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Portfolio Committee 7  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney 2000

Friday 10 November 2023

### **Submission**

#### **Inquiry into Planning system and the impacts of climate change on the environment and communities**

Central West Environment Council (CWEC) is an umbrella organization representing conservation groups and individuals in central west NSW working to protect the local environment for future generations.

Central West NSW has suffered from significant impacts of extreme weather events attributable to climate change over the past 5 years. We have experienced the most extreme drought on record 2018 - 2020, the most extreme bushfires on record 2019 - 2020 and the most extreme floods on record 2022. The region is now falling back into extreme drought conditions with intermittent extreme storm events.

The Western Coalfields of NSW at Lithgow and Mudgee Region fall within our area of interest. Coal mines in both these areas are continuing to seek approval to expand both production and timeframe of mining operations.

CWEC member groups are very concerned that the significant cumulative impact of these operations on both the environment and the global atmosphere are not being adequately considered by current NSW policy settings or through the Planning assessment and approvals process.

A key area of concern is that proposed new major mine extensions that were expected to be assessed and lodged as new projects with full Environmental Impact Statements are now being broken into a series of Modification applications.

This is occurring with the proposed Angus Place West expansion at Lithgow and the Wilpinjong Mine expansion at Wollar in the Mudgee Region. These projects will have significant cumulative impacts on the environment including water sources, biodiversity, cultural values, and ongoing social dislocation, as well as increasing the volume of carbon emissions at a time when science is advocating a reduction in fossil fuel extraction and use.

Breaking these major project expansions into a series of modifications by-passes the assessment of cumulative impact and also extinguishes the assessment and determination by the Independent Planning Commission.

This removal of opportunity for the community to engage in a more comprehensive assessment of the impacts of coal mine expansion is a key failure of the Planning system in NSW.

For more information on this submission contact:

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CWEC member groups include:

Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange, Orange Field Naturalist and Conservation Society, Canobolas Conservation Alliance, Bathurst Climate Change Action Network, Belubula Headwaters Protection Group, Lithgow Environment Group, Rylstone District Environment Society, Mudgee District Environment Group, Mudgee Region Action Group, Healthy Rivers Dubbo, Dubbo Environment Group, Dubbo Field Naturalist and Conservation Society.