

25<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Peter and Georgia Watson

Attn: Mr Steve O'Donoghue

Mining and Extractive Industries

Major Development Assessment

Department of Planning

GPO Box 39

SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr O'Donoghue

Re: Vickery Extension Coal Project

Project Application Number: 16\_7480

The extension plans for the Vickery Coal Mine by Whitehaven Coal will have an unacceptable and irreversible impact on the biodiversity of the area surrounding the mine and on the community of Boggabri who will be ringed by massive coal mining operations.

This is not just a minor extension of a small coal mine, rather a major infrastructure proposal that will open the door to further major mining projects in the Boggabri area. The proposed railway line and bridge will have massive impacts on the local fauna and flora (some of which are threatened species) during construction, and these impacts will continue as the railway line is used. The area has been well studied and documented as a Koala stronghold and any development will cause loss of habitat and restrictions to movement thereby threatening their survival.

The proposed pit will be too close to the alluvium of the Namoi River and the closely associated Upper and Lower Namoi Groundwater Alluvium. The Maules Creek coal mine has started impacting on the Maules creek aquifer and Creek itself. Self monitoring supported by the department of planning has allowed Whitehaven to avoid scrutiny, even though many of the monitoring bores are inadequately installed and the data misrepresented to the Community Consultative Committee members. No pump testing was ever carried out to determine flow rates across the boundaries between the coal bearing rock strata and the Maules Creek groundwater Alluvium as requested by the Maules Creek Community Council during the submission process. It is no wonder we are seeing the problems now emerging in the relatively isolated Maules Creek Aquifer. Similar impacts from the extension to the Vickery Mine will have major impacts to the water supplies for townships downstream like Boggabri, Narrabri, Wee Waa and Walgett.

Whitehaven Coal has an extremely poor track record of working within the approval conditions they are issued. They have breached on numerous occasions with examples ranging from release of contaminated mine water to surrounding waterways at Tarrawonga, continuous dust exceedances at Tarrawonga and Maules Creek mines, noise complaints, poisonous blast gas releases, mine traffic approval breaches leading to safety concerns on local roads.

We strongly object to the approval of the Vickery Extension Application on the grounds list above. Whitehaven does not respect the approval conditions it is issued and the impacts of the development and no doubt continued disregard for community health and wellbeing and environmental conservation make the application too much of a risk.

Yours sincerely

Peter and Georgia Watson