

Vickery Expansion

Climate change is real. Climate change is here. January was Australia hottest month since records began and the Bureau of Meteorology says that climate change contributed to the soaring temperatures. (January Climate Summary, Bureau of Meteorology) We have recorded extreme temperatures and drought here in Boggabri and across Australia in recent weeks, ancient rainforests are burning in Tasmania. This is climate change.

Climate Change is not adequately addressed in the Vickery Extension EIS or the IPCN Preliminary Issues Report⁶. There one sentence with two words referring to climate change in the report:

6.7 Other issues:

“As summarised in Appendix C, a range of other issues were raised in submissions on the project, including Aboriginal and non-indigenous heritage, traffic and transport, hazards and risk and **climate change**. Most of these issues will require further information and/or assessment from Whitehaven to respond to the issues raised.”

Climate change due to carbon emission- the most significant issue in any coal mine extensions has been ignored.

The Vickery extension EIS states that the ‘End use of product coal’ (burning the coal) will produce up to 21.5 million tonnes of CO₂ in each year³. Yet Australia is a signatory to the Paris Agreement to address climate change. The Paris agreement aims to limit the increase in global average temperatures to well below 2 degrees relative to pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to further limit temperature to 1.5 degrees

To keep temperatures below 2°C we must globally limit emissions to less than 1100 gig-tons of CO₂. For a 1.5°C increase we must limit emissions to 750 gig-ton of CO₂. Limiting temperature increases to 1.5°C will require rapid and far reaching transitions, a 45% reduction in world emissions. By 2017 the temperature had already increased by 1°C.²

To limit the temperature rise to 1.5° achieve this 80% of the worlds coal reserves must remain unburnt including 80% of Australian coal reserves.²

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report (Oct 2018) states that we must limit temperature increase to 1.5°C to avoid the most challenging impacts of climate change¹.

- Limiting temperature increases to 1.5° rather than 2° will result in-

- Fewer high temperature and extreme weather events
- Limit the risks of heavy precipitation events
- Limit the risks of droughts
- Limit the risks to natural ecosystems
- Limit the risks to human systems
- Sea level increases 0.1mtr or less by the end of the century
- Limit loss of sea ice
- Limit ocean acidification
- Limit local species losses
- Limit risks including
 - food shortages
 - loss of crops
 - loss of fisheries
 - loss of pacific islands
 - storms

Ocean acidification is caused by climate change. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from burning fossil fuels are making the world's oceans more acidic. In the water, CO₂ reacts to form carbonic acid, and over the years, the ocean's acidity has increased by 30 percent because so much of the excess man-made CO₂ is being drawn into the water⁷. This disruption will affect the all life in the oceans including the Barrier Reef and fisheries. Some fish species will not survive.

The poor and vulnerable are most affected by climate change, heatwaves kill babies, the elderly, and the sick. The homeless and the poor cannot escape the heat. Wildfires affect us all, as do severe storms.

The Guardian newspaper January 2019 reports that Pacific nations under threat from climate change urge Australia to phase out coal-powered electricity generation. asking that Australia prohibit new coal mines and coal mine extensions.

"From where we are sitting, we cannot imagine how the interests of any single industry (the coal industry) can be placed above the welfare of Pacific peoples and vulnerable people in the world over," Fiji's prime minister, Frank Bainimarama told Scott Morrison.¹⁴

The Guardian newspaper December 2018 reports that Australia is not meeting our Paris Agreement obligations. Climate scientist and the chief executive of Climate Analytics, Bill Hare,

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said use of carryover would effectively mean the target Australia was aiming for was “more like 12% to 14%” on 2005 levels by 2030.

“They’re as far away as ever from meeting the 2030 target,” he said. “The underlying projections show a substantial deterioration because the key sectors including direct combustion of fuel, transport and industry have larger increases than last year and the power sector begins increasing again from 2023 significantly.”

The Greens ask that the IPC give serious consideration to the devastating effects of burning coal in climate change and abandon expansion plans.

References

- (1) https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf
- (2) McGlade & Elkins(2015) Nature 517: 187-190
- (3) <https://majorprojects.accelo.com/public/9756e01a2a237f14113f99e59fc006d9/25.%20Appendix%20E%20Air%20Quality%20and%20Greenhouse%20Gas%20Assessment.pdf> Table 9-3: Estimated GHG emissions
- (4) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/18/fiji-urges-australia-not-to-put-coal-above-pacific-nations-battling-climate-change>
- (5) <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/21/australia-to-miss-2030-emissions-targets-by-vast-margin-coalitions-projections-reveal>
- (6) <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/projects/2018/11/vickery-extension-project/department-of-planning-and-environments-preliminary-issues-report/vickery-extension-project--preliminary-issues-report.pdf> page 38
- (7) <https://www.climatecentral.org/gallery/graphics/ocean-acidification-process>