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Whitehaven Vickery Extension Project Development Application SSD 7480

Adjoining Landholder Submission

Brian and Denise Keeler

'Denison' Property ID 131

Dear Mr O'Donoghue

BACKGROUND

We are the current owners of Denison with 131a and 131b dwellings as shown in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We purchased the property in late 1997. Prior to this we had been living in Gunnedah but were looking for a home in a rural setting on acreage to raise our young family. On purchase, the property was run down and the main homestead was an old house in very poor condition and a second cottage. Over the years we repaired fencing, planted trees, updated the cottage, established a garden and following council approval, undertook a major renovation and extension of the main homestead as an owner builder.

During this time Brian worked in a family farming partnership running stock on both Denison and other farming land. While not in farming fulltime now, we continue to run a sheep and lamb business at Denison. Denise is a nurse and has worked at Gunnedah Community Health for the past 15 years and is also studying a Bachelor of Midwifery.

Our research shows that the Whitehaven Vickery Coal extension development proposal and EIS show a number of inconsistencies and details that are inaccurate, absent or not clear. We, as the property owners of neighbouring land to the Vickery Coal extension development have many concerns that we know will impact our family and lifestyle. Some of the concerns are

listed below and the details of these concerns are not limited to this submission. If additional concerns arise we expect they will be heard with equal opportunity and value.

NOISE

We have major concerns regarding the noise level at both the main homestead (131a) and the cottage (131b). We are in close proximity to both the proposed mine extension, coal handling preparation plant (CHPP) and rail spur and we expect this will adversely affect our family, business and lifestyle. We believe the mitigation measures are insufficient and incomplete and do not include research into the noise levels that will be experienced by us from the rail spur and the shunting of trains. It had been determined in the EIS that predicted operational noise levels will be exceeded for both 131a and 131b homes. For residence 131a, our family home this exceedance is expected to commence in the early life of the mine operation. While the NSW Voluntary Land Acquisition Policy (VLAMP) describes this exceedance as 'negligable' we believe this to be inaccurate due to the close proximity of both homes 131a and 131b to the development.

As nurse, Denise is aware of the negative health effects from constant exceeded noise levels and subsequent disturbed and/or lack of sleep. Denise is required to work shift work and the noise level will impact on sleep quality both during the day and at night. We strongly believe that exceeded noise levels are unacceptable at any stage of the proposed development. As land holders we have the right to live in an environment free from excessive noise.

AIR QUALITY

Our property and its two homes are between 900 and 2300 metres from the proposed development. Based upon other local landholder experiences of living close to a mine site we believe we too will be adversely affected. The EIS model prediction suggests compliance for all air quality criteria although we believe this will not be the case. Other local landholders living further distances from mine sites have reported, dust, noise and dangerous fume events. We know that the dangerous fumes have the potential to drift up to 6 kilometres or more from the blast site, therefore being approximately 2300 metres places us in a vulnerable position and will affect our health and wellbeing.

FLOOD WATER

The proposed Vickery Coal extension, CHPP and rail spur is across a flood plain and we have major concerns on the impact of this model. Having lived at Denison for 21 years we are very familiar with flooding and the usual course of the flood waters. Construction of a rail spur loop across a major flood plain will increase flood levels and potentially divert flood water to our property. While a flood assessment has been included in the EIS, it does not address the impacts on our property, only the impact on Whitehaven owned land. To date we have not had water enter our home in a major flood but believe this could be very likely if the rail spur loop is constructed as proposed. Unfortunately, we have not seen the details of the rail spur as Whitehaven has not submitted a plan of this for exhibition.

VISUAL IMPACT

The attraction of Denison when we purchased it as our family home, was the beautiful landscape of Gulligal Lagoon and neighbouring Kelvin Hills. If the Vickery Coal proposal is approved our current landscape will be replaced with views of landforms, waste rock emplacement and mine infrastructure including the rail spur loop construction. The EIS states stationary work lights, fixed lights and vehicle mounted lights from the proposed mine development will be visible from our homes, and the lights from these sources can potentially produce sky glow. Therefore, we believe the constant lighting and sky glow will greatly impact on our quality of life. In addition, EIS states the headlights of trains and lighting of the rail spur will be visible from our homes. We know through discussions with other landholders who live further distances from mine sites than our homes are, that this has the potential to make our home unliveable.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Gunnedah Shire boasts the title of the Koala Capital of the World. We believe the EIS has not fully addressed the impacts on the local koala habitat in their proposal. Since owning Denison we have planted more than 350 local trees species. Our aim has been to regenerate the land and waterways and prevent erosion of Gulligal Lagoon. The regeneration of our property has provided an optimum environment for koalas, bird life and fish. We believe Whitehaven

does not hold the same values in relation to the environment and an approved mine in this area will adversely affect the environment, bird and animal habitat and biodiversity.

ASSETS

As previously described we purchased Denison in a very run down state. We worked hard as owner builders to extend and renovate both homes, the gardens and the adjoining farm land. The work we have undertaken at the Denison has substantially increased its value. We know that if the Vickery Coal extension is approved it will have a major negative impact on the value of our property.

LIFESTYLE

We met with Coalworks when the property Kurrumbede was first purchased for mine redevelopment. We were told by Coalworks management that our home would be severely affected by any mining operations and infrastructure development. Whitehaven have stated their research shows negligible impacts for us from the existing approved Vickery mine development and proposed mine extension and rail spur construction. As the Vickery Coal extension project is more than double the size of the original Coalworks proposal, we have difficulty in accepting the credibility of the information provided in the Whitehaven EIS.

We came to live on Denison over 21 years ago. We have both lived and worked in the area, conducted a small scale sheep grazing and lucerne business on the property and raised a family of 4 children. Denison has provided us with a peaceful and idyllic lifestyle that many others envy. We were expecting to continue to live at Denison in this idyllic environment in our retirement and show our grandchildren the lifestyle their parents grew up with.

If the Whitehaven Vickery Coal extension is approved we will no longer be able to live at Denison. We believe the issues highlighted in this submission have not been adequately addressed by the Whitehaven EIS. There must be no approval by the Planning and Assessment Commission unless there is a prior negotiated agreement with my family.

Our son Jacob is sitting his HSC exams, and Denise, in her final semester of midwifery studies is also sitting her final exams this week. The task of having to address the issues of the proposed mine extension development at this time and with only a 42 day exhibition

period has proved very stressful on our family. This proposal is already having a major impact on our lives and can only see this increasing if approval for the Whitehaven Vickery Coal extension is granted.

Yours sincerely

Brian & Denise Keeler