



Nature Conservation Council

The voice for nature in NSW

Friday 8th August 2025

Submission on Maules Creek Continuation Project
Application number: SSD-63428218

To whom it may concern,

The Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales (NCC) is the state's peak environment organisation. We represent over 200 environment groups across NSW. Together we are dedicated to protecting and conserving the wildlife, landscapes and natural resources of NSW.

NCC is concerned about the impacts of the Maules Creek Continuation Project and object to the project due to its impacts on threatened species, particularly the Swift Parrot, and impacts on water resources and climate change impacts.

Timing and Approval Process

We are concerned that this proposal seeks approval now for an operation that would not commence until 2034. This is an attempt by the proponent to "bank" approval laws before stronger climate and biodiversity protections are legislated.

Further, the Net Zero Commission's most recent report identified coal mine expansions as a major threat to NSW meeting its climate targets and committed to further investigation. It is irresponsible to advance this project until that work is complete.

Increasing Climate Change Impacts on the Local Community and threatening NSW's Climate Targets

If approved, the project would produce an additional 238 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. This will turbocharge climate change, undermine NSW's legislated climate targets, and further expose communities to extreme weather, bushfires, and drought.

NSW communities, including the community in the locality of the Maules Creek Continuation Project, are experiencing rapidly escalating climate impacts in the form of extreme weather events. Just this week, the area of Narrabri Shire including



Nature Conservation Council of NSW

GPO Box 2246 SYDNEY NSW 2001

www.nature.org.au

ABN 96 716 360 601

Maules Creek experienced a major flood, prompting evacuations, stranding residents, causing damage and road closures. Such events are increased in frequency and severity by climate change that this coal mine project would contribute to.

In light of the recent NSW Court of Appeal ruling on the Mt Pleasant coal mine, Whitehaven Coal must conduct a thorough evaluation of how downstream emissions from this project will affect the surrounding environment and nearby communities through increasing climate change events like the current flooding. This should involve rigorous attribution science, which has not yet been incorporated in the current Environmental Impact Statement.

The mining process alone emits over 3 million tonnes of greenhouse gases, seriously jeopardizing NSW's ability to meet its climate targets.

Under-reported climate impacts

The mine's own fugitive methane emissions have been subject to questionable reporting changes, with independent analysis suggesting actual emissions may be up to 13 times higher than reported. Methane is a potent short-term climate pollutant, and its full impacts must be independently assessed, with data made public.

Destruction of Critical Biodiversity

The Maules Creek mine has already destroyed significant parts of the Leard State Forest, a high conservation value ecosystem. Nearly half of the forest has been cleared for coal mining, and this continuation will clear 428 more hectares of the Leard State Forest. These impacts are cumulative, following the extensive clearing already undertaken by three adjacent mines in the Leard State Forest region. Continued habitat fragmentation risks long-term species decline.

Of particular concern is the Swift Parrot, given the species' critically endangered status and its repeated recorded presence in the State Forest in 2012, 2014, 2022, and 2023. The Leard State Forest represents a significant foraging habitat for the Swift Parrot. This project will destroy over 500 hectares of foraging habitat for the critically endangered Swift Parrot and bring the species closer to extinction. Scientific records show the forest has "high fidelity" use by Swift Parrots, with up to 4% of the entire population recorded feeding there in a single season. Additionally, the expansion would remove an estimated 50,000 feed trees, including over 19,000 large White Box habitat considered critical to the species' survival. Loss of this habitat would be irreversible and could accelerate the species' extinction. Offsetting such destruction is not acceptable.

Water Security at Risk

The Maules Creek mine has a history of unlawful and unsustainable water use, including prosecution for taking surface water without a licence during drought, and building unapproved pipelines to secure additional supplies. Current evidence



suggests groundwater extraction from the productive alluvial aquifer is far exceeding initial estimates, with projections that the mine's licensed entitlement could be exhausted before 2030. The project will deplete water from creeks and groundwater that are essential to farmers, impacting the farming community at Maules Creek.

Community and Social Impacts

The ongoing dust, noise, and water impacts from the mine will create more social division and loss in the community. The mining operation impacts on productive farmland and increases health risks from air pollution. Local farmers are particularly impacted, contributing to the continued departure of farming families from the Maules Creek community. The area has already experienced a population decline of approximately 8% per annum, and this continuation project would exacerbate these social challenges.

Whitehaven's Compliance Record

Whitehaven Coal has been found guilty, investigated, or prosecuted for breaches of environmental and planning laws on at least 35 occasions in the last decade. This track record should disqualify them from further approvals that risk serious and irreversible damage.

Due to the severe negative impacts on climate, biodiversity, water and community, we object the Maules Creek Coal Mine Continuation Project.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. Your contact person at Nature Conservation Council of NSW is Coal Mining and Methane Campaigner, Manjot Kaur (mkaur@nature.org.au).

Yours sincerely,



Jacqui Mumford
CEO of Nature Conversation Council NSW

