



Fossil Fool Bulletin

Fossil fools in the spotlight this week: A resource for people working to end the fossil fuel era in Australia

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FFB 3:19 • 21 APRIL 2020

Victorian Government ignores up to 88% of true emissions from new onshore gas

Analysis by The Australia Institute shows that the Victorian Government's key report used to approve onshore gas mining appears to have underestimated the greenhouse gas emissions from new sites by up to 88%.

The Victorian Gas Program Progress Report no.4 does not count emissions from the ultimate combustion of the gas, emissions from methane leakage or the lifecycle emissions from gas processing.

Methane has impact on climate

Methane is a very potent greenhouse warming gas, and small amounts of leakage can have a large impact on overall emissions.

The actual greenhouse gas emissions from the combustion of the gas that the report itself says would be produced (830 Petajoules over 26 years), is around seven times larger than the maximum emissions given in the report's high scenario.

It appears the Victorian Gas Program may have simply ignored combustion emissions which are by far the main source of greenhouse gas emissions from gas.

"The Victorian Government needs to explain why the advice it used to lift the ban on more gas extraction so badly underestimated the impact this would have on the climate," says Richie Merzian, Climate & Energy Program Director The Australia Institute.

"Gas is not a transitional fuel in the fight against climate change, it is part of the problem and it is highly con-

Onshore gas plant.
Photo: Petroleum Australia



cerning that greenhouse gas emissions from gas could be up to 7 times larger than what is admitted in the Victorian Government's analysis."

"In the cover of the pandemic, the Victorian Government has still found the opportunity to green-light new fossil fuel mining based on misleading research. At the same time, it has put off setting the ambitious emissions targets the state needs to guide recovery."

"Given Victoria has just been devastated by climate change fuelled fires, it is extraordinary that the Government is opening up a large new source of fossil fuel. When it comes to gas, the Victorian Government has its priorities around the wrong way."

• The report by Mark Ogge and Tom Swann, *Emissions from Onshore Gas in Victoria:*

<https://www.tai.org.au/sites/default/files/P891%20Victorian%20Onshore%20Gas%20Emissions%20Briefing%20Note%20%5BWeb%5D.pdf>

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• P2: Fossil subsidies dwarf Corona relief

• P3: CO2 content of gas is rising

P5: Qld's destructive new gas project

Fossil fuel subsidies dwarf coronavirus relief

Australia spends \$470,000 per fossil-fuel job, but 8 out of 10 of largest fuel producers pay no taxes

By Blair Palese
Climate & Capital Media

As emergency stimulus packages are being developed around the world to address the coronavirus economic crisis, Australia's Climate Justice Project at the University of New South Wales decided to take a look at the amount the Australian government regularly pays in subsidies to the fossil fuel industry.

Based on information from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) the Project found that the government provides an eye-popping \$30 billion in subsidies per year to the coal, oil and gas industry. That is far more than the Australian government has spent to support Australians affected by the coronavirus recession or the catastrophic wildfires earlier this year.

Australia is not alone in its lavish fossil fuel subsidies. Governments last year spent more than \$5 trillion in direct and indirect financial support of an industry that is the primary cause of carbon pollution.

\$1,832 per year from every taxpayer

"Shockingly, every Australian taxpayer is paying \$1,832 per year to prop up the fossil fuel industry, compared to around \$78 in the one-off government \$50 million dollar payment for bushfire relief or the first and second \$750 coronavirus support payment that went to around half of the country's population," says Jeremy Moss who runs the Climate Justice Project.

"As we rethink our current spending commitments during the coronavirus, it's definitely time to rethink this one," he continues. "Now's the time to ensure not only that money isn't wasted trying to save the unsavable, but that we remember we are also in a climate crisis that will still be very much with us when the coronavirus threat passes."

Australia provides \$30 billion per annum in fossil fuel subsidies

FF industry directly employs 64,300 (10% women)

The same amount of money could pay for 600,000 hospital workers

For each job the government spends \$470,000

Costing an Aus tax payer an average of \$1,178 per year

2019-20 Summer bushfire cost \$50 per person



If the goal of these subsidies is to create or protect jobs, as is the coronavirus stimulus, the subsidies have failed. Climate Justice Project research shows that these subsidies produced only 64,300 direct jobs in coal, oil and gas extraction, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Moss says that means that the Australia government spends \$470,000 for every direct fossil fuel job.

The subsidy comes on top of the fact that eight out of ten of the largest fossil fuel producers in Australia paid no taxes despite nine of these companies drawing revenue of almost \$28 billion in 2016 and 20017, according to the Climate Justice Project's research. Glencore, Australia's largest coal

producer and the and second-largest energy company, paid just \$640. "That's insane," says Moss.

Subsidising a dying industry

"When resources are so desperately needed for health and the broader economy, subsidies that create few direct jobs in dying industries are unconscionable," says Moss. "Directing funds to companies that have had 30 years to prepare for the demise of their industry in the face of efforts to address climate change is simply throwing money away when it could be put to so much better use elsewhere."

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WaterNSW wants to stop mine draining city's water

WaterNSW's dogged determination to ensure South32's Dendrobium coal mine does not further reduce water security for the Greater Sydney Region has been welcomed by environmentalists.

