



WHITEHAVEN COAL

# MEDIA RELEASE

WEDNESDAY 5 MARCH 2014

## STATEMENT FOR ABC RADIO NATIONAL ON MAULES CREEK BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS

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Dr David Robertson conducted the mapping of the biodiversity offsets for the Maules Creek Project.

Dr Robertson is a senior ecologist who has been retained on numerous occasions by the New South Wales Government to peer review ecological assessments for major projects. Dr Robertson's resume includes service as an occasional expert member of the Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel, the predecessor of the Planning and Assessment Commission.

Dr Robertson's treatment by some members of the community of ecologists has been an undignified attack on his professional reputation. This is especially so considering that the ecological studies of the Maules Creek Project's biodiversity offsets circulated by opponents of the Project, address only two out of a suite of seventeen properties proposed by Whitehaven Coal as offsets for the Project.

On those two properties, the opponent's ecologists inspected less than 10 per cent of the vegetation. None of them undertook the detailed survey work that would be required to map the properties in accordance with the relevant criteria. Indeed, one of the studies involved surveying a property from the vantage point of a nearby road, and even the most professional of the studies is subject to the caveat that it should be regarded as preliminary.

It is also worth noting that the opponent's ecologists have not explained the context for the offsets package, particularly its genesis, public exhibition and the conditions of approval that it must now meet to comply with the requirements of the Federal Minister for the Environment. They therefore present a deliberately distorted, and more unfavourable, perspective on the issue.

Whitehaven is committed to ensuring that approximately 10,000 ha of native vegetation, in an equivalent or better condition than the 1,600 ha of vegetation to be cleared for the Project, is afforded legal protection in perpetuity. The package will also offer 5,532 ha of Box Gum Woodland to compensate for the 544 ha of Box Gum Woodland to be cleared. Moreover, the offsets are available now and regeneration is commencing

This commitment is formalised in the conditions to the Maules Creek Project's approval under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. Further, those conditions mandate a mechanism to ensure that this commitment is honoured through a proper peer review of Dr Robertson's mapping by an independent expert ecologist whose appointment is approved by the Commonwealth Government.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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