

Following the lodgement of Whitehaven Coal's Environmental Impact Statement, I wish to object to the proposal for Maules Creek Continuation.

The proposal should not be considered now because the Maules Creek Mine already has approval out to 2034. To consider extending it at this stage is premature because over time it is less and less likely to be considered in the interests of NSW, for reasons of damage to climate, endangered species, and water resources.

Coal mining expansions are the weak spot in NSW reaching its climate targets

NSW is behind in its commitment to reduce its targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, on its way to Net Zero by 2050. Maules Creek Continuation would dig up an additional 117 million tonnes of coal for export, and contribute, in direct emissions, over 3 million tonnes of CO₂-e. This would significantly undermine NSW achieving its climate targets in the future.

To approve a ten-year extension for a coal mine that does not even start until 2034 is ridiculous.

It is highly likely that in the next 9 years, new evidence will show how the climate is worsening, reaching tipping points, and government will be forced to take the cost to our economy, environment and way of life more seriously by stopping coal mining completely.

Granting approval to mine until 2044 makes NSW vulnerable to future liabilities

If the NSW government grants Whitehaven the right to operate for an agreed length of time, and then later wishes to withdraw its approval, the company may well take legal action to seek damages.

The Department of Planning should instead be on the front foot. Last week, the NSW Court of Appeal found that MACH Energy had not fully assessed the impacts of the downstream emissions from the Mt Pleasant project on the local environment and community.¹ If the Department decides to further consider Whitehaven's application, the company should be required to do what MACH Energy should have done - it has not been done in the current EIS. Then this information should be independently assessed by the Net Zero Commission, before it progresses further.

Or the Department could simply put a halt to this premature application.

Coal is on the way out

The market for coal will collapse, most likely at some unknown point in the next ten years. Governments and allied bodies are beginning to recognise this:

- The Minister for Resources, Courtney Houssos, said recently "Mining is ultimately a temporary use of land"².
- The NSW Productivity and Equality Commission noted in its recent Net Zero series³ a key policy direction to achieve climate targets in NSW could include setting "a clear deadline for decommissioning thermal coal mining for export"⁴.

¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-24/mount-pleasant-coal-mine-expansion-halted-by-court/105566836>

² <https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases/government-supports-all-13-recommendations-response-to-post-mine-land-use-inquiry>

³ <https://www.productivity.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-11/NSW-Productivity-and-Equality-Commission-Achieving-net-zero-paper-1-Ensuring-a-cost-effective-transition.pdf>

- Premier Chris Minns has also spoken of the need to transition coal-reliant communities in the face of changing demand for the product.

This week I read of two coal mines which are closing or close to collapse: Dartbrook Mine in the Hunter is in liquidation and has let go of two thirds of its workforce⁴; Bowen Coal in Queensland has entered administration⁵. Last year, Russell Vale in the Illawarra closed.

Instead of encouraging communities to continue reliance on coal, at the expense of our environment both locally and globally, government should concentrate on transitioning its workforce.

Ten-year extension to 2044 will likely be a final blow for the Swift Parrot

My 1983 bird identification book describes the Swift Parrot as common. Now its numbers are estimated by Birdlife Australia to be between 600 and 850 individuals.

The bird nests in Tasmania but feeds during the cooler months in a few places in Victoria and NSW, including the Leard Forest. This proposal would cut a further swathe through the Forest, reducing it to 46% of its original size, and destroy 19,000 White Box trees, a feed resource for the Parrot.

The proposed destruction of 500 additional hectares of key foraging habitat could be the straw that breaks the continued existence of the Swift Parrot.

Whitehaven can't be trusted with water

Whitehaven has a long history of destroying the local environment and harming the communities that it operates in. Perhaps most egregious is the theft of water during one of Australia's worst droughts, affecting both farmers in the area and the natural environment. It has also engaged in illegal tree clearing and built pipelines without permission.

