

Dear NSW Government

This mine expansion of the **Maules Creek coal mine** near Narrabri will turn some of our most important **Swift Parrot** foraging habitat into a dirty great coal pit. The **Swift Parrot**, is one of Australia's most endangered birds and is listed as '*critically endangered*'. With fewer than **500 left in the wild**, every tree matters.

The beautiful irreplaceable Leard State Forest deserves protection along with its precious water resources. Whitehaven have left a legacy of **environmental harm and broken trust**. The community says **no** to more coal, more destruction, and more climate harm as Whitehaven has already destroyed nature around them.

The mine is approved to continue until December 2034, but is seeking approval now to expand and extend the timeframe for another 10 years until 2044. This approval **MUST** not be granted as 2034 is 9 years away , and they want approval for an added 10 years. How can approval be given for a total combined period of 19 years of operation? The government has no idea how bad climate change, natural disasters, carbon emissions and the state of the environment will be. This is unacceptable to make a decision that **WILL** affect the public's welfare that involves a 19 year timeframe from now.

As a NSW citizen I can only assume that deals have already been made between the NSW government and Whitehaven behind closed doors. This is not why you our government were voted into office by the NSW electorate. The NSW electorate still make up more votes than the coal mining sector. Our voices should be listened to rather than industry.

The government brazenly supporting coal mining is turning its back on the rest of the NSW electorate. Minister for Natural Resources Courtney Houssos has also said, "with global demand for coal projected to **decrease** over the coming decades, we want to ensure workers, communities and regional centres are given the support they need." Planning for coal to run for the next 20 years plus is wishful thinking.

The Minns government were voted in to make the right decisions for the public. We do **NOT** need more coal.

I **strongly oppose** the Maules Creek Coal Mine Continuation Project for the following reasons.

Turbocharging climate change

- NSW communities are already experiencing devastating impacts from global warming but this project will produce an extra 238 million tonnes of total greenhouse gas pollution.
- Following the NSW Court of Appeal decision only a few weeks ago on Whitehaven's Mt Pleasant coal mine, Whitehaven Coal should be required to fully assess the impacts of the downstream emissions from the project on the local environment and community. This requires proper attribution science to be conducted. None of this has been done in the current Environmental Impact Statement. Whitehaven continues to fail in all areas to mitigate damage to communities and the local areas. They show a pattern of repeatedly accepting no responsibility for their careless actions.
- The direct emissions from the mining process itself, of over 3 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, will completely undermine NSW achieving climate targets. This proposed expansion – the Maules Creek Coal Mine Continuation Project – will dig up an additional **117 million tonnes of coal for export. Atrocious!**
- To date the Minns government has approved its sixth coal mine expansion since coming to power. Two were approved in 2024 and this year alone four have already been approved and now with the

Maules Creek Coal Mine Continuation Project listed as a 'Major Project' awaiting approval to continue for the next 19 years. How dare this company have the audacity to expect that they should be allowed to destroy the land, air, and water that damages the environment for people and nature for another additional 10 years from 2034 to 2044.

- The NSW Net Zero Commission has already warned this year that NSW is **NOT** on track to meet its emission reduction **LEGISLATED** climate targets for 2030 or 2035. This is because of the constant approval of coal expansions. Since 2024 there are an extra 6 already new approved coal mines in NSW approved by the Minns government. When combined with already pre-existing coal mines it is estimated that **340.67 million tonnes of climate pollution (lifetime) will be emitted**, more than **three** times NSW's total annual emissions from all sources.
- The flow on affect of increased carbon emissions produces more frequent and worse **natural disasters**. This is a blow to communities who are bearing the brunt of the fossil fuel-driven climate crisis. The government is urged to accept the truth that the **mining of coal is supercharging the climate crisis** and worsening catastrophic weather events like the flooding in our state. People are suffering and homes have been flooded, but it's business as usual for the government who continues to approve more coal mine expansion in NSW. Expansion referring to higher coal production and/or an extension of time in operation.
- **Whitehaven is banking an approval that won't start until 2034.** The NSW Government shouldn't be approving a coal mine expansion now that will not even start until 2034 to operate to 2044 – it is locking in greenhouse gas emissions far into the future that we can't afford.
- Whitehaven are assuming that getting approval in the future will be harder for a continuance of the Maules Creek Coal Mine. This proposal **now**, is designed to 'bank' an approval **now** before climate laws are strengthened further in response to the rapidly escalating impacts of global warming in the form of more extreme weather events. The NSW Government **MUST NOT** be approving a coal mine expansion now that won't start for another 9 years to end in 2044. This would be the wrong decision. The coal market, along with climate bills and carbon emission targets will look very different to what we have now. NSW will probably be at that point the worst state in Australia- a 'climate laggard' forced to permit Whitehaven to begin operations in 2034 if it is approved now. This will contribute to huge levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Making this decision now is extremely foolish and reckless.

