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Sustainable Living Armidale is a broad-based community group raising awareness of the implications of climate change and the depletion of natural resources, building networks, and inspiring and empowering our community to build a more self-reliant, resilient and sustainable future.

We do this by:

- *Holding monthly public meetings, drawing on the breadth of knowledge within Armidale and beyond*
- *Having a regular stall at both Mall Markets & Farmers' Market*
- *Organising backyard garden & sustainable house tours*
- *Maintaining a community garden*
- *Showing inspiring films*
- *Enabling action groups: food, energy, transport, education, community garden & mining, to promote local initiatives & local resilience*

INC9891413
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25 October 18

To Whom It May Concern:

Submission Regarding the Vickery Mine Extension

Sustainable Living Armidale (SLA) objects to the Vickery Mine Extension proposed by Whitehaven Coal.

Our objection is due to the risks and adverse effects this extension would have on Aboriginal cultural heritage, the local community, biodiversity, agriculture, climate change as well as ground and surface water.

While we are not opposed to mining in principle, supporting farmers to protect the Liverpool Plains and its agriculture from coal mining was one of the concerns which led to the formation of our action group Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining (AACSGaM) in August, 2011.

AACSGaM is one of several action groups of SLA, an organisation *committed to raise awareness of climate change and the depletion of natural resources, to build networks, and inspire and empower our community to build a more self-reliant, resilient and sustainable future.*

AACSGaM has 122 members on its mailing list and SLA 549. In Sydney this would correspond to over 24,000 and 109,000 people, respectively.

Whitehaven Coal is currently operating several coal mines in the region, including the Maules Creek, Werris Creek, Narrabri, Tarrawonga and Rocglen Mines.

The company already has an approval for a mine at the site and the proposed extension would more than double the volume of coal it mines to 10 million tonnes per year.

It includes infrastructure for coal mining, such as a new rail crossing over the Namoi River and floodplain and a new coal handling facility, whose capacities exceed the requirements for the already approved mine and its extension.

The project under consideration is one of eleven new or expanding coal mines in NSW which together would be bigger than Adani's mega-mine in Queensland.

Coal mining not only uses water, but the already approved mine and its extension would also induce leakage from the Namoi River and its alluvial aquifer. At a time when droughts are becoming harsher and more frequent due to climate change it would be irresponsible to approve this extension.

The people of Boggabri have learned from experience at Werris Creek and Maules Creek that Whitehaven does not keep its promises. The company has left rural communities shattered and landholders struggling when groundwater bores adjoining Whitehaven coal mines have run dry.

The mine site is adjacent to strategic agricultural land which will be rendered unlivable by dust and noise from the proposed mine. We are concerned that coal mining will take over the whole area, destroying agriculture and the Boggabri community.

Already, 76 family farms have been purchased by Whitehaven Coal in close proximity to the town of Boggabri, hollowing out the township, affecting local businesses and tearing the social fabric of the district.

The experience of our environmental representative on the Community Consultative Committee (CCC) of Whitehaven Coal's Maules Creek mine does not bode well for the community should this extension be approved. It shows that both the community and the environment are treated as collateral damage for company gain.

Problems experienced include:

- the apparent collaboration of the CCC chair John Turner with Whitehaven Coal in providing apologies for CCC meetings on behalf of a Greening Australia environmental CCC representative who did not exist;
- stalling with putting an actual environmental representative in place once the ghost representative was discovered;
- lack of co-operation and continual failure by Whitehaven Coal to provide the community with information relating to mining impacts during CCC meetings while admitting that these meetings are the only form of community consultation;
- manipulation of meeting minutes which were often incorrect or extremely vague;
- observed disregard for local community members directly impacted by toxic effects of mining including blast fumes, dust, noise pollution, light pollution e.g. Pat Murphy living 1 km from the mine with no mine noise or dust limits in place, see also - <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/farmer-pat-murphy:-a-forgotten-man-of-rural-australia/7322016>;
- harassment by mine security;
- failure to communicate breaches regarding pollution, clearing and bus transport requirements for workers;
- changing the permanent stream status of Maules Creek at Elfin Crossing to semi-permanent ponds in the Biodiversity Management Plan contrary to professional assessment and local knowledge;
- failure to offset threatened plant communities cleared for mining with like-for-like plant communities.

There is no reason to expect that community members living close to the proposed Vickery mine extension will not suffer a similar fate to those currently battling with Whitehaven Coal over the Maules Creek mine.

The threatened ecological communities and habitat, the surface and ground water, prime farming land, local communities - townships and traditional caretakers of the land, sacred sites and aboriginal artefacts are more valuable to our community than the short term financial gain of the coal industry.

The cumulative impacts from multiple mega-mines in the area have not been adequately considered and would have a lasting and irreversible negative impact on the community and the environment.

We note that the Exhibition Period for this project is not adequate given the size, complexity and lack of public awareness of the Vickery Mine Extension project. The Minister for Planning refused to extend the Public Exhibition to 90 days and this submission is incomplete due to these time constraints. Thus we reserve the right to provide additional details supporting our objection.

In the interest of the local communities as well as our nation as a whole we call on you not to approve the Vickery Mining Extension.

Yours Sincerely



Mahalath Halperin
Convenor, Sustainable Living Armidale