

Maules Creek Community Council Inc

24 October 2018

Attn: Mr Steve O'Donoghue,
Mining & 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

Please find enclosed a submission by the Maules Creek Community Council Inc (MCCC) regarding the Environmental Assessment by Whitehaven Coal prepared as part of the above mentioned Project Application.

The Environmental Assessment involves a substantial expansion of the existing mining approval for the Vickery coal mine which will have a cumulative impact on the already coal mine impacted district of Boggabri and Maules Creek.

Due to;

1. the environmental track record of the parent company Whitehaven Coal and its impacts on Maules Creek,
2. the Independent Panel on Climate Change report urging that coal be phased out as soon as possible due to its impact on climate, and,
3. the potential impacts of a large pit next to the Namoi River and the surrounding rich agricultural land,

the Maules Creek Community Council is strongly of the view that this project should be rejected and a message sent to the community that the State government is listening and acting on the science.

As such we strongly object to the project proposal. This is exactly the sort of project that should never be developed.

Yours sincerely
Maules Creek Community Council Inc

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Re: Vickery Coal Project/ Project Application Number: 16_7480

Vickery Extension Project

Project Application Number: 16_7480

Submission by:

Maules Creek Community Council Inc

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Executive Summary

In earlier submissions the Maules Creek Community Council provided extensive expert evidence as to the risks posed by the mine at Maules Creek to the groundwater, amenity, biodiversity, community viability and climate.

The recommendations of the MCCC submission based on the expert evidence were ignored in the final planning conditions.

Once the planning department had ignored sensible recommendations, the community had little faith in the strict / stringent conditions of the planning approval.

In the years that followed we have witnessed a litany of corruption allegations, ministerial leaks of draft federal approval conditions, bankruptcy and a host of other matters surrounding the Maules Creek coal mines proponent and the politicians who have long since departed the scene.

Since then, groundwater at Maules Creek is disappearing at the rate of 1.5 mm per day, Whitehaven coal has a terrible environmental track record on dust and noise as evidenced by the EPA risk rating and the IPCC has released a clarion call to arms for citizens to defend the climate.

Despite engaging in the process in good faith, employing experts at our expense and trusting the science, our concerns have been justified.

Now when we make a complaint to the planning and compliance regulators, the resultant investigations have gone nowhere.

This failure to plan and then to regulate, gives the MCCC no confidence that the Dept of Planning, the NSW EPA or Work Cover can regulate a rogue operator like Whitehaven at Maules Creek or at Vickery.

It is not possible to regulate a company that consistently misrepresents the truth, covers up facts and bullies its employees with the existing weak model planning conditions that require timely and accurate management reports, adaptive management whilst placing the burden of proof on the public, the neighbours and the regulator.

The entire framework and organisational structure for planning and managing coal mines is broken in this state.

As such, we can see no reason to approve such a risky project that is to be managed by a rogue operator on the basis of light touch planning conditions by such unwilling regulators in these days of climate emergency.

If this mine is approved the community of Boggabri will suffer further increased negative impacts of coal mining on their physical and mental health. The benefits and profits will bypass the town and fly out to the bigger towns and cities as well as to the predominantly overseas shareholders of Whitehaven Coal.

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