By Paul Gregoire and Ugur Nedim
Sydney Criminal Lawyers

Over a weekend in February, a tour group visiting areas threatened by mining in the Upper Hunter was placed under NSW police surveillance. This apparently unwarranted monitoring – reminiscent of totalitarian regimes like North Korea – seems to be yet another attempt to suppress potential dissent under the Coalition’s anti-protest regime.

The Lock the Gate tour comprised city-based residents visiting communities and areas impacted by the Hunter coal-mining industry. Promotional material for the tour lists a series of meetings with local residents. And there’s no mention of any plans to protest.

However, NSW police took it upon themselves to label the tour a ‘protest group’ and actively monitor its movements. Convoys of up to four police vehicles were shadowing tour participants for hours on end on both February 3 and 4.

The use of the laws shines a light on the state government’s interests, particularly its pro-mining stance, which is effectively putting residents of, and visitors to, areas that are heavily owned by multinational mining corporations at risk of targeting and even criminal prosecution.

Occupied territory

Lock the Gate spokesperson Steve Phillips recalls that the tour first encountered police in Wollar in the far Upper Hunter. "Police vehicles began frequently driving by our tour group, and then a convoy of police vehicles appeared to follow our tour bus as we left Wollar," he said.

As the group made their way to a nature reserve area in Ulan, known as the Drip, officers followed. "About half a dozen police vehicles, including a police rescue outfit, followed us into the parking lot at the Drip and stayed there for over an hour observing our tour group," Phillips continued.

The tour organiser said Mudgee police inspector Jeff Boon approached him and asked what the group were up to. "I told him we were hosting an information tour and observed that there was really no reason for the police to be there," Mr Phillips told Sydney Criminal Lawyers.

"Nevertheless, the police were waiting for us at our next stop, Bylong," he added.

NSW police has since stated that it’s appropriate to monitor the “actions of protest groups during planned events.” However, it gave no evidence as to why they labelled those on tour as a protest group.

Continued p 2

• P 2: Bill & Geoff at odds on Adani
• P 3: Nanna Felicity’s gas report
• P 4: The week’s news on coal & gas
NSW police monitor community group’s bus trip – from p 1

**Far from reasonable**

NSW Council for Civil Liberties vice president Pauline Wright said that “lawful protest is a right that we have as a democracy.” And even though “there are certain restrictions,” in this case, there was nothing to warrant police having a “reasonable suspicion that there would be any unlawful protest.”

“People should be free to go about lawful activities – like being part of a guided tour – without being subject to police surveillance,” Ms Wright outlined. And she questioned why police resources weren’t being directed towards serious crime, rather than “normal, lawful business.”

According to Ms Wright, there’s no doubt the new anti-protest laws were behind what the police saw “as a reasonable apprehension that a crime might be about to be committed.” And she added that these laws have implications for “people’s ability to have freedom of political communication.”

**Silencing dissent**

Back in 2014, then NSW premier Mike Baird told a NSW mining industry dinner that his government was going to “crackdown” on those who choose to break the law when they protest. And he singled out “protesters who unlawfully enter mining sites.”

A little over a year later, the Coalition government followed through with the premier’s promise when it passed a series of harsh anti-protest laws, under the Inclosed Lands, Crimes and Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (Interference) Bill 2016.

The legislation created the new offence of aggravated unlawful entry on enclosed land. Section 4B of the Inclosed Land Protection Act 1901 provides that interfering, or attempts to interfere, with the conduct of a business on enclosed land can land a protestor with a fine of up to $5,500.

Under the provisions of the bill, police were provided with additional powers to stop, search, detain, and seize the property of protesters, as well as being given the power to shutdown a peaceful protest if it is obstructing traffic.

And the bill also inserted a definition of mine into section 201 of the Crimes Act 1900, so that the offence of interfering with a mine includes coal seam gas exploration and extraction sites.

This offence carries a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment.

**The Wilpinjong Three**

Bev Smiles, Bruce Hughes and Stephanie Luce are the first people to be up on protesting charges since the laws were changed. In April last year, the three were arrested for protesting outside the Wilpinjong coal mine in Wollar.

The three are up on charges of rendering a road belonging to a mine useless and hindering the working equipment belonging to a mine. These are both offences that carry the penalty of seven years imprisonment.

When the trio appeared at Mudgee Local Court on February 9, the presiding magistrate rejected police claims that the Wollar-Ulan Road, where the defendants were arrested, actually belonged to the mining company.

“They have pleaded not guilty, and are awaiting a judgment on the case,” Mr Phillips explained. “The outcome of that case will be important.” If the three have “the book thrown at them” then it’s likely to discourage the protesting of coal mines in NSW.

**An unconstitutional clampdown**

And Ms Wright also warns of the stifling effect that the new anti-protest laws are likely to have upon demonstrations. “People are right to be concerned,” Ms Wright told Sydney Criminal Lawyers. The laws “will have an impact on their decisions as to whether they are going to protest or not.”

