

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
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Parramatta NSW 2124

7 August 2025

Aurizon submission: Maules Creek Continuation Project

To whom it may concern

Aurizon appreciates the opportunity to provide this submission in support of Whitehaven Coal's proposed Maules Creek Continuation Project.

Our company is pleased to support the proposal, recognising the significant and sustainable benefits that would be delivered by enabling the Maules Creek mining operations to both increase production and to continue the mining life of the operations until 2044, particularly for communities in a number of regions in New South Wales (NSW).

Aurizon notes the Scoping Report prepared by Whitehaven Coal finds that the proposed extension would enable the continued production and supply of high energy content, low emissions coal to satisfy forecast thermal coal market demand.

We particularly note the economic contribution of coal mining in the Narrabri and Gunnedah region, as well as the wider Hunter Valley and Newcastle regions, with the industry providing a substantial proportion of jobs, with mining jobs leading to skilled and well-paid careers for people across these regions. Consistent with these benefits, Aurizon notes the conclusion of the Scoping Report that the proposed Extension would allow the continuation of the employment of the workforce until 2045.

Aurizon's operations

Aurizon (ASX: AZJ) is Australia's largest rail-based transport business. Our purpose is to grow regional Australia by enabling producers to deliver bulk commodities to end customers. Each year, our company transports more than 250 million tonnes of Australian products connecting miners, primary producers, and industry with international and domestic markets.

We provide customers with integrated freight and logistics solutions across our national footprint that comprises operations in all mainland Australian states and the Northern Territory.

Having commenced heavy haul rail services in the Hunter Valley in 2005, Aurizon now hauls more than 50 million tonnes of coal per annum in NSW.

Beyond coal services, Aurizon operates bulk export terminal and ship loading facility which is adjacent to rail lines at the Port of Newcastle. We also provide interstate containerised freight services connecting Sydney with cities in other states.

Our company has approximately 500 employees who live and work in the NSW regions of Newcastle, the Upper Hunter Valley and Gunnedah. Aurizon's employees in NSW are a valued part of the company's total workforce of approximately 6,000 people.

In relation to Whitehaven's Maules Creek Mine, Aurizon has operated rail haulage services from the mine to port since the first haulage operations commenced at Maules Creek in 2015.

Aurizon's ability to provide efficient operations and to continue improving our haulage services depends on investments in our rollingstock, facilities, as well as in technology services and maintenance operations that support supply chain operations. Over more than a decade, Aurizon has invested more than \$1.1 billion in rollingstock, operations and maintenance facilities and in technology to support our NSW operations¹.

Safety

At Aurizon, our safety goal is to protect ourselves, each other, and our communities. Both Aurizon and Whitehaven share a common set of values relating to safety. The companies are conducting their businesses in a way that provides and maintains safe and healthy workplaces for employees, contractors, visitors and the communities in which our operations are located.

We are both working to provide workplaces and operations where there are zero injuries by ensuring that safety and the prevention of injury is part of our culture. Having safety at the core of our culture provides the basis for safe and productive workplaces extending from the operation of mines and across all parts of the land transport supply chain. As part of this commitment, Aurizon actively participates in industry-wide efforts to help reduce rail safety incidents.

The mental health and wellbeing of our employees has always been a priority for our business. We are committed to working with employees to break the stigma associated with mental health problems, and increase awareness by participating in events such as National R U OK? Day, Rail R U OK? Day, and Movember, and by actively promoting our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services.

Our people have also organised and participated in local activities to talk about mental wellbeing, raise awareness of the issues and provide support and advice to anyone who might be seeking information and assistance for themselves or on behalf of others.

Sustainability including decarbonisation

Aurizon is continuing to embed sustainable practices into the company's day to day operations. This commitment complements the high priority that Aurizon gives to ensuring that the transport supply chain is developed and operated sustainably, and to effectively managing and reducing the impacts of our operations and support services on the natural environment.

A key component of our approach to sustainability is the commitment we have made to decarbonisation, based on a Climate Strategy and Action Plan developed and released by the company in 2020. Aurizon is committed to achieving net-zero operational greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This involves taking a leading role in accelerating decarbonisation of Australia's freight sector, and contribute to decarbonising the supply chains in which we participate, by:

- establishing \$50 million Future Fleet Fund to develop new technologies;
- establishing partnerships and forums for customer and industry collaboration; and
- continuing advocacy for rail's significant role in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Our annual Sustainability Reports provides a comprehensive explanation of the priorities and actions the company has committed to deliver, consistent with our values.

