been both a leader and a in terms of producing emissions and while, currently, particularly at a provincial level, we're seeing another burst of enthusiasm for coal, but there's every reason to think it's possible that – possible that these things will change and that we will have to seek further markets in countries which have failed
20 to implement their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Summing up all of this, the idea that we can ignore scope 3 emissions basically comes down to a bet on the idea that the world as a whole is going to fail in dealing with climate change. I don't think that's justified and I think the consequence will be
25 that projects like this one will become standard assets with costs ultimately being thrown on to the community, as we're seeing most large companies that move out of this field, we're down to a small number of specialist coal miners who are attempting to ride this wave as far as they can. I think the history of these things has been that the public, in one way or another, ends up bearing substantial costs when
30 these projects fail. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, John. Zada, do you have any questions?

PROF LIPMAN: Well, not in relation to scope 3. I was just wondering about scope
35 1, whether you've been looking at that. My question, really, was whether you've had a look at the figures for the scope 1 projections and there's a substantial reduction from that, which was envisaged under the approved project by taking the trucks off the road and introducing rail conveyance.

PROF QUIGGIN: Really, I think, in the case of a coal mine, scope 3 emissions are almost the entire story. The whole idea of the project is to create products
40 generating large amounts of greenhouse gases, so I think the scope 1 emissions in this context are a second order concern. The real issue is, are we going to add more coal mines at a time when the only possible path to meeting the Paris goals is to
45 create no new coal mines and to close the existing ones down in an orderly fashion.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. In relation to scope 3, the approved coal mine also had a relatively high scope 3 emissions. There's a slight increase in scope 3 emissions and to the extent of the project, but not substantially in relation to the approved project.

5 PROF QUIGGIN: Well, I think – the issue, I think, is that any new coal mine at this point, even if it has a previous approval, would amount to a net addition to supply. I think it's important to bear in mind because we're seeing – we're seeing very substantial drops in demand for coal associated with the pandemic but many of those appear likely to continue, so I think we are – really have to look at this and look at it
10 in the light of the global picture, which says we really cannot afford to disregard scope 3 emissions. So, unless the project generates very substantial benefits to offset those emissions, as for the world as a whole it's a negative and I don't think it's true that Australia or New South Wales can escape the consequence of this by just saying, look, this is somebody else's problem.

15 PROF LIPMAN: Yes. Thank you.

MR HANN: Chris, do you have questions?

20 PROF FELL: No. Thanks.

MR HANN: Okay. Thank you very much, John. Our next speaker is Graham McRae. Hello Graham.

25 MR McRAE: My name is Graham McRae. I've got a family of eight kids and a missus. We've lived in Boggabri for 15 years. We've been in the area a lot longer than that and in that time, needless to say, there has been a lot of changes. When I first came to Boggabri there wasn't much happening. I got a job with a local farmer, good honest work, not much money, but I was happy to have a job. Like I said, there
30 wasn't much happening in the town. Over the next few years the town came to life with a little project here and there. I got to know a few fellows. I got a job with one of the contractors. I've now been working on and off for contractors under Whitehaven for nine years and got to know how they operate and the thought process that goes into every aspect of any job. In my opinion, the Vickery Extension should
35 go ahead.

Whitehaven are professional in what they do and it's hard to misunderstand what their intentions are. If they say they're going to do this and that, they'll have it planned out blow by blow in plain English so there's no confusion between the
40 parties conducting the work on the ground and – but first it's got to get approved by everyone else in the job to eliminate mistakes. It's pretty professional. A couple of my own kids have worked for Whitehaven at Maules Creek and my son still works with me on the biodiversity offset. And I have plans on my other kids working for Whitehaven as well once they're old enough if they choose to.

45 What's in it for me; well, what's in it for all of us. I remember hearing people saying that their young ones were moving away. They've got to, they say; there's

no future here. You hear it in all the little towns. Well, guess what, not in Boggabri. This is another way of ensuring our kids don't have to move away unless they want to. But if they stay, there's jobs and good jobs; set them up for a bright future. I wish I'd have had that opportunity at a young age. The town doesn't have big
5 shopping malls or things like that but the businesses here are miles in front of where they were 15 years ago. Where I shop would be shut if it wasn't for the coal mines in the area. We basically have no crime. Why: because everybody works.