The Alliance also believes it is long past time for the NSW Government to make the Special Areas off-limits to further coal mining.

In its latest public rebuttal of South32's plans, WaterNSW reiterates its serious concerns that the proposed expansion would lead to increased surface water drainage, environmental damage, and could threaten existing water supply infrastructure.

South 32's response inadequate

The water authority first aired its concerns through a submission in October last year. In its most recent response published last month, expressed its disappointment that South32 had failed to adequately respond to its concerns.

"WaterNSW remains strongly opposed to this project in its current form as none of its key concerns have been adequately addressed through the Response to Submission," it wrote in its latest submission.

"[South32's Response to Submissions] placed too much reliance on 'post-approval' management, rather than providing relevant information that would allow key issues to be properly assessed prior to a determination.

"Further, the RTS has not adequately considered or addressed the findings and recommendations from the Final Report of the Independent Expert Panel for Mining in the Catchment."

Among WaterNSW's most serious concerns with the Dendrobium expansion are the additional surface water losses from the expansion would be up to 5.2 ML/day.

WaterNSW is concerned that these predictions by the company may be underestimating the full extent of surface water losses from the catchment.

Nine major watercourses and approximately 100 smaller tributaries are expected to experience fracturing as a result of the expansion, including the Avon and Cordeaux Rivers, which are downstream of the reservoirs and feed into Pheasants Nest Weir - a major component of the water supply system.

Potential water quality impacts from the extensive stream fracturing that is predicted.

Setbacks from the two dam walls (Cordeaux and Avon) should be increased to at least 1,500 metres due to potential far-field differential movements. "Should any impacts occur to these dams, there is the potential that the risks and consequences could be extreme."

Lock the Gate Alliance NSW Community Coordinator Nic Clyde said South32's decision not to address WaterNSW's concerns showed an arrogance and lack of respect for all who depended on the drinking water

catchment area.

"WaterNSW hasn't pulled any punches with its latest submission, because South32's plans would negatively impact its core responsibility of delivering water to Greater Sydney's residents," he said.

"The Dendrobium mine has already caused serious damage in the region which has led to loss of surface water.

"In 2018, it was revealed six billion litres of water had been diverted from creeks feeding Sydney water catchments into underground coal mines in the Special Areas.

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CO2 content of gas is growing

The massive growth in Australia's production of liquefied natural gas (LNG) has come with an unwelcome byproduct - even bigger growth in the industry's output of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming and climate change.

That is the finding of John Robert, a 40-year veteran of industrial economics and process engineering in the Australian petrochemical and LNG industries and related fields.

He writes in a guest contribution for the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, that by 2019, the industry's output of carbon dioxide had reached 0.7 of a tonne of CO2 for every tonne of LNG it produced as the concentration of the extracted gas declined.

"The 360% expansion of LNG production accompanies a likely 460% growth in the industry's domestic greenhouse gas emissions," he writes in a briefing note: *The Growth of Australia's LNG Industry and the Decline in Greenhouse Gas Emission Standards.*

Robert notes that LNG production requires the intentional release of millions of tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere, which he contrasts with the industry's much less significant and inadvertent fugitive emissions, which tend to be more eye-catching.

"Inadvertent or unintended emissions of methane could correctly be called 'fugitive,' but they are generally very small in the conventional LNG

industry compared to both necessary and deliberate CO2 venting."

Robert adds that as the industry depletes known gas reserves, the CO2 content of the LNG produced rises. Citing a new floating processing and storage facility being built to serve Darwin LNG, CO2 emissions could rise 4-6 times, taking emissions in production from 0.6 tonne per tonne of LNG in 2015 to between 2.4 and 3.6 tonnes of greenhouse gases per tonne of LNG.

"In other words, the total project could become a CO2 venting factory with an LNG byproduct," he writes.

Robert notes that other major LNG exporting nations, such as Qatar, Papua New Guinea, the United States, Trinidad, Indonesia and Malaysia, have national oil companies and/or regulators that licence energy exports.

"They are thus able to extract substantial and equitable returns to the national estate on behalf of its citizens. Several of these authorities also take an active national interest role in the planning of LNG plants. By contrast, the extreme 'laissez-faire' regime in Australia has not served the nation's interests in either financial returns or in clarity about controlling their emissions."

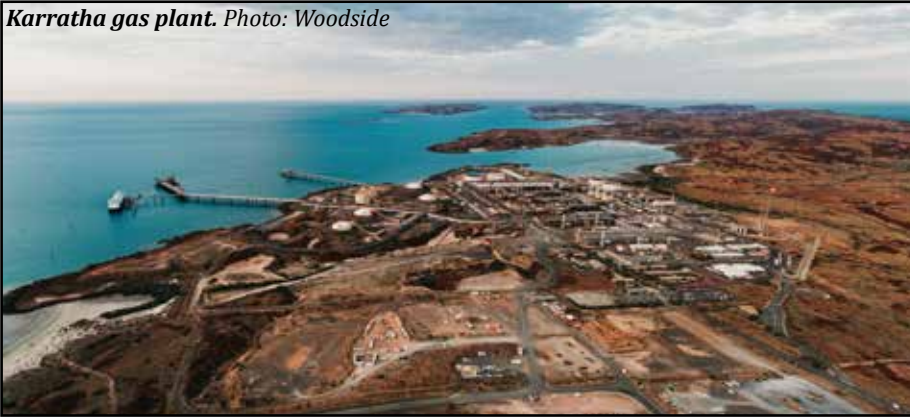
• **Full report:** *IEEFA brief The Australian LNG industry's growth - and the decline in greenhouse gas emissions standards:*

<https://ieefa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Australia-LNG-Industry-Growth-and-Emission-Standards-Decline-April-2020.pdf>

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New WA policy lacks clarity

Karratha gas plant. Photo: Woodside



The WA Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) last week released an amended policy on carbon pollution which adopts the Paris Agreement goal of net-zero emissions.

