

Department of Planning & Environment

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Dear Mr O'Donoghue

Adjoining Landholder Submission in Response to EIS for Proposed Vickery Coal Mine Expansion Project ('Project') DA No SSD 7480

I, Grant McIlveen, provide this submission in relation to the Vickery Coal Mine Extension EIS. I have lived on my family farm for the past 46.5 years alongside the Gulligal Lagoon, situated 25km from Gunnedah towards Boggabri (and directly across the river from the proposed Vickery Coal mine site). My father has lived here for 81.5 years and his father brought this farm as a Soldier Settlement block in 1924 or 1925. Also, it just so happens that when he brought it my mother's uncle (Bill Dillworth) owned the farm. So, my family's history on this land goes back well over 100 years. My Great Grandfather (Sam Turner) was the first white boy to be born in Gunnedah, my family's history goes back to the start of Gunnedah. But today with my wife and I we have raised two young men on this farm. What life holds for them who knows, but hopefully one or both of them will still have ownership of this land and the family history in years to come along with the quiet and beautiful scenery looking at the Kelvin Hills to the East of our property that we currently enjoy everyday. I would also like to note that it is not just me that has strong ties to this land, but the families of two of my close uncles, who passed away in the last 16 years, both of them had enough connection to this land to have their ashes spread over the Gulligal Lagoon and land that surround it.

MEETINGS WITH WHITEHAVEN

My first meeting with Whitehaven about the first proposed 4.5 million ton per annum Vickery Mine back in 2012 was held in my farm workshop with Whitehaven's Liaison Officer and Environment Officer. On this day I was told about their plan for the 4.5million ton open cut pit on the otherside of the Namoi river from my farm (on the old Vickery mine site). I expressed to both of them at the time "as long as they stayed in the Vickery/Wean Valley I had no problems with the mine, but if they came closer to the Namoi Valley ie Blue Vale, South Vickery project pits or train line that Coal works had planned in 2010" (which would cross the Namoi Valley flood plains), then I would have objections to it as it is closer to my home. I was told on that same afternoon by the both representatives of Whitehaven "that the Environmentals would be far too strict to be able to mine near us". But since that day my community and I have been misled on so many things around this mine project and other mines that Whitehaven own and operate.

I joined the Vickery Community Consultative Committee (CCC) and at the first meeting, we were told how the Community Consultative Committee (CCC) works, the do's and don'ts of the committee, we were also told about the 4.5million ton per annum mine at Vickery that was still some time away as Whitehaven was working on the Maules Creek coal mine. Looking back, I was very naïve because in just a short time later on the front page of the Gunnedah newspaper (Namoi Valley Independent) I read were Vickery Coal mine (owned by Whitehaven) was planned as a 10-million-ton coal mine. Obviously, Whitehaven knew of this at the first CCC meeting, but nothing was said.

At another CCC meeting we were advised that Whitehaven had planned to reopen the Blue Vale pit. A pit much closer to the Namoi River and closer to the Barlow's, Keelers, Hannan's and my family farms. At this meeting I asked Whitehaven if they would keep mining past the BlueVale pit into the Pine Hill EL area, I was told at the meeting by a Whitehaven consultant that there was not enough coal there and Whitehaven didn't have the lease for this. When I got home from that meeting I looked at some previous paperwork

from CoalWorks to read that Whitehaven did have the EL Lease on the Pine Hill area. At the next meeting I brought this up and I was told it was just an oversight from the Whitehaven consultant at the time (not in my eyes it was an OVERSIGHT it was Whitehaven misleading me and the community AGAIN!!), there are so many more oversights that this company has said over the years ie Government making them mine the whole resource, no autonomous trucks at Vickery and I could on and on and on.

NOISE, DUST AND VISUAL IMPACT ON US

Night lighting from this mine, if it will be the same as the Narrabri mine lighting, we know that the receivers in the South West will be affected from all the infrastructure just over the river. Whitehaven advised that they will plant trees to mitigate this lighting, this will be great in 25 years' time when the trees are high enough to block out the lights from the Washery, ROM and infrastructure, but what about now and for the next 25 years?