10 What's wrong with us being a farming and a mining town. I was told by a wise old man once to go where the money is. Well, the money's here. This extension is just another way of ensuring the future of the region and our children. I don't know if you've seen the jobless rate late; it's not pretty, but here it's great. Let's keep it that way. It's another way to give all of our kids a chance for a good start to their young lives and it would be silly to let this slip away. Thanks very much.

15

MR HANN: Thank you, Graham. Our next speaker is Stephanie Darley.

MS DARLEY: Hello commissioners.

20 MR HANN: Good afternoon, Stephanie.

MS DARLEY: Hi, commissioners. I strongly object to the Vickery Extension Project, and I have already prepared my speech which your team will now play. Thank you.

25

MR HANN: Thank you.

MS DARLEY: On the 13th of August 2017 my family and I had a meeting with Whitehaven Coal in their office in Gunnedah. They stated, "You will not be
30 impacted via the Vickery Extension Project. You have nothing to worry about." On the far left-hand side you can see the Werris Creek to Mungindi railway line. This is 5.7 kilometres from house A where I call home. I can hear this railway sound and clear every day. It does not bother me. It doesn't affect me. It doesn't wake me up at night. At house A you can see the proposed railway line will be 600 metres.
35 That's 9.5 times closer than the existing railway line. House B is where my brother will live; it's only 450 metres from the proposed rail spur. That's 16.7 closer than the existing railway line. House C is where I was to build my dream home. It's just 250 metres from the proposed rail spur. That's 22.8 times closer than the existing rail line.

40

There are so many underlying consequences due to this mine, the current mine, and how corrupt our government and the local Gunnedah council are. Members of our community should not be afraid to speak up against Whitehaven, but they are. Our Gunnedah council and government are so brain-washed in the thought that coal
45 mining will economically produce them with the most money so who can farmers and the agriculture sector look for support and trust. Why do these bodies put short-

term profit as a priority compared to long-term stability, protecting our environment and locals mental and physical health.

5 One of the large major factors differentiating me from most of the people who
attended and spoke at the last public hearing was my age. This made it very obvious
to me the gap between my generation and your generation. I believe it is absolutely
crucial to look after our environment and resources as they are so scarce and
irreplaceable. The sooner an alternative to coal is developed the better. I will be
10 living with the burden Whitehaven Coal leaves behind, not you. So your decision
will decide my future. Any coal mine has no positive effect on the environment,
although if Whitehaven Coal handed me a blank cheque, I too could develop some
models and have them peer reviewed to support their relationship with the
environment and their impact on neighbouring residents.

15 Their models are only as good as the numbers and figures they put into them. I
actually do walk the streets of this town, by choice, not just talk about it in the hope
to get a pay rise. There is so much negativity about Whitehaven Coal. Wives and
husbands do worry their partners will not come at night as there is just a death
waiting to happen out there. People walking up to me and my family saying “Don’t
20 let Whitehaven get to you. Don’t let them destroy you like they have done to so
many other families in the community.” If this project had no risk to our land, our
water, our health and our community, why has it dragged out this long? Why didn’t
you just accept it and pass it in the first place? Why di the government change their
rules to suit Whitehaven’s submission. If it was fair and reasonable, it should have
25 been able to comply with the rules and standards.

Please don’t put our agricultural land at risk. My generation and I will be living with
the consequence. I turn the TV on at night to watch the news and the verbal
diarrhoea that comes out of our government’s mouth is disgusting. Reduce
30 emissions, renewable energy, water security. They say speak even if your voice
shakes. Well, every single one of my neighbours, the community and my family
members voices shook when they spoke at the last public hearing. Now, I question
why speak even if your voice shakes when nothing happens. Thank you.

35 MR HANN: Thank you, Stephanie. Just to let you know, we lost a little bit of the
audio part way through your video but we do have it on transcript.

MS DARLEY: Yes, no worries.

40 MR HANN: Thank you very much for your presentation.

MS DARLEY: Bye.