However, a lack of clarity on how the policy will be applied to individual projects under assessment risks the potential for legal challenges, according to Western Australia's peak environment group the Conservation Council of WA.

The original EPA Greenhouse Gas Guidance Statement released in 2019 was aimed at preventing any further increases in carbon pollution – a goal which is necessary to maintain a safe climate according to overwhelming scientific consensus. The EPA was forced to review the policy by the McGowan Government which buckled to pressure from WA's biggest polluters in the oil and gas industry led by Woodside.

The revised version lacks the clarity of the previous statement, instead requiring new projects to demonstrate how they will 'contribute' to the long-term goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Community has expectations on climate

CCWA Director Piers Verstegen said that it was now up to the EPA to apply the policy in a way that was consistent with the science and community expectation on climate change, and new projects that add net pollution cannot be considered environmentally acceptable.

"We welcome the EPA's acknowledgement of the Paris Agreement and its goal of net-zero emissions; however, it is disappointing that the EPA policy lacks clarity on the fundamental need for pollution to be reduced immediately to achieve the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees," said Verstegen.

"Given the inbuilt flexibility in this policy, its effect will not be known until we see how it will be applied by the EPA in future assessments, however, it is concerning that the policy does not send a clear signal to industry about what is and what is not acceptable right now.

"Emissions must be reduced now to maintain a safe climate and that means no new pollution sources can be considered environmentally acceptable. This was the central message contained in thousands of submissions from scientists, community and experts and it must not be set aside by the EPA in favour of an approach designed to provide more flexibility for polluting industries.

"The fundamental test for this policy is whether it will result in an increase in carbon emissions by allowing major new pollution sources such as the Burup Hub LNG developments proposed by Woodside, Shell, BP and others.

Approvals open to legal challenge

"Any approvals that fail to properly consider and apply the science on climate change as required under legislation face a high likelihood of legal challenge as community and environment groups will be forced to the courts to defend the climate, communities and the environment.

"In the absence of leadership from government on climate change, a strong, science-based approach from the EPA is all the more critical.

"Such an approach could drive thousands of new jobs and a transition to a cleaner, more competitive future for WA. A weak policy would miss that opportunity and instead risks locking in low employment, high pollution industries with declining global markets such as LNG," Verstegen said.

Massive new seismic testing plan for WA

Hundreds of concerned Western Australians have called on the state's Environmental Protection Authority to publicly and transparently assess the massive 97,000 hectare 3D seismic testing plan for the Mid West.

The surveys, which are looking for gas, would stretch across the shires of Irwin, Three Springs, Mingenew, and Carnamah.

Up to 1,000 hectares of vegetation would also be cleared just for the seismic trucks to pass through.

Irwin farmer Rod Copeland said locals were concerned in regards to the impacts of the seismic testing on farm biosecurity and the spreading of dieback, but also about the data being able to facilitate fracking across the area.

"Neither Beach Energy, nor the other companies like Strike, have ruled out fracking in this area," he said.

"We know there are shale and tight gas reserves here.

"Through a Public Environmental Review, the public can learn more about the nature of the resources the company is targeting, as well as the direct impacts of the clearing and thumper trucks."

Lock the Gate Alliance WA spokesperson Simone van Hattem said there was a high level of public concern throughout the region and the state about the seismic testing, due to the risk it could lead to fracking.

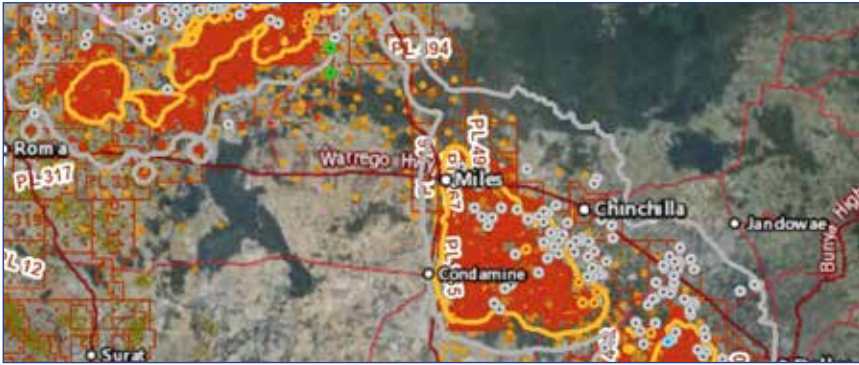
"Many communities in and around the northern Perth Basin have declared themselves fracking gas-field free.