The solicitor pointed to last year’s High Court of Australia decision that found parts of the 2014 Tasmanian anti-protest laws were unconstitutional in terms of breaching freedom of political communication. And she added this decision could have implications for the NSW laws.

This attempt to silence protest is something that all citizens should be worried about, Ms Wright concluded. “If we don’t feel that we can stand up and say that we are concerned about an activity... for fear of being charged with a criminal offence for doing so, that is going to have a chilling effect.”

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**News this week**

It’s all about Bill Shorten and Geoff Cousins this week.

Outgoing Australian Conservation Foundation leader, Geoff Cousins, revealed on ABC TV that he had accompanied Bill Shorten on a tour of north Queensland areas that will be impacted by the Adani coal mine.

In January, they visited the Great Barrier Reef, the mine location and adjacent agricultural and environmental areas.

Cousins told the ABC that Shorten had indicated he would kill off the mine if Labor wins the next election.

The ACF provided legal advice it had commissioned on how that might be done.

However, as Shorten has equivocated over Labor’s position since the tour, Cousins went on TV to put him on the spot.

The fallout occupied a huge amount of space, particularly in the Murdoch press which consistently spruiks the mine and condemns opponents.

By the end of the week, Shorten had retreated to saying he didn’t support the mine but would not rip up existing agreements with Adani, for fear of creating sovereign risk.

Meanwhile in Townsville, the Townsville Bulletin fumed about last week’s excellent Guardian piece on the mood in the town.

“Another week, another condescending lecture by smug southerners about how we North Queenslanders don’t know what’s good for us” thundered the Bully, complaining of a full-scale kale leaf assault. The Bully is Adani’s biggest advocate.

On the gas front, an industry conference in Sydney gave a platform to gasco’s and their supporters.

There were calls for state governments to drop restrictions and increase gas exploration and production.

QRC chief Ian Macfarlane derided “anti-fracking witchcraft peddlers” while resources minister Matt Cavan slammed “voodoo science” for holding up progress.
In the last month, Barnaby Joyce (our MP here in the New England electorate) has gone from disaster to disaster, and even the mainstream press is commenting on his profligacy.

One would think that we expect our highest representatives, our politicians, to have some morality, but our prime minister has found it necessary to make a rule that his ministers should not have sex with their staff. You have to be kidding! Does that mean it’s okay if you aren’t a minister, just an ordinary MP?

In the meantime, Malcolm has sent Barney home for a week and told him he’s a naughty boy! Wow, it’s a good thing a mate of his in Armidale is giving him an apartment rent free or he’d go broke, on the $hundreds of thousands we pay him. No wonder I am becoming more and more angry!

A happy note

On a happy note, the appeal by New Hope to approve the Acland Stage 3 mine extension was again denied in court. But we must now rely on the Queensland government not to renege on the deal. Like we must remember in the Northern Rivers: the CSG licenses were not cancelled – they were just bought back by the government.

Being a Knitting Nanna is a lesson in riding the emotional roller coaster of highs and lows.

There are wins such as the euphoria of the outcome of Bentley.

And low notes

But there are lows like the suicide of George Bender (and others), who could not stand the complicity of the government in the rape and poisoning of his farmland by the gas companies in the name of giving you cheaper gas! (Yeah, ha, ha.)

Approvals for mining mean companies wipe out towns, while they get rich, and the people who have lived there for a few generations lose everything. (I have not forgotten that we, the white people, did the same to the indigenous people here on a much larger scale – another wrong the Nannas are trying to come to terms with).

According to the north Queensland Labor people, protesters disrupting Adani progress are latte-sipping gree-nies from Melbourne stuffing up the prospects of thousands of jobs. Have we got news for them!! And if they only knew it, we are saving them from being stuck with huge mortgages after two years or so, on houses they can’t sell because the construction jobs in the mines have gone, being replaced by a handful of technicians.

I feel utter respect for those who put themselves on the line to be arrested for what they believe in – 96-year-old veteran Bill Ryan has now been arrested so many times for locking on it has become quite “ho-hum”.

Must-see movie

The Nannas in Lismore had a “secret Nanna business” a preview of Cloud-catcher Media’s movie, The Sacrifice Zone. A massive effort, put together at considerable cost to the team. They have interviewed people from Tara, Chinchilla and points north, down nearly to Dubbo. The story is the impact of CSG mining on Darling Downs and how it will impact the Pilliga forest and farmers in the area.

You must see it for yourself, and this feature length movie will available free in a few weeks.

There is already so much information on the poisonous produced water brought up from below the aquifers of the re-charge zone of the Great Artesian Basin. The claim that there will be no accidents, and not a drop of poison will get into the pure GAB water is not credible – there have already been more than 20 spills killing tracts of forest and leaching into waterways that lead to the Murray – Darling.