Destruction of Nature and People's lives

- Often the approval of a coalmine is made first and then the negative affects appear later. As an example Tahmoor coal mine, 25 km from Campbelltown, is the second most polluting coal mine in NSW, with high volumes of methane emissions. However, the company was not proposing to implement best practice methane abatement for this expansion. Even though there is a severe warming effect of methane emissions which are 84 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, this project was still approved. This approval allows Tahmoor to operate for an additional nine months in 2032, to access a new long wall and to release an additional 5.8 million tonnes of carbon emissions. Longwall mining at Tahmoor is currently causing damage to people's homes in the nearby village of Bargo. The company reviewed its last expansion in 2020 to reduce the number of impacted properties from 751 homes to 143. An improvement but why should anyone's property be the collateral damage of a government coalmine approval. This coalmine has cost people's homes

financially and displaced many. The reason in citing this example is that the long term side effects for nature and people are felt after approvals are given, and it is too late to change the damage that has been caused to people's lives and the negative consequences for nature because of a bad government decision.

- We already know in advance the negative environmental impacts that Whitehaven has caused for this area. This mine first started in 2015 despite widespread opposition from people across NSW and the powerful objections of the local farming community and Gomeroi custodians. The community galvanised in force to object to this project with ongoing protests for over 2 years. This disgusting project should never have been given approval in the first place. Extending approval for another 10 years until 2044 will dig up an additional 117 million tonnes of coal for export that will cause the decline of people's health and nature.
- The destruction of **LEARD STATE FOREST** has already begun as Whitehaven's 4 existing open cut coal mines in the Namoi Valley in Northwestern NSW have ALREADY cleared hundreds of hectares of the beloved and environmentally significant Leard State Forest with biodiversity offset regulations not achieved. If Whitehaven's mine expansion gets their way, the remaining 'critically endangered' Swift Parrot's precious habitat will be replaced by a giant coal pit.
- Whitehaven's Maules Creek coalmine has been plagued with environmental failures since it began. The mine gained federal approval in 2013 on the condition that the company secure 5,532 hectares of biodiversity offsets to compensate for clearing a critically endangered ecological community, known as box gum grassy woodland, essential life sustaining habitat for bird species and is a critically endangered flora. Box Gum Grassy Woodland (BGGW) is a critically endangered vegetation type throughout NSW, and across eastern Australia. Box gum grassy woodlands supports more than 400 plant species with the highest diversity present in the grasses and forbs. The woodlands are primary habitat for a range of native fauna, including woodland birds such as the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater, Superb Parrot and Swift Parrot. The BGGW is so important that projects across NSW are trying to protect and enhance remnant grassy woodland vegetation and revegetate and regenerate new areas on private properties to improve connectivity between patches of vegetation and support valued ecological communities.
- From 2013 Whitehaven had until 2020 to secure its biodiversity offsets. Even after 7 years Whitehaven was unable to secure thousands of hectares of biodiversity offsets. Citing Whitehaven's past failures is important. They did not care about nature then so what has changed to ensure they will do the right thing to protect nature now. They have shown that they are a company that cannot be trusted and even when given warnings to act, do not do what they are supposed to. Anything that they promise now needs to be viewed with scepticism by the community and also the government. Nature is not a priority for this company!
- The seriousness of this offence cannot be overstated. The federally listed box gum grassy woodland is an ecological community on the brink of extinction. The iconic woodland once existed across millions of hectares in eastern Australia. Today, there is far less than 5% left in the world. Whitehaven was given another reprieve to secure offsets. Whitehaven failed to verify that its proposed offset areas will satisfy its offsetting requirements and proposed to contravene its offsetting conditions. This is a company that cannot be trusted and shows an irresponsible attitude to environmental destruction.