"The data that will be acquired through this survey will facilitate drilling of gas wells. Whether they are conventional or unconventional fracking gasfields remains to be seen."

Ms van Hattem said people were clearly concerned about the impact the seismic testing would have.

"Seismic surveys are by their very nature highly intrusive, requiring access to large areas of land," she said.

Recommended reading



Arrow Energy 'Lazarus Project' rises once again to save us all from COVID-19

By Shay Dougall, Principal of Molliwell

The rehashed announcement by the Qld Premier in the media dead zone of last Friday afternoon that the Arrow Energy Surat Gas Project will go ahead with a final investment decision shows that the Premier is happy to stand with Arrow Energy's CEO in opposition to the CEOs of farming families in the impacted area. Premier Palaszczuk joyfully (and ignorantly) risks their business, children's recreation areas, their air quality and water security and their staff's health and safety. The failure of the Premier to consider the impact of this announcement on Queensland farming families (who are another essential service and pre-existing primary industry) is negligent.

Read all about it here:

<https://nwprotectionadvocacy.com/arrow-energy-lazarus-project-rises-once-again-to-save-us-all-from-covid-19/>



Arrow project labelled 'destructive' for Qld

The Palaszczuk Government's public endorsement of Arrow Energy's destructive Surat Gas Project is an insult to farmers and communities battling to grow food and fodder for Queenslanders, according to Lock the Gate Alliance.

The government last week released a statement, gushing over the PetroChina and Shell joint venture, that will further pockmark the fertile plains of the Western Downs and threaten underground water relied on by farmers.

Lock the Gate Queensland spokesperson Vicki Perrin said the unconventional gas industry had already wreaked havoc across the Western Downs.

She said the Palaszczuk Government's attempt to tie the destructive project to the Covid-19 crisis reeked of political spin.

"At a time when the world is oversupplied with gas, there is no reason to put Queensland's precious agricultural lands and groundwater at further risk," she said.

"The existing industry is already draining water bores on the Western Downs, and this project will only multiply farmers' woes.

"Make no mistake, this temporary, destructive project poses a significant risk to the long term food security of Queensland.

"In particular, this project will damage the extremely valuable agricultural area around Cecil Plains, where farmers have resisted Arrow tooth and nail since at least 2010 in order to protect their food growing capability.

"This is why we need urgent changes to Queensland's Regional Planning Interests Act, so vitally important food growing regions can be permanently protected from dangerous projects like unconventional gas exploitation."

Last year, the Underground water impact report (UWIR) for the Surat Basin revealed that more than 100 farming bores had been drained due to CSG, with more than 500 bores expected to be impacted in the coming years as the industry expanded.

Almost 25,000 km² of land has been made available in Queensland for gas exploration since early 2017.

Recommended reading



Goodbye to Bass Strait gas **renew.**

Tim Forcey's article on the future of gas in Australia, published in *Renew*, is well worth a read. It contains informative charts and diagrams, and tells you how homes can be made more sustainable – and cheaper to run – by disconnecting from the gas grid and going all electric.

Read all about it here:

<https://renew.org.au/renew-magazine/renewable-grid/goodbye-to-bass-strait-gas/>



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Inside the news

While we're all preoccupied with **Coronavirus**, researchers warn that **fossil fuel** companies will use the crisis to their **advantage**. Tax cuts and relaxed environmental regulations are likely top of their list, along with dismantling workplace safeguards for their increasingly casualised labor force (p11).

Already, they are circumventing **travel restrictions** to get their FIFO workers out to the mines and gaswells (p11).

Meanwhile, **oil prices** have dipped into negative territory (p9) with bad profit implications for oil and gas producers.

Whitehaven Coal has put its **Vickery** mine expansion on hold as prices slump, and has also delayed a decision on building a new coking coal mine at **Winchester South** in Queensland (p8).

Adani, unable to refinance a \$100 debt on its **Abbot Point** coal export terminal, has had to stump up the money itself when the loan fell due (p7).

And another contractor, **FKG**, has dumped Adani (p7).



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In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 9,200 words of news for your convenience. [Click on the links](#) to view original articles. (Subscriptions may be required)

THE ADANI SAGA

<https://onestepoffthegrid.com.au/townsville-office-building-and-adani-carmichael-coal-project-hq-goes-solar/>

Townsville office building, and Adani Carmichael coal mine HQ, goes solar

Sophie Vorrath, Renew Economy, 14/04/2020

Brisbane-based Sentinel Property Group continued its portfolio-wide shift to solar last week, with the installation of a 100kW PV system at its River Quays building in Townsville – an office complex whose tenants include Indian mining giant Adani Resources.

The building's high profile list of tenants includes Adani, Telstra and Adani's soon to be ex-engineering contractor for the Carmichael rail project, AECOM.

<https://www.afr.com/companies/mining/adani-in-100m-debt-scrumble-20200414-p54jls>

Adani in \$100m debt scramble

Peter Ker, AFR, 15/04/2020

Adani has urgently pumped more than \$100 million into a crucial Australian subsidiary after the coronavirus derailed debt refinancing efforts, triggering ratings downgrades and steep falls in the value of the company's bonds.

Australian-registered company Adani Abbot Point Terminal (AAPT) has signalled to lenders it will repay by Friday the \$100 million of debt that is due for repayment next month, after an 11th-hour funding injection from a related party.