MR HANN: Our next speaker is Marie Flood. Hello, Marie.

45 MS FLOOD: Hello Commissioners. Can you hear me?

MR HANN: We can.

MS FLOOD: Thank you.

5 MR HANN: Welcome.

MS FLOOD: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. To begin, I acknowledge the Gomeri traditional owners of the land on which the development is proposed. I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I object to
10 Vickery Extension. I grew up in the north-west and I keep in touch with the area through my friends and relatives. The development of Whitehaven's Maules Creek Mine was a shocking awakening for me, and it's part of the back story of my speaking with you today. I still feel saddened by what happened in the development of that mine. I'll never forget the destruction of Aboriginal sites and how enormous
15 the disrespect for Whitehaven Coal were of the Gomeri people.

Nor will I forget the company's flawed push in clearing the forest in winter and decimating native wildlife; they stopped but only when they were made to stop, and it seems that's just how it goes with Whitehaven.

20 Many local residents and community leaders have recounted their experiences to you, and they have laid out Whitehaven's track record in the development of other mines in the region, and they have spelt out the problems with their water use data. I urge you to look at their track record, what they have actually done in the other
25 mines, to consider the evidence that they're not sensitive to farmers' reliance on water and they will do anything to keep digging and processing coal. Last year we saw them outbid farmers for water, the farmers who were desperate in the drought. This morning we read in the paper that they were accused of water theft by the New South Wales water regulator.

30 Now, there are many uncertainties about the future, about the coal mine market, about the mining jobs that may or may not be there in the face of automation, but what is certain is the past, the evidence of Whitehaven's record of breaches of environmental protections. You have heard about how they develop pipelines to
35 shift water around between their mines without even asking for permission. With this sort of track record, Whitehaven should not be allowed to develop a massive new mine, which could impact on water, nearby farms and the Boggabri community and biodiversity.

40 There's an argument I ask you to dismiss, an argument from Whitehaven. They argue that the coking coal is of a higher quality on average than coal produced elsewhere in Australia and also in other coal-exporting countries such as Indonesia and Russia. Whitehaven says the consequence of refusing the Vickery Extension would be higher greenhouse gas emissions. They say without Vickery, I will quote:

45 *...it is likely that demand would be met from other sources, more coal mined and combusted to satisfy the same power needs.*

Now, this is total supposition. It's a furphy and should not be considered. It's one of the arguments that the Land and Environment Court rejected in the Rocky Hill Coal Mines appeal case. Suppositions are not what reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and they do not make a mine in the public interest. To be in the public interest, a mine needs to be safe for groundwater, for surface water, for endangered species of animals and plants, for human health and wellbeing, and for the climate.

Finally, I would like to speak up for the 201, the fauna species who cannot speak for themselves. Forty-five of these species are threatened: the grey-crowned babbler, the hooded robin, the squirrel glider, the koalas and many other species. I'm not satisfied with the department's total reliance on Whitehaven's conclusion about the threatened species which I quote:

Although the development would result in the removal of habitat for the species recorded onsite, the development is unlikely to cause a significant impact on any threatened species and communities such that a local population would be lost.

Okay. So Whitehaven are saying it's unlikely the species would be totally wiped out locally by this mine. Now, is "unlikely" good enough? It's really sad that it is good enough for the department. Please do not accept Whitehaven's words about wildlife; please consider their record of destruction of wildlife at Maules Creek. I ask that you reject this mining development because of the environmental impacts and because it's not in the public interest. Thank you.

MR HANN: Thank you, Marie. Our next speaker is Angela Burrows. Good afternoon, Angela.

MS BURROWS: Good afternoon. I appreciate this opportunity to address the commission in person today because the passion I feel about another coal mine being approved in this time of climate emergency is difficult to convey in a written submission. I start by acknowledging the original inhabitants of the land where I live, the Cammeraygal people of the Eora nation, and I pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal people participating in this process.