I find it hard to work out in the Whitehaven EIS that receiver 88 and 89 was brought out because they were going to be affected by noise and dust. But on Whitehaven models shows receiver's 88 and 89 are at a similar distance as receiver's 127 (a, b and c), 131 (a and b), 132 and myself being 133a. We need independent modelling on each of dust, noise and flooding because Whitehaven can not be trusted anymore to provide the correct information to the community.

A nearby non-whitehaven mine has brought out family farms around their mine site because of the noise, these farms are up to 1200m from a coal train line, and up to 9km from the mine infrastructure and other farms have been brought out which are up to 6.5km in the affected zone. My family's farm boundary is only 850m from the Vickery train coal loop and line and our family home is 2.6km from the CCHP, a Whitehaven representative said that "we will not be affected". However, they have also advised that five (5) other homes that are closer to the mine than me are also not affected and six (6) homes within 1000m of the train line are also not affected (how can this be right?). But to quote the Whitehaven Coal Limited, Executive General Manager – Projects Delivery, "you have nothing to worry about, you will not hear a thing".

Whitehaven modelling shows that the proposed new plans will be no more louder than previous modellings even though the proposed Vickery mine will now be more than double the size of the original approved 4.5million ton coal mine which includes the addition of a ROM, washery, train loadout facility and train line to the East and South of our farm, plus 3 million ton of coal from Tarrawonga also to be carted to this washery. But again, quote from the Whitehaven Coal Limited, Executive General Manager – Projects Delivery said "you have nothing to worry about, you will not hear a thing".

I would like to see the Planning department look at an independent noise modelling of this proposed project because Whitehaven models again cannot be trusted. With the mine to start up towards the North of the lease and then move to the South over the life time of the mine (some 6km), but the noise contours would only move a few hundred metres at best towards the South, this is not right in my view and the view of most people I show the model too since the EIS has come on exhibition.

Our families to the South West zone of this mine did not ask for this coal mine or train line to be put on our door step. But we are asking the Planning Department to please protect us from this development, unlike the families at Maules Creek:

Re: Cromptons with noise model to be incorrect (Attachment 1 – EPA Letter)
 Lietch's with noise and blast fume (Attachment 2 – DPE Letter)
 Murphy's with noise, dust and blast fume
 Druce with noise, dust and blast fume

I feel sorry for these families and especially the kids. They have had a very long and very hard time with Whitehaven as a neighbor. These families didn't ask to have a coal mine on their back-door step as well and I feel that if the proposed Vickery mine goes ahead as Whitehaven plan we will be in the same situation as the Leitches, Murphy's and Druce families.

Whitehaven have shown on a number of times to let shots off with wind blowing towards a nearby receiver's - Picton family at Tarrawonga and the Leitch, Murphy and Druce families at Maules Creek. With the Leitch's family members having to go to the doctors in Boggabri in April 2018 because of fumes from Maules Creek coal mine. There was a large fume event at Rockglen coal mine a few years ago that is still currently in the courts.

If this mine does get the go ahead, I ask the Planning Department, will there will be a 'no blasting' if the wind is blowing anywhere over the river to the South west of the proposed mine, just like the 'no blast zone' at Werris Creek coal mine and another nearby mine where receiver's live close by.

Also, if this mine does get the go ahead, I ask that the Department of Planning to place blast monitors at receivers' 125, 127 (a,b and c), 133a, 131 (a and b) and 132. I also ask the department to have attended noise monitoring with no pre-notice to Whitehaven so that the equipment cannot be shut down and with also no phone calls at the 15min interval to Whitehaven so that they cannot reduce the noise levels at the specific receivers to the South west.

I find this EIS very poor in its modelling ie: noise modelling, that there are no noise contours from the train line and that the noise from the train line would increase the noise to the receivers to the South west of the affected area. But Whitehaven Coal Limited, Executive General Manager – Projects Delivery, keeps telling my neighbours and I that "we will not hear a thing".