The funding injection was required after efforts to refinance the May debt obligations fell flat over the past month, and Adani has now postponed efforts to refinance the further \$1.1 billion of debt AAPT is due to repay over the next 32 months.

AAPT holds a 99-year lease on Queensland's Abbot Point coal terminal, and its revenue comes from selling port services to big coal exporters like BHP and Glencore.

While it does not own Adani's controversial Carmichael coal project, there are strong links given the coal produced at Carmichael will be exported



Galilee Blockade says, "FKG were due to construct the second 125km section of Adani's coal railway. We can't share our communications with FKG but we can share that our blockade actions (including two arrests) have been successful!"

via the terminal and will deliver revenue to AAPT.

ASIC filings suggest ownership of AAPT's holding company was transferred on March 30 from Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone – a company listed on India's National Stock Exchange – to an unlisted Singaporean company owned by the Adani family.

ASIC filings suggest the Singaporean company paid \$130.6 million for control of AAPT's holding company.

Adani's long struggle to secure finance for Carmichael has prompted the group to attempt to self-fund development of a \$2 billion mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin.

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COAL ROCKS ON

<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/6724048/another-mount-arthur-mine-truck-accident-workers-blame-unrealistic-targets/>

Dump truck driver's lucky escape from dump truck accident at BHP's Mount Arthur mine on Monday night

Ian Kirkwood, Newcastle Herald, 16/04/2020

Two investigations are under way at BHP's Mount Arthur coal mine after a Caterpillar dump truck slid backwards over the side of a 20-metre drop on Monday night, trapping its operator for almost five hours.

The incident took place at the Saddlers Creek or southern end of Mount Arthur open-cut, a few kilometres south of the Muswellbrook township.

BHP said the truck operator "sustained no physical injuries" during the ordeal and had been "supported and monitored since the incident".

The ground gave way under the Caterpillar 793 truck - weighing more than 500 tonnes with a payload of up to 230 tonnes - after it reversed up to the earthen wall or "bund" marking the edge of the "tip-head" at an overburden dump.

Past and present Mount Arthur employees say that the accident was the fault of mine management and the pressure put on digger operators and truck operators to meet unrealistic performance targets.

"A number of factors appear to be involved in the incident and we have notified the NSW Resources Regulator," a BHP spokesperson said yesterday. "It has launched its own investigation, as well as the one launched internally."

<https://www.afr.com/companies/mining/whitehaven-delays-coal-expansions-takes-second-sales-downgrade-20200415-p54k7y>

Whitehaven delays coal expansions, takes second sales downgrade

Peter Ker, AFR, 16/04/2020

Whitehaven Coal has downgraded its coal sales target for the second time in five months and ruled out investments in coal mine expansions this year amid turbulent financial markets.

The freeze on expansion decisions has most relevance for the \$700 million Vickery project near Gunnedah in New South Wales, which was expected to be the subject of an investment decision in 2020.

The project continues to be held up in NSW approval processes, and Whitehaven said on Thursday it would be cautious amid the recent market turbulence, even though the coronavirus had not affected its business to any significant degree.

The comments come after Whitehaven's half year profits in February were 91% lower than in the previous comparable period, on lower coal prices and lower sales volumes.

Whitehaven also reported in February that its net debt had more than tripled.

The delay to approvals is partly caused by the coronavirus, which has complicated efforts by regulators to hold public hearings into the project.

Whitehaven also hopes to build a new coking coal mine in Queensland at Winchester South, but an investment decision on that project was not expected in 2020. The company has also been considering an expansion of the Narrabri mine.

Shaw and Partners analyst Peter O'Connor said the weight of the roof at Narrabri was compressing Whitehaven's work into tighter and more confined spaces.

He said geological challenges at Narrabri were occurring too frequently for comfort.

"We are concerned that Narrabri has registered another red flag ... the last quarter's red flag was an 'unplanned intrusion' impacting production," he said.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/ev-ery-measure-new-plan-to-protect-sydney-water-supplies-20200417-p54kv5.html>

'Every measure': New plan to protect Sydney water supplies

Peter Hannam, SMH, 18/04/2020

The Berejiklian government has accepted all 50 recommendations of an independent expert panel assessing the impacts of coal mining in the Sydney catchment and pledged "a more stringent approach" to future approvals.

Planning Minister Rob Stokes said the government would set up an inter-agency taskforce this year to implement the panel's findings.

The plan includes setting up an independent expert panel to assess mining applications in the catchment, and to review and update calculations of current and future water losses "in line with the best available science".

The aim is to ensure a "net gain" for the city's water supply by requiring miners more than compensate for any loss.

Underground mining typically results in subsidence as rocks collapse into the void created by the extraction of coal. Resulting cracks can potentially reach the surface, draining creeks and endangered upland swamps.

Peter Turner, mining projects science officer of the National Parks Association, said Stokes's comments were "encouraging".

However, "without a commitment of substantial funding and an urgent timeframe to address the long-known monitoring and data access problems, in reality, the assurances may be little more than window dressing for business as usual".

"There should be no further mining approvals until water quantity and quality losses to date can be robustly determined with high scientific con-

fidence," Dr Turner said. "Currently that's not possible."

