

Submission to EIS

from Philippa Murray, "Merralong" 1583 Quia Rd, Gunnedah

I harbour grave concerns re the environmental impact of the proposed mine. It is not just an extension as the EIS states but a project that has more than doubled in size with the accompanying infrastructure.

Part of that includes a new large coal handling facility that will service other mines in the region. New infrastructure such as a rail line across the Namoi River expands its potential impact even further, creating a footprint which opens the door for other expansions.

Despite Whitehaven's much lauded move of the mine pit 1km from the river, the mine is still perilously close to the critical water source of the Namoi. On Kurrumbede, there has always been a permanent waterhole and a series of lagoons providing for stock and wildlife.

The revered poet Dorothea Mackellar, whose family owned the property a century ago, wrote of the wild swans, the cranes and the ibis that were found there together with the fish in the Namoi. Whether fish will survive in a river where run off of coal dust can be expected is doubtful.

Despite the water studies undertaken which support negligible effects on the water table, I cannot ignore landowners to the north of the project near Maule's Creek whose bores have dried up and now rely on water being carted for stock and domestic use.

Existing mines around Boggabri have already had a significant social impact on the small town. Imported labour who would be working at the proposed mine, leaves locals feeling disconnected. The buy-up of many farms in the district has resulted in small communities being gutted. Farms, like ours, find it difficult to source labour.

The proposed rail corridor to link up to the Werris Creek-Mungindi line is of great concern. Nowhere in the EIS is there a detailed plan of the construction of the line apart from using pylons and culverts. Anyone who has lived on a floodplain well knows the potentially devastating impact of floodwaters without them being constrained by a rail embankment, even with culverts. Water could potentially back up for weeks and cause vast soil erosion problems because of the wash and debris.

Surely the Planning Dept has the powers to propose that a rail link be run to the north to connect with Boggabri Coal's loading facility and road overpass near Gin's Leap? This would reduce the footprint and environmental impact.

I would also add the social impact of building a rail link to this proposed mine. Those landowners who signed agreements with Whitehaven to allow the rail corridor have been effectively ostracised from the local community, causing deep divisions in what was a tight knit district. It also goes close to farm dwellings where the noise and dust

impacts will sadly only be known when/if this project goes ahead with its minimum 10 trains a day.

The preservation of the historically significant homestead Kurrumbede and its outbuildings cannot be rated too highly. It does not feature on the local LEP nor any heritage listing yet its importance as a cultural destination is most important. As home to the Mackellar family, which includes the iconic poet Dorothea, it is a vital thread in this country's historical and literary fabric. Blasting and dust damage must be minimised.

From our property, approximately 10kms from the Namoi River, we are already subjected to a blaze of mine lights clearly visible at night from Maule's Creek. Dust clouds can also be seen when there is blasting. The Nandewar Range is often just a blue haze. Any expansion of mining will only increase these impacts.

Finally, I would hope that Whitehaven and the NSW government had both conscience and foresight. When a report issued earlier this month by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommends a two thirds reduction in coal power by 2030 to avoid climate warming and its risk of extreme drought, floods, fires and food shortages, it was a siren.

They recommended that Australia and the rest of the world move to virtual elimination of coal power by 2050. There are alternatives, there is renewable energy.

I don't believe approval should be given to a project of this magnitude with its potentially devastating consequences in a region renowned for its food and fibre production.

Fast forward to 2030 ....An aquifer drained, crops low yielding because of dust issues, stock numbers decreased as bores and the river dry up..... what will be the government response?

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