



Hon **Sam Farraway** MLC

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
DEPUTY GOVERNMENT WHIP IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL



14 July 2020

John Hann
Chair
Panel for the Vickery Extension Project
Independent Planning Commission NSW
Level 3, 201 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Submission to the Independent Planning Commission Vickery Extension Project (SSD 16-7480)

Dear Chair,

I write this submission in my capacity as a member of the NSW Parliament and the Nationals Duty MLC for the Barwon electorate, including the Narrabri region, which will bear the burden of consequences of the proposed 'extension' of the Vickery Coal Mine.

Since being sworn into parliament in October 2019, I have spent significant time in the Narrabri region and have spoken to many landholders, local businesses and local government officials on how this project, as proposed, will impact them and the broader region.

I am not anti-coal or anti mining. I acknowledge the positives that mining can bring to a regional community and the economic stimulus this industry can bring to a local economy through jobs, education, local expenditure and further opportunities.

Agriculture and mining can co-exist throughout the region, however, White Haven Coal have missed many opportunities to bring the Narrabri and Boggabri

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THE NATIONALS
for Regional NSW

communities along on this journey and they need to address concerns brought forward in greater detail.

I would not be a true representative of Regional NSW if I did not bring these concerns forward, to the Independent Planning Commission, before making your final determination on the Vickery Extension Project.

Greenfield Site vs Extension

After consultation with the community, Narrabri Shire Council and reading submissions made in relation to this project, I cannot help but agree with the view that the proposal should be viewed as a Greenfield site and not an extension.

The ability of Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), Independent Planning Commission (IPC) or White Haven Coal to measure and compare the additional impacts the proposed extension will have on the local economy, community and environment must be brought into question given that White Haven Coal's Vickery mining site is yet to be operational - following the first approval for the site.

Whilst I acknowledge restrictions have been put in place to manage disturbances such as noise and dust during construction and production, I do raise questions as to their accuracy.

Until the site is fully operational following the original approval, we will not know for sure the impacts it will have on the local communities within the region.

In my view, the proposed site is not an extension, it is a new site, a new mine and will impact a broader range of the Narrabri and Boggabri communities – this project needs to be viewed as a Greenfield site by the commission.

Proximity to the Namoi River System

Along with other submissions made to the IPC on this project, in my opinion a 10 million tonne coal mine operating adjacent to (approx. 400 metres from the banks) the Namoi River is not acceptable and has the potential to adversely affect local water resources.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) does make reference to the impacts and measures put in place for the existing Vickery mine site approval. What it fails to do, in my opinion, is provide sufficient detail relating to the potential risks associated with the 'extension' of the mine on floodplain areas and the potential impacts on the associated water resources of the Namoi River.

The new sites proximity to the banks of the Namoi River, is the biggest difference between the original approval and the proposed 'extension' and the largest issue that has been brought to my attention by members of the local community.

It is my belief that the EIS has not provided sufficient evidence as to how they intend to manage impacts of potential contamination of water from mining waste, direct and indirect, given the close proximity to the banks of the Namoi River.

There is also a need for greater clarification or significant assurance to the community on the meaning of their intent to dump polluted waste water from the site into the river system when rainfall exceeds 38mm over 5 days.

In my opinion, White Haven Coal have an opportunity to engage with the local community further on these matters and consider options to move their proposed development further away from the banks of the Namoi River.

If the industrial infrastructure is moved away from the Namoi River, I believe that this would be a big step in working with the Narrabri and Boggabri communities and should be made a condition of approval that the Commission considers.

Construction of Rail Spur on Floodplains

Another major concern has been the development of a rail line directly over local floodplains, when there are other viable options for this type of infrastructure.

The proposed Vickery Extension Project rail spur is approximately 14 Kilometers in length and from my understanding is to be built completely over floodplains before crossing the Namoi River to the proposed extension site.

I understand the need for rail infrastructure and the important role it plays on a mining site, however, without further information on the placement and engineering requirements proposed for the rail spur I find it difficult to support such significant development on delicate and unstable floodplain soil.

There are other, viable options for this rail spur. It is not necessary for the 14kms of track to be built on local floodplains and I would encourage the commission to consider making the relocation of this rail line a 'condition' of the projects approval.

Not in the Public Interest of the Narrabri Region

Last year Narrabri Shire Council passed a motion to not support the proposed extension project on the grounds that it is not in the public interest of the communities they represent.

The Narrabri region will bear the burden on local resources for this proposed project.

They will lose local families due to land acquisitions, this will lead to schools losing numbers and the local economy suffering from people and businesses moving elsewhere to gain employment and put their kids in school.

However from data provided by Narrabri Shire Council and from White Haven Coal it appears that these losses will not be adequately compensated by the opportunities advertised by the new mining site.

Local schools, businesses and the Council itself have been disappointed in the lack of effort by White Haven Coal to appease their concerns around the future of communities of Boggabri & Narrabri.

Industry has a responsibility to the communities they impact, they have a responsibility to ensure that any negative outcomes are met with equally positive ones.

Conclusion

I support development across regional NSW and see the benefit large scale projects bring to our local economies.

This can only happen when a coexistence model is put in place and industry works with community groups, schools, existing small business, landholders and local government.

Community concerns cannot be ignored by White Haven Coal or by the IPC, which is why I have written this submission, to provide you with an overview of what is being said on the ground.

I can only support the Vickey project going ahead if the issues mentioned above are addressed by the placement of conditions on each matter brought forward.

The conditions should cover:

- That the project be considered a Greenfield site and not an extension by the Commission.

- That the 14km of rail lines be relocated so they do not sit on floodplain.
- That White Haven Coal engage further with Narrabri and Boggabri communities to address local concerns about jobs and economic outcomes in the region to ensure the project is in the public interest.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sam Farraway', with a stylized, cursive script.

The Hon. Sam Farraway MLC

Nationals Member of the NSW Legislative Council

Duty MLC for the Barwon Electorate