Last month, the government gave the nod for the extension of coal mining under one of greater Sydney's reservoirs, the first such approval in two decades.

The Planning Department told Peabody Energy it could proceed with the extraction of coal from three new longwalls planned for its Metropolitan mine, two of which will go beneath Woronora reservoir.

In a 2014 report on mining in the catchment, the NSW Chief Scientist found Sydney was alone among major cities in permitting such activities.

<https://www.theage.com.au/environment/sustainability/waternsw-warns-of-extreme-risks-from-expansion-of-catchment-coal-mine-20200419-p54l67.html>

WaterNSW warns of 'extreme' risks from expansion of catchment coal mine

Peter Hannam, SMH, 19/04/2020

The agency in charge of Sydney's water catchment says it remains "strongly opposed" to the expansion of a coal mine, warning that without increased setbacks from two dam walls "risks and consequences could be extreme".

In a letter to the Planning Department last month, WaterNSW's manager for catchment protection Clay Preshaw said the extension of South32's Dendrobium underground mine in the Illawarra region could also trigger rock fracturing and potential water losses for nine major watercourses and about 100 smaller tributaries.

"WaterNSW remains strongly opposed to this project in its current form as none of its key concerns have been adequately addressed" on the expansion plan, Preshaw wrote.

The agency also reaffirmed its worry that the project could affect its ability to construct and operate future proposed infrastructure works, such as the Lower Cordeaux Dam and Avon Deep Water Access projects.

"WaterNSW also reiterates its position that the setbacks from the [Avon and Cordeaux] dam walls should be increased to at least 1500m due to potential far-field differential movements," Preshaw said. "Should any impacts occur to these dams, there is the potential that the risks and consequences could be extreme."

Stuart Khan, a professor in UNSW's School of Civil & Environmental Engineering Research, said "we would be

very foolish” to ignore WaterNSW’s “wide-ranging and very significant” concerns.

“I strongly agree with the concerns of WaterNSW regarding the heavy reliance on ‘post-approval’ management of risks,” Professor Khan said. “Once a project is approved, the major opportunities to avoid significant risks are lost.”

OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.alicespringsnews.com.au/2020/04/16/this-crisis-cant-look-to-natural-gas-for-relief/>

This crisis can't look to natural gas for relief

Erwin Chlanda, Alice Springs News, 16/04/2020

Gas, the hoped-for get out of jail card for Michael Gunner’s record debt ridden NT Government, does not have a bright future.

EnergyQuest Chief Executive Graeme Bethune says Australian liquid natural gas revenue will be “smashed as affordability of gas field development to keep LNG plants full looms as long-term threat”.

He says total Australian LNG export revenue for 2019-20 is forecast at around A\$50 billion and the impact of low oil prices will push 2020-21 LNG revenue down to as low as A\$30 billion.

“Australian project deferrals have national economic implications,” says Dr Bethune.

Federal Government is having to step in to stimulate the economy, with measures costing around \$200 billion.

“Unfortunately, this time there is no accompanying surge in oil and gas investment and there is unlikely to be until oil prices improve.”

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/markets/oil-price-plunges-below-zero-as-demand-collapses-stocks-dip-20200421-p54jm2.html>

Oil price plunges below zero as demand collapses; stocks dip

Stan Choe, Damian J. Troise & Alex Veiga, SMH, 21/04/2020

Oil prices have plunged below zero, the latest never-before-seen number to come out of the economic coma caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The cost to have a barrel of US crude delivered in May plummeted to minus \$US37.63 (\$59.37). It was at roughly \$US60 at the start of the year.

Traders are still paying \$US20.43 for a barrel of US oil to be delivered in June, which analysts consider to be closer to the “true” price of oil. Crude to be delivered next month, meanwhile, is running up against a stark problem: traders are running out of places to keep it, with storage tanks close to full amid a collapse in demand as factories, automobiles and airplanes sit idled around the world.

Tanks at a key energy hub in Oklahoma could hit their limits within three weeks. Because of that, traders are willing to pay others to take that oil for delivery in May off their hands, so long as they also take the burden of figuring out where to keep it.

Halliburton lurched between gains and sharp losses, even though it reported stronger results for the first three months of 2020 than analysts expected. The oilfield engineering company said that the pandemic has created so much turmoil in the industry that it “cannot reasonably estimate” how long the hit will last. It expects a further decline in revenue and profitability for the rest of 2020, particularly in North America.

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/business/the-economy/port-kembla-gas-import-terminal-set-to-expand-20200420-p54ljj.html>

Port Kembla gas import terminal set to expand

Nick O'Malley, Brisbane Times, 20/04/2020

The NSW government has approved a plan to nearly double the capacity of the Port Kembla gas terminal, which could begin supplying imported liquefied natural gas to NSW and Victoria by 2023.

Though Australia is the world’s largest gas exporter, domestic prices have soared in recent years as producers in the nation’s north met long-term contracts with overseas customers.

The Australian Industrial Energy venture at Port Kembla, which is backed by Andrew Forrest, now has the capacity to provide gas security to both states, said the project’s head, Peter Mitchley.

The increased capacity could see the number of shipping movements at the terminal from 26 per year to 46, he said. Mitchley said that, at capacity, the terminal could meet NSW peak demand alone.