Lock the Gate reports "In the last 10 years, Whitehaven has been found guilty or investigated for breaches of the law on 35 occasions, many of them including multiple offences. They have been prosecuted numerous times". The full shame file, showing that Whitehaven has been reported or prosecuted for over 100 breaches of environmental laws, is attached.

The original Maules Creek proposal was to draw 300 Megalitres of water from two water sources; this new proposal is to draw from seven different sources, a total of 5400 Megalitres. To allow this expansion which could finish farming and grazing in the area forever, as well as destroy the natural environment, would be highly irresponsible, especially as there is very little oversight of water extraction once approval is granted.

Angela Michaelis
31 July, 2025

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⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-29/mass-redundancies-hit-dartbrook-hunter-valley-coal-mine/105585058>

⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-30/bowen-coking-coal-appoints-administrators-amid-price-slump/105590630>

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More than 100 incidences creating almost \$2M in fines, due to Whitehaven Coal breaching environmental laws

Date	Action	Explanation	Mine	Amount
Nov 2024	Breach	Breach of conditions of consent for not having an Aboriginal stakeholder representative on the CCC	Maules Creek	-
Jan 2024	Warning Letter	Failure to implement Energy Savings Action Plan from 2014	Narrabri Underground	-
December 2022	Non-compliance ¹	Noise monitoring report provided late	Werris Creek	-
September 2022	Non-compliance ²	Released water exceeding TSS limits during flooding	Rocglen	-
September 2022	Non-compliance ³	Discharge samples showed very high readings due to sampling error	Werris Creek	-
Aug 2022	Official Caution	Exceeding the approved disturbance boundary during vegetation clearing activities	Tarrawonga	-
Jun 2022	Official Caution	Allowing blast fumes to leave the premises	Tarrawonga	-
July 2022	Penalty Notice	Contravention of licence	Tarrawonga	\$15,000
July 2022	Non-compliance ⁴	Standing Water Level dropped below trigger levels and was not reported when it happened	Narrabri Underground	-
Mar 2022	Prosecution	EPA prosecuted three charges for pollution events, two of which saw styrofoam balls being carried into Back Creek & Maules Creek ⁵	Maules Creek	\$93,750, \$25,000 and \$40,000 (to Enviro Trust)
Feb 2022	Non-compliance ⁶	Groundwater management plan did not include trigger levels	Sunnyside	-

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<https://whitehavencoal.com.au/Documentations/Werris%20Creek%20Mine/Environmental%20Management,%20Monitoring%20&%20Compliance/Annual%20Reviews/WCC%20Annual%20Review%202022.pdf>

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<https://whitehavencoal.com.au/Documentations/Rocglen%20Mine/Environmental%20Management,%20Monitoring%20&%20Compliance/Annual%20Reviews/ROC-Annual%20Review%202022.pdf>

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<https://whitehavencoal.com.au/Documentations/Werris%20Creek%20Mine/Environmental%20Management,%20Monitoring%20&%20Compliance/Annual%20Reviews/WCC%20Annual%20Review%202022.pdf>

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<https://whitehavencoal.com.au/Documentations/Narrabri%20Mine/Environmental%20Management,%20Monitoring%20&%20Compliance/Annual%20Reviews/NAR-Annual%20Review%202022.pdf>

⁵ Concluded 6 May 2022. [https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/news/media-releases/2022/epamedia220506-maules-creek-coal-ordered-to-pay-\\$158000-for-water-pollution](https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/news/media-releases/2022/epamedia220506-maules-creek-coal-ordered-to-pay-$158000-for-water-pollution)

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<https://whitehavencoal.com.au/Documentations/Sunnyside%20Mine/Environmental%20Management,%20Monitoring%20&%20Compliance/Annual%20Reviews/SUN-Annual%20Review%202022.pdf>

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The full file can be viewed at https://www.lockthegate.org.au/whitehaven_coal_shame_file.