Government Priorities and the Coal Market

- The NSW 2025-26 Budget sends the message that NSW is open for business regardless of the damage from coal mining. The NSW coal industry has plans to extend mines and operate into the 2040s. We do not have to the 2040's to tackle climate change. It needs to be addressed now. NSW is the driving state economically accounting for 65 per cent of the nation's venture capital investment in 2024. The government does not have a balanced perspective when it comes to the ongoing approval of coalmines. The coal mining lobby has an unfair advantage and access to the government and ministers. The community do not, yet any decision made does affect communities in a negative way. It damages directly affected communities' emotional and physical well-being and destroys species' habitats that effects the survival of already struggling wildlife. The Minns Government needs to decide whether it is on the side of communities or big coal mining companies. So far, it is siding with the coal companies and communities are paying the price.
- NSW coal mining approvals are out of step with the reality of the situation. According to Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (September 27 2024), "Increasing supply over the long term into a market with declining demand for Australia's thermal coal exports places these and other mines at increasing risk of financial stress."
- Coal export trade from Australia is undergoing significant change and has recently deteriorated in key markets. The Trade Map data indicates our traditional coal markets declined – all except China. Exports to our premium coal markets of Japan, Korea and Taiwan (JKT) fell by 11% in FY2024, following a 24% decrease in FY2023. China's long-term vision is to cease imports by bolstering their own domestic production levels. It has grown domestic production by nearly 1 billion tonnes in the past five years and will continue this pace.
- The reality is there will be reduced coal markets with increased emissions as the demand for Australia's high-energy coal will be in terminal decline, at some point it will be insufficient to support any mines' viability. The industry will need to adapt as global decarbonisation targets approach. Coalmines' emissions intensities are set to continue to grow into the future as more and more methane is emitted per tonne of coal produced. This is the result of mining projects having to extend into deeper and more gaseous reserves.

Whitehaven's history of continuing breaches

- Whitehaven Coal has an appalling compliance record. 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. They have incurred almost \$1.5 million in total penalties for offences that have included stealing 1 billion litres of water without a licence during the worst drought on record at the Maules Creek Coal mine, polluting waterways, and illegally clearing hundreds of hectares of endangered forest, breaking noise restraints, and serious workplace health and safety failures.
- Whitehaven cannot be trusted. They have a history of ongoing breaches. This rampant destruction will massively increase if Whitehaven's new coal project continuance is allowed to proceed. ***They have a shameful record that shows they are not fit and proper to hold a licence to operate coal mines in NSW.*** Even when receiving government warnings they do not respond and refuse action to rectify breaches. The NSW government has failed to reign in this company to be accountable and fix the problems that they cause. Some examples are-

- 1) A clean up notice only with no follow-up in March 2020 of the release of polystyrene balls into a local waterway at Maules Creek.
- 2) Penalty notices only for failing to seek approval for exploration activities in November 2019.
- 3) In September 2019 at Maules Creek a prohibition notice issued by the Resources Regulator prohibiting the use of vehicles following a dangerous incident, this followed with Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) investigating groundwater loss to local farmers the following month and then the next month in November NRAR and the Department of Planning investigating (that is still ongoing apparently) construction of a water pipeline NOT included in the approval.
- 4) September 2019 NRAR finds Whitehaven has taken 3 billion litres of surface water illegally over 4 years at Maules Creek.
- 5) Other breaches include failures to minimise dust, dumping combustible cannisters improperly at Narrabri Council's rubbish dump causing a fire, blast fumes affecting neighbouring properties, blasts exceeding the air blast pressure criteria; sound power levels exceeded the Noise Management Plan, failure to minimise dust pollution on haul roads, failure in implementing Blast Management Plan, failure to implement proper weed and feral animal control as per Biodiversity Management Plan (Maules Creek), disturbing Aboriginal artefacts, mining more coal than licence allows and the list goes on.
- 6) April 2020 South East Forest Rescue launch legal action for Whitehaven Coal failing to secure necessary biodiversity offsets at Maules Creek when clearing endangered woodlands. How many woodland bird species were affected by Whitehaven's failures here?
 - This ongoing arrogance and violation by Whitehaven Coal is UNACCEPTABLE. How much of our taxpayer money is the NSW government spending to watch, investigate, issue court findings, penalty notices, fines, suspensions, prosecutions, warning letters, court hearings and undertakings to make Whitehaven accountable for their Biodiversity Management Plans and official cautions to Whitehaven.
 - Accessing records and breaches of non-compliance by Whitehaven is also difficult to obtain from the NSW government. Freedom of information records just on pollution reports from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) that should be public can take months to obtain. Transparency of records is not forthcoming and the public are often denied access to these records. This indicates that there are more wrongful breaches occurring that the government wants to keep hidden from the public.
 - Permitting this company to continue operation to 2044 would be the wrong decision and is strongly opposed by the local and wider communities. The government is urged to listen to communities. Approving the continuance of Maules Creek Coalmine is not in the best interests of the state or its citizens. We already have sufficient coalmines operating in NSW to meet our future coal needs, especially when markets will start to decrease from 2035.

