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25th October 2018

RE: Whitehaven Vickery Extension Project

Introduction

I have been living at Mirrabinda in residence 127b for 34 years, raising a family while working full time on the property for 32 years. I object to the extension proposed for the very obvious reason of proximity - proximity to the Namoi River, proximity to our home.

Noise

Given the size of the mine, how can we trust any of the modelling now that we are being told that the noise impacts are less than the previous approval, even though the capacity has doubled and there is CHPP and railway line?

I lived here next to the Rio Tinto mine in the 80s and 90s and had sleep disturbances then. That mine was approximately 20 times smaller than what is proposed by this extension.

The EIS shows my home will be in the noise management zone, exceeding the limit by 3-5 dB (Annexure D, page 39). Where as in the previous 2014 approval for a much smaller 4.5 Mtpa mine, the EIS Noise & Blasting Impact Assessment document showed my home was much more affected/had higher predicted noise levels.

If you compare Year 7 in the proposed extension where the mine will be at 8.4Mtpa – operational noise will be lower at 35 dB (Day P10) 37 dB (Evening P10) and 38 dB (Night P10) then in the already approved much smaller mine which has production in Year 7 at 4.5 Mtpa (nearly half), and noise at 38 dB (Day P10) 42 dB (Evening P10) and 43 dB (Night P10) (Vickery Coal Project EIS Noise & Blasting Assessment, page 41). This is just one comparison and it makes you wonder about the reliability of the noise modelling that is the basis for the approval of the mine and consent conditions.

Dust

Whitehaven state that predominant winds are from the south east. I have a massive wind sock near my house and it blows from the proposed site a lot of the time. How will this not affect my health, my family's health and drinking water? How can our health and wellbeing be protected?

Despite what Whitehaven say, in the real world they will not stop operating when the conditions aren't suitable like they say they will in their application.

Flooding & Railway

Over the years I have seen many major floods. We have a levy bank around our house to stop inundation. It is absurd to put a railway crossing in the proposed location, let alone without the design of the railway line in the application. The risks associated are obvious, breaching of our levy bank would be catastrophic.

It is a really stupid location for a railway crossing. Whitehaven are only proposing it in this location because of the private property they own and the only people that would negotiate with them. No thought has gone into finding the best place to minimise the impacts on the people and the surrounding environment.

There is already one crossing across the floodplain. We shouldn't suffer the consequences because two companies can't come to an agreement.

Namoi River

Mirrabinda has approximately 7 kilometres of Namoi River frontage, including the biodiverse section known as Broadwater. I have fished from these river banks all my life. For Whitehaven studies in the EIS to identify one cod between Gulligal and south of Deadmans Gully is an absolute joke and gives me no faith in their research (Appendix N, page 30). This stretch of water is loaded with cod, yellow belly, black brim and eel-tailed catfish (endangered).

I am member of the Boggabri Fishing Club. Over the years we have restocked the area with fingerlings. This area around the proposed mine site is accessible and known by the Boggabri and Gunnedah community as an excellent recreational fishing hotspot.

In the past 39 years Boggabri has experienced on average 17 rain events per year where more than 40 mm over 5 days was recorded. With the mine only being required to catch 38.4mmm over 5 days, there is the possibility for a large amount of uncontrolled releases straight into the Namoi River.

These uncontrolled releases could contain water from overflowing sediment dams that have the potential to contain high levels of sulphur, potentially acid forming, concentrations of arsenic, molybdenum and selenium.

Summary

It is obvious this EIS downplays impacts to gain approval regardless of the real impacts on people and the environment.

It would be criminal to approve such a big mine in such a sensitive area purely for export coal and government royalties.

Regards,

Bert Devine