FLOODING

The lack of design in the EIS re the Whitehaven train line model in relation to flooding, must be looked at. The train line design provided in the EIS only shows a few hundred metres of length of the train line over the Kamilaroi highway, the design does not show the remainder of the train line design, therefore how can we know that this flood design will be accurate. The Whitehaven Coal Limited, Executive General Manager – Projects Delivery advised that the train line "will be elevated" (dirt, culverts or via duct, who knows only Whitehaven). Here is a better idea, take the train line north away from us into Whitehaven's back yard!!

Whitehaven flood models are based on the 1955 and one (1) of the four (4) floods in 1998 at Gunnedah. I have included some photos (Attachments 3 a, b, c and d) to show how the flooding can be so different from 20km up the river at Gunnedah compared to here on the farm where we live. With the 1955 flood being a record flood in Gunnedah, but out here on the farm the record flood was 1984, but the 1984 flood was a lot smaller in Gunnedah, with the Rangari Creek (between Gunnedah and our farm) being a major influence with flooding here on the farm at times. I also couldn't find in the EIS any reference in relation to Rangari Creek and how it would affect the flood water downstream.

In 2007 I was working in the Hunter Valley, just after the Pasha Bulker ran a ground, from a massive storm, I seen were mine dams had been breached and broken because of so much flood water from this storm. If Whitehaven get the go ahead and build a number of infrastructures near the Namoi River, considering that the infrastructure will only be approx 500 metres from the river, storm water or a large rain event may fill their dams to capacity and therefore causing overflow from these dams, which will cause the dirty coal water to runoff and enter our river system.

BIODIVERSITY

Appendix F – Biodiversity assessment report and biodiversity offset strategy

Figure 4 b

In June 2016 a DRAFT copy of Biodiversity Plan was handed out at a CCC Meeting, this copy had the only area of Weeping Myall woodlands on the Vickery Mine site, it was right where Whitehaven are going to put the train load out loop and infrastructure in today's EIS, but also in this EIS the Weeping Myall woodlands area on the map has been made a lot smaller compared to the DRAFT 2016 woodlands area map provided, but there has been no clearing!!!. (see Attachment 4 a and b)

I also find in the Whitehaven threatened species section in the EIS very interesting, with the EIS only saying that two (2) koalas have been seen and reported over a six (6) year period (2017 – OEH and 2011 - Kendall and Kendall reports), in and adjacent to the infrastructure area. I would like to ask the Planning Department and the IPAC to take a short walk with me on both sides of the Namoi river and where the proposed train loop is to go and we will see all the evidence to show you that there are more than two (2) koalas living within that area. I find it hard that on the day I am writing this that the NSW Government is handing out \$20 million to buy back Koala habitats, when Whitehaven are planning to knock it down and put in a train loop and line over the Namoi river where these Koalas live. All the NSW Government has to do is to tell Whitehaven to go back up to the Northern end of proposed Vickery mine and put the train loop and infrastructure away from this Koala habitat area, where the train loop should go in on the old cleared farmland which Whitehaven currently owns and where it was first planned for. Gunnedah is Koala Capital of the World!! and this is how Whitehaven proposes to treat our Koala's - by knocking down their habitat?

FINAL COMMENTS

Just to put this mine into perspective, Whitehaven keep telling us that this pit has been mined in the past (yes, which it was), up to 400,000 ton of coal per year. This new proposed mine at its peak will take 14.2 days to mine 400,000 ton of coal. Also, this proposed mine at its peak will have over 50,000 dump trucks coming to the ROM each year - that's at 200 ton of coal per dump truck, but a more realistic 150 ton of coal per dump truck, it would be 66,000 truck movements to the ROM per year just over the river from all of us.

I have written this submission over the past 2 weeks and I have found it hard to get my thoughts out on paper, but I invite the Planning Department and the IPAC to visit our farm and discuss the proposed mine before you decide anything that will affect my family and other families in this area.

One last thing, the families who have suffered for years at Maules Creek keep telling us to make sure the Planning Department ensures that there is a negotiated agreement in place to the receivers in the South west of this proposed mine, as the families at Maules Creek did not have this agreement in place and are still suffering from this company.

Whitehaven may get a mining licence, but that doesn't mean they have a social licence to mine here.

Thank you to you for taking the time to read my thoughts

Yours sincerely

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