I am an honours agricultural science graduate. I am also a mother and grandmother who cares deeply about the Earth and all living things, all peoples and the generations to come. I object strongly to the Vickery Mine Extension Proposal and appeal to the panel, the commission, to focus on the bigger picture and the long-term vision for the area and for the generations to come and for the planet. The Earth is sacred, as recognised for tens of thousands of years by the Gomeroi people, the original custodians of the land around Boggabri. We hold the land in trust for future generations. We are completely dependent on the Earth for our wellbeing and survival, and it is our ethical and moral responsibility to care for and preserve it for the future generations.

We were eloquently and powerfully reminded of this responsibility by Pope Francis in his two – sorry, 2015 encyclical letter entitled *Laudato si'*: On Care for Our Common Home. Alas, today we plunder the Earth's resources for our selfish and corporate short-term gain with little consideration for the future or the wellbeing of
5 all, concerned only about money now and profits for the few instead of listening and learning from the wisdom and caring shown by people like the First Nations people and Pope Francis. Such greed has led to the destruction of forests, complete landscapes, the environment, native species, farms, water, heritage, air quality, health and communities.

10 Everything is interrelated, and alas, to our peril, we don't listen to the scientists either. We refuse to admit that fossil fuels must stay in the ground. Regardless of where in the world the coal is burnt, carbon dioxide is released, blanketing the Earth, trapping heat and causing temperature increases. We have only a few short years
15 before we reach a tipping point: irreversible warming of the planet. The recent drought and devastating sum of bushfires are a big wake-up call. We have to act quickly or it will be too late.

I'm deeply disturbed to hear that Whitehaven has bought out 90 farms and owns land
20 almost the size of Singapore. The irrevocable damage that has already been caused to local families, farms and communities is heartbreaking: ruined landscapes, sucking up vast quantities of vital water needed for people, animals, plants and land, polluting air and property, dust and explosions day and night, even prioritising water to wash coal during searing drought conditions. We have our priorities all wrong.

25 Listening to submissions over the last couple of days, I have also heard about jobs and local businesses; however, what we haven't heard or haven't recognised is that the jobs on offer are not long-term or sustainable. Whitehaven Coal knows that fuel is a thing of the past – sorry, coal is a fuel of the past, and it's rushing to mine and
30 export it before the market is gone completely. With automation and market uncertainties, the jobs are unlikely to last 25 years. That's less than half a working person's life – a working life. What will be left? Towns will become empty shells surrounded by poisoned water and polluted – sorry, poisoned land and polluted water. Where's the equity?

35 There are good alternatives to burning coal for energy, but there are no alternatives to reliable water and fertile land for food production for future generations. Clean alternatives are the future for energy production and for fossil fuel. To sum up, for our survival, we must care for the Earth, for one another, and build long-term
40 sustainable communities, not destroy them. We can and must be creative in developing more clean, healthy, life-giving jobs in rural areas, focusing on a low-carbon economy. I will cover this in more detail in a written submission. The task ahead therefore is a moral and spiritual one as well as a practical one, and I appeal to the commission to protect our heritage, our land, our water for the future and for the
45 whole planet and refuse approval for this mine. Thank you for listening.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Angela, and we look forward to your written submission. Our final speaker for today is Robert Henderson. Welcome, Robert.

MR HENDERSON: Good afternoon, Commissioners, and thanks for the
5 opportunity to speak to you. I know it's been a very long day, so I will try and keep
my presentation to the five minutes, and I'm sure you will be very glad about that.
I'm an economist, Commissioners. I have worked in both the private sector and for
the Australian Government. I have had about a 45-year career now in economics,
and I'm still very interested in economic policy issues, and I want to talk to you
10 today about this mine from an economic perspective.

I have listened to a lot of the submissions during the day, and of course most of those
submissions have actually been around the local issues. Economists tend to take a
broader perspective. When I look at this mine and I think about the social cost which
15 it's likely to impose on the economy more widely, it seems to me that you have to
come to the conclusion that this mine actually is uneconomic, and from that point of
view I think this mine should be rejected as a proposal.