AGL Energy is facing protests over its plan to build a second import terminal at Crib Point in Victoria

<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/twiggy-venture-presses-on-with-bigger-lng-import-project-20200420-p54ld9>

Twiggy venture presses on with bigger LNG import project

Angela Macdonald-Smith, AFR, 20/04/2020

The Andrew Forrest-backed LNG import venture at Port Kembla has secured NSW government approval for an increase in capacity and is pressing towards a final go-ahead despite the COVID-19 crisis and the prospect of increased gas flows from Queensland.

LNG could start to be imported through the terminal in 2022, although signals from customers pointed to most need for fresh supplies in 2023.

The revised development consent for the terminal allows for well over 100 petajoules a year of gas to be imported every year, representing about 75% of the NSW market’s needs. Gas could also be sent south to Victoria.

Similarly, AGL Energy is still working on securing approvals for an LNG import project at Crib Point in Victoria, taking the view that the Arrow gas would not directly ease the tight southern gas market due to pipeline constraints from the north. The company is due to issue its environmental impact statement for the project this month or next.

Meanwhile, Santos is continuing to pursue its Narrabri coal seam gas project in NSW, while a Korean-backed LNG import project is proposed for Newcastle.

AIE has appointed Spiecapag Sole-tanche Bachy as the major construction contractor and has signed a contract with Norway’s Hoegh for a floating LNG import vessel that would be parked at the Port Kembla wharf for the duration of the project.

NUKE MADNESS

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-16/risk-kimba-nuclear-dump-may-breach-human-rights-committee-says/12154474>

Kimba nuclear waste dump law risks breaching Indigenous human rights, committee finds

Gabriella Marchant, ABC, 16/04/2020

A cross-party parliamentary committee has found “significant risk” that local Indigenous groups were not consulted about a proposed nuclear waste facility to a standard required under international law.

A report by the Joint Committee on Human Rights found that given Barn-garla traditional owners unanimously



*A sign in Kimba.
Photo: Mike Coggan/ABC*

vetoed the proposed facility, the Federal Government's decision to press ahead with a bill to build it risked breaching Barnjarla rights to culture and self-determination.

The proposed site outside Kimba on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula is on land traditionally associated with the Barnjarla people and would store Australia's low to medium-level radioactive waste, most of which is created by nuclear medicine.

Two non-binding independent ballots were conducted to gauge community support for the proposal; one for residents in the local government area surrounding the site, the other among Barnjarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation members, who largely did not qualify for the first ballot.

While more than 60% of voters in the Kimba local government ballot supported the facility, 100% of Barnjarla voters rejected the proposal.

CLIMATE CRISIS

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/business/companies/a-year-on-wa-s-environmental-watchdog-releases-its-new-pollution-guidelines-20200416-p54kkm.html>

A year on, WA's environmental watchdog releases its new pollution guidelines

Hamish Hastie, Brisbane Times, 16/04/2020

More than a year after its net-zero pollution ambitions were swiftly rejected by the state government and resources industry, Western Australia's Environmental Protection Authority has finally released its new greenhouse gas emission guidelines.

The new guidelines set the same target as the Paris Climate Agreement of net-zero emissions by 2050 and allow the authority to ask for information about how companies plan to contribute to that target.

In March 2019, the authority released guidelines that would compel companies expanding or building new projects with emissions higher than 100,000 tonnes a year to fully offset them.

It was forced back to the drawing board after big LNG players including Woodside and Chevron blasted the guidelines, arguing they would put future projects worth billions of dollars at risk.

The authority has been consulting with conservation groups and industry since June 2019 and received nearly 7,000 submissions.

Under the new guidelines, the EPA can request information on all emissions of a project including emissions from customers of resources companies known as 'scope 3' emissions.

The authority can also request a greenhouse gas management plan and public reporting of emissions.

The Conservation Council of WA welcomed the alignment of the guidelines with the Paris Agreement but said a lack of clarity on how they would be applied could open EPA decisions up to legal challenges.

Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association chief executive Andrew McConville said the new guidelines reflected a more pragmatic and workable approach.

"How the EPA implements its guideline in practice will be key, particularly how that implementation reflects the importance of national and international emissions reduction policies over ad-hoc regional measures," he said.

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/climate-change/kick-them-into-action-fire-group-takes-epa-to-court-over-climate-20200418-p54kzl.html>

'Kick them into action': Fire group takes EPA to court over climate

Peter Hannam, SMH, 20/04/2020

A legal challenge has been launched against the NSW Environment Protection Authority. Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action began the suit last week with the NSW Environmental Defenders Office "to kick [the EPA] into action".

EDO chief executive David Morris said the case, in the Land and Environment Court, would seek to force the EPA, which does not have a climate policy, to use its powers to keep communities safe from the increasingly severe impacts of a warming world.

Mr Morris said the EPA was chosen as a test case among similar agencies nationally in part because of a section of the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997.

That section requires the agency to "develop environmental quality objectives, guidelines and policies to ensure environment protection".

Bushfire Survivors chairwoman Jo Dodds, who is also a Bega Shire councillor, said the group's 30-odd members had endured fires from the 2003 blazes in Canberra, Black Saturday in Victoria in 2009 and the fires that devastated parts of her town in Tathra two years ago.