Water and communities at risk

- This expansion poses a major risk to local water resources – it will suck down water beneath local creeks and the groundwater used by farmers to water their stock. Whitehaven has already been prosecuted for stealing water at the Maules Creek coal mine at the height of the last drought.
- The expansion will harm the local farming community at Maules Creek and cause negative social impacts.
- It will further empty the district of families through alienation of productive land, and create dangerous dust pollution and escalating noise for surrounding areas, whilst creating division and conflict. It will exacerbate the housing crisis in the region.

The real cost- do we need more coal mines?

- The Australian Institute report in May 2021 said that “the rationale for new coal mines in NSW is undermined by the fact that existing coal mines are producing at well below their approved capacity.” Upper Hunter coal mines a few years ago were operating at less than two thirds (62%) of approved capacity. The NSW Minns government has opened up 6 new mines since in office with 4 new ones in 2025 alone. We are only halfway through the year! And now Whitehaven want a continuance of their coal mine to 2044. The world has been telling us for years that it intends to use less coal in the future. Markets are decreasing and will decrease further.
- When mining ceases it leaves an environmental mess. Coal mine companies are notorious for not accepting their responsibility to clean up this mess. There will be at least and more, if further coal mines are approved or permitted to operate longer like Maules Creek Coal mine, a minimum of **23 mine voids** left behind by current coal mines. The total cost could reach \$25 billion, far exceeding the \$3.3 billion paid in environmental bonds by the NSW Government. Obviously this money will not be enough with a shortfall of \$21.7 billion dollars to meet current rehabilitation liabilities, how will this shortfall be addressed? Obviously the government has failed to budget correctly in this area. We assume that with any wrong costings by the government, it is always absorbed by the taxpayer and these coal mining companies will get ‘off Scot free.’
- These voids must be attended to and rehabilitated properly and NOT left to scar the landscape. Voids affect groundwater and often fill with highly saline or otherwise unusable water. Polling by The Australia Institute found that 77 % of Australians expected voids to be filled to “near original surface level with groundwater protected”. Of course mining companies will avoid their responsibility and the people’s voice will be ignored. The NSW government must stand up to these mining companies and force them to pay. They destroyed the land, they are accountable to repair it. Unfortunately the government’s agenda is to supercharge the NSW economy with more mining industries. They forget the negative legacy they leave behind for nature and communities. This is wrong and these coal mining companies must be called out.

Summary

NSW communities are already experiencing devastating impacts from global warming but this Whitehaven project expansion will turbocharge climate change even more. The Maules Creek Coal Mine Continuation Project will dig up an additional 117 million tonnes of coal for export. The direct emissions from the mining process itself, of over 3 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, will completely **undermine NSW**

achieving climate targets. This project will produce an extra 238 million tonnes of **total** greenhouse gas pollution.

The NSW security bond system currently holds just a fraction (\$3.3 Billion) of the estimated cost of properly backfilling and rehabilitating the final voids that will be left by coal mines. This is the collateral damage that coal mines walk away from. After they have destroyed environmental values, pillaged nature, and increased emissions and climate change, they walk away with their profits not accepting any responsibility for the damage that they cause to communities and the environment. The NSW government should be protecting its citizens not accepting the damage from these coal mines.

The NSW government through its proposed model called the 'Future Jobs and Investment Authorities' clearly are prioritising the future of coal and are ignoring the fact that the need for coal is already declining but are refusing to accept this fact. Nearly 40 coal mines currently operate across NSW, including 17 in the Hunter region, with most involved in export coal markets. This is enough coal.

Approving Whitehaven to operate their Maules Creek Coal Mine Continuation Project to 2044 is strongly **opposed**.

Yours sincerely

Janice Haviland