Before I get to those social costs, I just wanted to make one comment on the
20 employment opportunities that this mine may – might make available to the local
community. The numbers that have been bandied around suggest that the
employment opportunities are 450,000 extra jobs, although I noticed yesterday that
perhaps that's actually only 200 extra jobs. So I compared those jobs with total
employment in Gunnedah and Boggabri and Tamworth, and for the 450 jobs, that's
25 about 1.25 per cent of the total workforce. If you actually use the 200 extra jobs
number, that's only about .6 of a per cent of the total workforce, so hardly a large
increase in job availability.

Now, moving onto those social costs that I talk about, there's three categories of
30 them. The first category are the greenhouse gas emissions that would arise as a
result of the bigger mine and also of the burning of those fossil fuels. You heard
from Professor Will Steffen this morning, who I thought gave a pretty good rendition
of the Paris Climate Change Agreement and climate change issues. My focus is on
the economic costs of climate change and particularly what might happen for
35 Australia on a business as usual approach.

In other words, if the commission were to agree to this proposal, it went ahead,
Australia keeps digging up more coal and it gets burnt, what does that mean for
Australia's economy? And some ANU academics, Tom Kompas and his colleagues,
40 recently modelled this, and they have come to the conclusion that the cost in terms of
lost GDP per annum is around about \$94 billion if on a business as usual approach.
Now, by means of comparison, how does that compare, say, with coronavirus? The
latest Treasury estimates suggest that the coronavirus will in total take about \$50
billion off Australian GDP, so the cost of climate change actually will far exceed that
45 on an annual basis unless something is done about this.

The second category I want to talk about is reputational costs. We're already starting to see countries overseas starting to, I guess, take adverse reactions to countries that they see as dragging their heels in terms of climate change, and I can give you a couple examples of that. The European Commission recently has said that it's going to impose carbon import taxes on countries that are not introducing effective policies to mitigate climate change. Now, that of course would be a negative for Australian exporters into that market. A second example is the Swedish central bank, that announced late last year that they are actually divesting all of their Queensland and Western Australian Government bonds; they're doing that because they say those states have some of the highest greenhouse gas emissions in the world, and they think it's too risky to hold those bonds. Now, that concerns me because that's going to affect the ability of governments in Australia to raise – to be able to raise their debt.

The third category, of course, is effects on other industries, and we have already heard about agricultural problems with water. The last thing I wanted to mention was the potential that this could become a stranded asset. A stranded asset arises when an asset is no longer profitable, and at the moment, with current coal prices, there's already a large number of Australian mines that are unprofitable. The trend is down, and if that continues, we could see this mine be a stranded asset. That raises the question in my mind, will that company be able to do the rehabilitation of the mine site, reparations for any damage to the water supply and so on? So when I put all these things together, I come to the conclusion that continuing with this mine proposal is actually uneconomic from an economy-wise perspective, and I urge the commission to reject that proposal on that basis.

MR HANN: Thank you very much, Robert.

MR HENDERSON: Thanks.

MR HANN: I will just ask, Zada, do you have any questions? Chris?

PROF FELL: No, I don't.

MR HANN: Thank you, Robert. We much appreciate your submission and presentation, and if you have got a written submission, if you haven't already forwarded it to us, we would appreciate that.

MR HENDERSON: I have. Thank you, Commissioner. I have sent one in already, but I have already sent a copy of my speaking notes for your information as well.

MR HANN: That would be appreciated. Thank you.

MR HENDERSON: Okay. Thank you for your time, and congratulations on a couple of days that have been quite long but very interesting.

MR HANN: Thank you. So that brings us to the end of the second day of this public hearing into the Vickery Extension Project, and I would like to thank all of the speakers for their participation in the process and remind everyone that the transcript will become available on our website. The commission will be accepting comments and submissions from the public until 5 pm on Friday, the 10th of July 2020, and please note these comments can be sent to the commission via post, via email and also through our Have Your Say portal on the commission's website. At the time of determination, the commission will publish a statement of reasons for the decision, which will outline how the commission took the community's views into consideration in the decision-making process, and I now call a close to the two-day public hearing into the Vickery Extension Project. And on behalf of the commission and my fellow commissioners, thank you for watching the live stream and good afternoon.

15 PROF FELL: Thank you.

MATTER ADJOURNED at 4.12 pm INDEFINITELY