¹ The combined total of all past investments made in the Hunter Valley and Gunnedah Basin regions by Aurizon.

Our values are the basis on which we are continuing to build a strong company that contributes to a sustainable future for our employees, customers, shareholders and the communities where we operate².

Regional communities

A high priority for Aurizon is to build on the positive contribution our businesses make to the regional communities where our employees live and work and where our train and supply chain operations are located.

More than 80 per cent of Aurizon's employees are based in regional locations. With regard to our NSW operations, Aurizon's employees who work in operational and maintenance positions are predominantly based in the Newcastle and Hunter Valley regions.

Another way that Whitehaven and Aurizon contribute to regional areas is through the commitment that both companies have to supporting and working with local communities. Both businesses work with organisations and individuals in regional communities to continuously maintain safety, including the safety of the communities where we have our operations. We also engage in ongoing dialogue with community representatives and use this dialogue to improve our performance. Similarly, we strive to understand and, where we can contribute or lend a hand, to support local community issues and priorities.

Aurizon provides support for charitable and not for profit organisations in the communities where we have operations. Aurizon provides this support through our Community Giving Fund. Since 2011, Aurizon has supported more than 650 local initiatives undertaken by charities and community organisations, including local projects to provide education, community safety, environmental improvement and health and well-being services and support.

In addition, Aurizon purchases a large proportion of the company's business inputs from local suppliers. In 2024-25 Aurizon spent approximately \$1 billion with suppliers across all operations in Australia. This included purchases from suppliers in regional NSW. These businesses supply goods and services including, for example, equipment hire and office services.

Diversity and inclusion

Aurizon has a commitment to building greater diversity and inclusion in our workforce, with a focus on increasing the representation of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women across the company, including in skilled operational roles.

Aurizon appreciates that an inclusive workplace, which supports gender balance and equality, drives better performance and outcomes for our customers, shareholders and the communities where employees live and work. The representation of women in our workforce is currently 22.7 per cent, up from 12 per cent in 2012. This increased representation of women includes providing more opportunities to pursue skilled pathways through apprenticeships and training programs within the company.

Providing effective employment, training and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as part of a broader commitment to achieving greater understanding and contributing to reconciliation, has been a key focus for Aurizon.

We have made significant progress, with the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in our workforce increasing from approximately 2.5 per cent of all employees in 2012, to approximately 7 per cent of total employees today. Our aim is to make further progress with providing opportunities for Indigenous Australians as set out in Aurizon's latest Reconciliation Action Plan.

² Aurizon 2024 Sustainability Report is available at: [Our sustainability approach](#)

Long term benefits

The proposed approach to the development of the Maules Creek Continuation Project would deliver important economic benefits for the NSW economy. As a commercial partner of Whitehaven, Aurizon recognises that Whitehaven is committed to embedding sustainable practices and operating a sustainable business. Importantly, given the regional presence and the commitment of Whitehaven, a large proportion of the economic benefits would be shared with regional communities, including the Maules Creek, Narrabri, Gunnedah and neighbouring regions.

These benefits include the creation of additional skilled and well-paid jobs to enable the continued operation of the mine. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) average weekly earnings by industry, published by the ABS in November 2024, estimated that the average weekly earnings for people working in the mining industry is more than \$3,100, which is approximately 50 per cent higher than the average weekly earnings for all industries³. Similarly, the gross value to the economy per mining industry employee is substantially higher than for any other major industry.

In addition, jobs in this sector involve the development of skills and capabilities that provide opportunities for employees to pursue rewarding careers, with the skills and experience gained in mining roles being valued by many other industries. These benefits are especially important to regional communities where well-paid and highly skilled employment opportunities can be limited when compared to the opportunities available in capital cities.

Informed by the substantial economic, sustainability and community benefits the project would make available, particularly for people living and working in regional NSW, Aurizon is very pleased to support Whitehaven's application for the Maules Creek Continuation Project.

Yours sincerely,



Ed McKeiver (Group Executive Coal)

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Average Weekly Earnings Australia*, November 2024. [Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2024 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)