

Commissioners, my name is James Barlow. I would like to open with a statement,

I am not anti-mining or anti-coal, I recognise its role in society, past and present. In saying that moving into the future we must be more sustainable protecting people, environment and water. whilst minimising the very real effects of climate change.

In the background I will be playing current footage filmed in December last year to give some real perspective of the location of this project in relation to our home and the river as the maps used in the EIS are outdated.

The flight begins here at one of our homes. All I ask is for some compassion and understanding. Try to see it as if you own this farm and it's been in the family for generations understanding the very deep connection we have to the land as farmers.

I am here today to represent my wife and 8 month old daughter who cannot speak for her future which is my greatest concern. We own the property Mirrabinda on the left with the all the circles. We are the closest neighbours to Whitehaven coal with only the river separating us. It's 2200 acres or 880 hectares, which is dwarfed by this proposed footprint, more than double the size.

I am 3<sup>rd</sup> generation farmer. taking over the farm at 23 due to the loss of my father prematurely. This was his legacy, it was his gift to me. I'm

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extremely lucky and proud of who he was and what he stood for. My family worked extremely hard to survive through many devastating floods to see me into this position today. The floods will come again I'm sure, but my greatest fear is a tsunami of toxic dust, toxic blasting, constant noise, night lighting the river, underground water and last but not least, the concern for all the wonderful people in our community that care and have these same concerns.

14 years of my life has been spent making the farm what it is today. A highly sustainable, modern water efficient agribusiness. Irreplaceable! with 7km of river frontage supporting a recognised unique biodiverse ecosystem, ( Broadwater ) which even right now is harbouring hundreds possibly thousands of Murray cod catfish and yellow belly. Also quality underground water on the fertile Liverpool plains. growing food, fibre and fodder sustainably and efficiently in the midst of the one of the worst droughts in recorded history, with no end in sight. It is irreplaceable!! Acquisition rights give us absolutely no comfort, where would we go there are no properties in this region that have all these attributes that make it our home. We would potentially have to leave the district I love and am proud of. This isn't about money. I do not want to sell my livelihood; beliefs and heritage, no one should be put into a position where they are forced to.. Yet this government, company and process might leave us no choice.

Travelling to my once lived on once peaceful home for work everyday defeats the purpose of life on the land, I will no longer be minutes away

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to spend precious time with my daughter. These are the only two options this company and process is forcing us into if approved.

As we know In 2014, WHC were granted approval for a 4.5mtpa mine, which we were told would make one house unliveable. WE accepted it, we didn't even write a submission . In close succession the extension was announced. Potentially displacing all three families which reside here. We felt very deceived by the proponent Whitehaven as they assured us back then the main homestead would not be impacted.

For four long years we are yet to get the truth from WHC. For me logically the mine proposal is way too big for this location as it is all uphill from the Namoi River and at a time when our climate is evidently changing emphasising the undeniable importance of natural water resources. There is so much misinformation and distortion of the truth and at times no information in this EIS. The impacts are so understated its insulting.

Despite what Whitehaven say it is primarily a greenfield site. Yes there was a tiny mine in the 80s and 90s my family even agreed to let a lot of the coal pass through our property. We are now in 2019 and this proposal is more than 20 times larger. The vast majority of this mine is on a greenfield site. On a very historic Australian property. On the most southern point of the approximately 70,000 hectare swag of land Whitehaven now own, next to the Namoi River, with a coal handling facility, not to mention a NO Design railway crossing , across one of the

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worst spots on this major floodplain. It was the only place Whitehaven could buy their way through. Collectively we know this area well, we are not being heard!

All for coal to be exported to Japan. Not for securing energy for ourselves or "Powering the region" as Whitehaven ambiguously advertise.

All we hear from Whitehaven are jobs jobs jobs. Yet the local workforce is exhausted. Many local businesses suffering, unable to find employees. Boggabri is suffering as so many farming families have left already as Whitehaven has bought so much agricultural land to the north.

We are at a tipping point, this Extension is far too large for this location. It puts at risk all our assets, including our water, both underground and river. It will impact negatively on our health, livelihood and business.

This would be the fourth large mine in this area.. It would be a shame to see such a highly productive agricultural valley become the next hunter valley. The cumulative impacts will be significant, leaving our families and the boggabri community to carry the majority of the burden. What happened to a fair go?

Its important to note we have had several meetings with Whitehaven, certainly not negotiations which they claim. None of which have eased our angst fears and distress, if anything they have made it worse as we have always felt like a box ticking exercise. There has been a lack of transparency and honesty. Whitehaven graciously removed the blue vale pit and said they were listening to the public and it's concerns. Yet recently at a public meeting at emerald hill a senior member said it was

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off the table **at this stage**. How are we suppose to trust? We have experienced trespassing, even from a senior employee in the early stages and so much more.

We can only form judgment from experience and our experience to date has been ordinary and that's being polite.

How will my family be protected given the size of this mine with broken trust.

How will my family be protected given the department of planning seems hell bent on approving mines no matter the cost.

How will my family be protected given the Epa lacks power and resources to enforce conditions set. They can't!! as we are in acquisition that has been forced upon us.

These are all fair and reasonable questions given what we have been through and now know.

I urge Whitehaven strongly to stick with what is approved, it still provides jobs and economic growth for the region whilst maintaining some sort of sustainable balance. If its not economical, move on! away from the river, people and Floodplain to show you have a moral compass and to regain back some social licence. showing respect to the people , and the environment you reside in. Because despite what you say the majority of the community doesn't want to see this project approved and the numbers in favour only reflect the amount of money that was spent by

Whitehaven to drum up support. This is obvious by the sheer lack of substance in the majority of the supporting submissions.

Money! can be the root of all evil, realistically this is what is all about. From Government right through to local councils and individual interests. I ask, at what cost? The people want serious change. There must be more balance for the sake of people like ourselves, more balance for the environment which we rely so heavily on yet take for granted, and balance for the whole world so future generations don't pay for our mistakes.

It seems we are living in age where we have so much knowledge about the impacts we are having on this fragile planet. Yet domestically we are adding to the problems approving mines in ridiculous areas and I'm extremely concerned that this will be yet another one. As I have no faith in our current politicians and policy's and no faith in the process we now find ourselves in. At least I can look myself in the mirror knowing I've stood up for what I truly believe, not blinded by the fog of short term vision and money.

So I ask you commissioners to help us! If you can. Don't leave us at the mercy of the department of planning and current policy's they both favour the proponent and leave us with a huge burden we don't deserve to carry. Do you all really believe there is a future for huge coal mines on major rivers? If your gut tells you no please do what you can in the present to make a positive difference for the future.