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IPC Hearing

Have you ever

Been stalked by security guards who are allegedly guarding a coal mine.

Have you ever

Seen them hiding in the bushes, taking number plates on the side of the road and lurking around corners.

Have you ever

Watched a forest being blown up, bulldozed and destroyed. Day by day, week by week, month by month, <sup>and</sup> year by year.

Have you ever

Felt an explosion from a mine site that shook your house then seen a dust cloud rise up into the sky

Have you ever

Been kept awake by constant and unrelenting noise composed of bangs, crashes and a constant rumbling.

Have you ever

Lived close to a coal mine that you have been told won't affect you but does?

You may not have experienced any of these things but if you have lived close to a mine you will know what I am talking about.

IPC members, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I have come to speak to you because I want you to reject this Vickery Mine Extension application.

At my home in Maules Creek I can no longer drink the water from the tap even when it has been filtered, as the filtering is unable to remove heavy metals.

To reduce the toxic levels in my system I have been prescribed to drink special bottled water that is triple purified. Although I cannot prove it is from drinking rainwater that has heavy metals from the dust fall into it, I think this is the source of the toxic levels in my system.

Water is really important at Maules Creek. Our groundwater is depleting and the water is becoming more and more salty where we are.

One of my favourite places along Maules Creek is at Elfin Crossing. It is the permanent water source in the creek that we have always swam in and even the one Grandpa used to swim in when he was little.

Lots of the kids in Maules Creek used to swim in here.

The problem is that last February it stopped flowing. This was before the drought hit. I do not think it was drought that caused the loss of flow as Mr. Niall Blair the minister for Water has said.

Now Elfin crossing is all swampy and dirty.

One of the things I really care about is the environment in our area. Both the land and water environments. Maules Creek and all the creeks running into it are protected creeks. It is part of the endangered aquatic ecological community of the lower land catchments of the Darling River. This creek ends up flowing into the Namoi River and then further north and west.

Stygofauna are aquatic creatures that live in groundwater systems. They are important because they contain many ancient linkages to the Gondwana and Pangea supercontinents, and are one of the building blocks to the food chain. As the creek has now turned into a puddle, I fear for the water quality and the 400 million year old creatures like the synacardia. A blind stygofauna creature that looks a bit like a tiny prawn- they are only found at Maules Creek.

As you listen to my thoughts, don't look at me as a 13 year old – look at me as someone whose stake in the future is bigger than anyone else in the room. The decisions that have been made in the past and present will impact me more.

I would rather see our region valuing its native wildlife and places, a rapid shift out of fossil fuels, and a greater importance place on cleaning our air, saving our water for life and health instead of everything being about more coal and coal being the only thing we can have.  
Thank you.