

Submission to the Independent Planning Commission

Vickery Extension Project

1. The argument that the Boggabri – Gunnedah district is a historic mining area is totally misleading. There have been small underground mines supplying coal for domestic power production not large export, open cut and long wall mining.
2. We hold no trust or confidence in the process of the Department of Planning or the Independent Planning Commission. This concern has been articulated in recent media coverage. A thorough inquiry must be held to examine both the “whistle blowers” from within the Department of Planning and the “musical chairs” being played out by appointed members of the Independent Planning Commission and their conflict of interest.

No members of the IPC have any agricultural knowledge or expertise which is unacceptable as the project is in a productive agricultural area.

3. The release of the Namoi Subregion Bioregional Assessment,

<https://www.bioregionalassessments.gov.au/assessments/3-4-impact-and-risk-analysis-namoi-subregion>

leaves little or no time to have this important and relevant report peer reviewed by unbiased and independent experts such as the hydrogeologists Andrea Broughton (Maloney), one of the original experts that mapped the Namoi Region Hydrogeology and Dr Phillip Pells.

This endorses our suspicion that this project is being fast tracked without the proper or lawful processes being applied.

4. The past Namoi Catchment Authority had developed a world first state of the art computer model, the Namoi catchment Risk Assessment Tool,

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=c21a5608e4&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1620051056081040604&th=167b93da23b4f4dc&view=att&disp=inline>

This model enables all the current as well as future mining projects, whether coal or coal seam gas, to be measured and accurately assessed for their cumulative impact on bioregional assets in the Namoi Catchment. This was a taxpayer funded project that the residents of the Namoi Region have every right to see employed when looking at the Vickery Expansion in conjunction with all other proposed and existing projects. There is no better tool available in the world for the assessment of the cumulative impacts.

This important and ground-breaking model has been effectively archived by the current North West Local Lands Services which merged into the old NCA and engulfed its roles and those of some other bodies of the current North West LLS

It is a very sad indictment that this taxpayer funded programme has never seen the light of day or been commissioned to evaluate these mining projects that propose considerable risk to our precious and valuable Agricultural Land and Water

5. I stood and was elected to Gunnedah Shire Council with the intention of representing my community. During my term on council I believe Whitehaven Coal exerted undue and improper influence over Gunnedah Council. Gunnedah Council failed to negotiate any effective Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) with the Whitehaven – Maules Creek mine which sources 60% of the workforce from Gunnedah. This represents gross maladministration by Gunnedah Council.

Councillors failed to declare a conflict of interest in discussion on issues relating to Whitehaven Coal when they were either employed by the company or had relatives who were employed by the company. (Previously councillors had been disqualified from council for not declaring an interest.)

The councillors in question did not declare an interest which I believe led to a favourable outcome for the company when the renewal of a lease with Whitehaven Coal was negotiated. The renewal of the Whitehaven Coal Loader Lease which was located on Gunnedah Shire land had strict provisions that were documented in the original agreement. In renegotiating the lease, Gunnedah Council were obligated to engage an independent valuer to get unbiased and current value for the recommencement of another leasing period. This did not occur.

The Deputy Mayor voted as chairperson and another councillor on this matter in a tied vote. I referred this matter to ICAC, the Department of Local Government and the Ombudsman.

6. I successfully convinced Gunnedah Shire Council to employ Warwick Giblin – OzEnvironment P/L to renegotiate the Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPAs) for Shenhua and the Vickery mine expansion. The VPA with Whitehaven – Vickery expansion was not signed off on and now risks being compromised. I do not believe Whitehaven Coal is a fit and proper company in applying for approval of this project.

7. Governments and companies must now take into consideration the cumulative effects of climate change.

It is anticipated that the proposed Vickery expansion will produce ten times the emissions than the recently rejected Rocky Hill – Gloucester coal mine.

8. Please refer to the document,

<http://www.otfordeco.com/coalseamgas/EffectsOfLandUseOnCoalResources1994byCoalResourcesCommittee.pdf>

As stated in my presentation to the IPC at Boggabri that this document commissioned by National party's Ian Causley clearly illustrates the fact that the

mining of Coal Resources, whether it is coal mining or coal seam gas, does not and cannot coexist with Agriculture, Groundwater Resources, Heritage Sites, Commonwealth Land, Conservation Areas, Urban Development, Infrastructure, Natural Features and Stored Bodies of Water.

In fact, it also clearly states that Agriculture and National Parks are the main or greatest threat to coal resource extraction. In other words that Food and the Environment are the greatest threat to Coal Resources what a sad state of affairs and a terrible indictment on the way both this government and its Departments distorted view of what is of real importance and sustainable.

I am sure that the general public and hence the electorate of NSW & in fact Australia would be justifiably horrified.