Cr Dodds said the legal action was aimed at making the EPA "live up to its remit".

The agency "needs to have adequate policies around climate change", including setting limits on greenhouse emissions and enforcing them, she said.

FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/watchdog-to-consider-audit-of-ung-i-program-as-legal-questions-loom-93960/>

Watchdog to consider audit of UNGI program as legal questions loom

Michael Mazengarb, Renew Economy, 15/04/2020

The chief watchdog over federal government expenditure has flagged a potential audit of the Morrison government's Underwriting New Generation Investments (UNGI) program in response to suggestions that the controversial initiative may be unlawful.

The issue was initially raised by think tank The Australia Institute, raising concerns that the Morrison government appeared to be progressing moves to provide funding to new gas generators and coal power station upgrades under the UNGI program, despite publishing no guidelines for how funding would be awarded and no legislation necessary to authorise the funding has passed parliament.

No project initiatives have been finalised, and the energy industry – from individual developers, through to big utilities such as AGL and even the head of the Energy Security Board – says the uncertainty over the UNGI process is halting private investment elsewhere.

In a reply to the Australia Institute, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has said that it is actively considering the inclusion of the UNGI program as part of its 2020-21 audit work program.

According to the legal advice provided to the Australia Institute, if the Morrison government fails to pass the

required legislative amendments, the UNGI program could be left open to a legal challenge on the basis that it is unconstitutional.

While no funding has been formally awarded under the UNGI program, despite it now being more than a year since an initial shortlist of 12 projects was announced by Scott Morrison, negotiations are still being progressed for several prospective projects.

The shortlist included six pumped-hydro storage projects, five gas generator projects and a proposed upgrade to the Vales Point coal-fired power station.

Two gas fired generators, planned for Victoria and Queensland, were announced as the first two UNGI projects that had advanced to more detailed negotiations with the Morrison government.

An additional three projects have been earmarked for New South Wales, as was agreed under a bilateral detail between the state and federal governments. This included up to \$11 million in funding for upgrades to the Vales Point coal-fired power station.

But none of these projects have reached a final investment decision, as the government has yet to secure parliamentary authorisation for the UNGI funding commitments.

<https://www.afr.com/policy/economy/thousands-win-exemption-from-foreign-travel-ban-20200415-p54jyv>

Thousands win exemption from foreign travel ban

Peter Ker, AFR, 15/04/2020

Big companies are finding it easy to sidestep the Australian government's ban on foreign travel, with thousands of exemptions awarded in the early weeks of the moratorium.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced an indefinite ban on Australians travelling abroad on March 18 amid concerns that foreign travel was helping to spread the coronavirus,

and the policy was formally in place by March 24. "More than 1,400" exemptions from the foreign travel ban were granted between March 24 and April 8, a Department of Home Affairs spokesman confirmed.

Australian citizens and permanent residents can win a travel exemption if they convince Border Force they have special circumstances requiring travel.

Examples include those working in "critical" industries, particularly big export industries such as mining and energy. ASX top 20 companies are among those to have successfully lobbied for exemptions, with resources companies simply saying skilled workers were required at foreign mining and oil and gas sites.

One company granted permission to send workers to the northern hemisphere – speaking on condition of anonymity – said it had found Border Force very willing to assist, a sign of the government's determination to ensure Australian resources companies remain profitable and continue to pay strong dividends through the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.

The government has asked the sector to keep operating through the pandemic, and has given it exemption from other rules. Dining halls in remote mining camps can operate with social distancing measures in place.

Several states have also given special treatment to resources industry workers when crossing state borders. More than 50,000 Australians regularly commute from major population centres to remote mining, oil and gas sites.

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/fossil-fuel-lobby-to-use-covid-19-to-push-for-weaker-climate-laws-41487/>

Fossil fuel lobby to use Covid-19 to push for weaker climate laws

Michael Mazengarb, Renew Economy, 20/04/2020

Australian researchers warn that governments and powerful business lobby

groups may use the Covid-19 crisis as an opportunity to water down environmental controls, with the fossil fuel industry most likely to take advantage.

Economists from the Australian National University found that studies of the behaviour of corporations and governments during previous economic crises show they were able to predict how the government responses to Covid-19 may be influenced by vested interests.

The researchers from the ANU's Energy Change Institute and the School of Regulation and Global Governance warn that the power of large incumbent industries, like that of the fossil fuel lobby, could use their power to convince governments that an economic crisis could justify the relaxation of climate change and environmental regulations.

"Political power is proportional to the size of an industry, and currently the fossil fuel industry still easily dominates the renewable energy industry in many parts of the world," study co-author and ANU researcher Dr Emma Aisbett said.

As an Australian example, Aisbett cites the recent approval for the expansion of coal mining operations under a Sydney drinking water catchment as another example of how the industry can use its influence to win favourable treatment from governments.

An even more explicit example was the recent commitment made by a meeting of G20 energy ministers, including federal energy minister Angus Taylor, to boost demand for oil in an effort to help suppliers recover from the impacts of a recent price war between Russia and OPEC states. **F**

STOP WATER MINING THE NEXT RESOURCES BATTLE



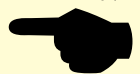
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