A projected 117 tonnes of highly toxic salt will be produced per day, and Santos’s answer on what happens to this incredibly dangerous stuff: “Oh, we’ve passed that off to a contractor – their problem!”

The Pilliga is known for the bush fires it sustains. Santos’s fire plan: remotely shut down the gas wells (never mind the ever-present leaks) and hightail it out of there, leaving it to the volunteer fire service to control.

The smart RFS guys will refuse – after all, we are just volunteers!! Nothing like wandering through a burning forest and having a gas pocket go up under your feet!

– Felicity Cahill

NANNA FELICITY’S GAS REPORT

Riding the highs and lows of the mining fight

Bill Ryan, 96, (holding microphone) has been arrested so many times it has become quite “ho-hum”. Photo: Lock the Gate

- Felicity Cahill

• Reprinted from Drake Village Voice
In the news this week:

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 37,000 words of news for your convenience. Click on the links to view original articles. ($ = subscription may be required)

THE ADANI SAGA
http://www.afr.com/opinion/columnists/against-adani-youre-against-lifting-the-worlds-poorest-out-of-poverty-danny-price-20180226-h0wof8

Against Adani? You're against lifting the world's poorest out of poverty
Danny Price, AFR, 27/02/2018

This [Adani Mundra] power plant generates electricity for some of the poorest people in the world so they can have lighting to study at night and power for clean water.

Reliable power is also crucial to attract industry so that people can have jobs to lift themselves out of poverty.

Stopping Adani won't mean an end to the difficult political decisions about coal. Conflicting reasons why the government should not support Adani will simply kick the can down the political street. Activists against Adani will simply turn their attention to the next development, and so on.

Danny Price is managing director of Frontier Economics. Disclosure: Frontier has advised Adani on Australian regulatory matters.


For Adani? There are better ways to help India's poor
Rob Burgess, The New Daily, 27/02/2018

Economist Danny Price copped a fair bit of flak and “plenty of hate mail” on Monday for an opinion piece in the Australian Financial Review headlined ‘Against Adani? You’re against lifting the world’s poorest out of poverty’.

Mr Price doesn’t actually make that argument in the article – the headline was written by the paper’s editors – but he does argue that Australian coal is the cheapest way to cater to energy-hungry Indians in the province of Gujarat.

But … a detailed study of energy supply in India in 2015 entitled Rural electrification in India: Galilee Basin coal versus decentralised renewable energy micro-grids … found that for the rural poor in Bihar state – another very impoverished region – renewable power micro-grids were a cheaper and quicker way to provide basic services – lighting, refrigeration, water pumps and sewage pumps for basic sanitation.

The technology that makes up micro-grids is not only cheap, and getting cheaper; but they are technologies that can be controlled by villagers themselves. ...

No wonder the banks see Adani’s approach to poverty alleviation as too risky to touch.


Adani mine licence could be revoked under Labor government, Geoff Cousins says Bill Shorten told him
Businessman and environmentalist Geoff Cousins says Opposition Leader Bill Shorten told him that if Labor wins government it could revoke the Adani mine licence.


Labor prepared to revoke Adani coalmine licence if elected, says Cousins
Katharine Murphy, The Guardian, 28/02/2018

Businessman and environmentalist Geoff Cousins says Bill Shorten gave him clear and repeated signals that Labor intended to harden its opposition to the controversial Adani coalmine, including promising to revoke the licence for the project if the ALP won the next federal election.

Cousins, a former president of the Australian Conservation Foundation, who accompanied Shorten to north Queensland in January to explore the various policy options for the Adani project, used a television interview on Tuesday night to publicly blast him for a lack of leadership.

Geoff Cousins says Bill Shorten vowed to revoke Adani mine licence if Labor win election
Rhian Deutrom & Sarah Elks, The Australian, 28/02/2018

Millionaire businessman and environmentalist Geoff Cousins has revealed private conversations with Bill Shorten last month, claiming the Opposition Leader promised to revoke the Adani coalmine licence as soon as he took government.
Queensland senator Matt Canavan said Mr Cousins’ comments proved that Mr Shorten’s “so-called listening tour through Queensland was a sham”.


Green-Left media push Adani conspiracy theories

Damien Tomlinson, Townsville Bulletin, 27/02/2018

Another week, another condescending lecture by smug southerners about how we North Queenslanders don’t know what’s good for us.

This time it was from deep left field, with The Guardian Australia launching a full-scale kale leaf assault on the Townsville Bulletin and News Corp Australia over our alleged reluctance to join the media throng abetting the campaign to stop the lawful building and operation of Adani’s Carmichael coal mine.

http://www.afr.com/news/politics/adanis-environmental-record-under-fire-over-165b-carmichael-mine-20180227-
h0wr27

Adani’s environmental record under fire over $16.5b Carmichael mine

Mark Ludlow, AFR, 28/02/2018

Indian energy company Adani said it has passed rigorous environmental assessment on its $16.5 billion Carmichael project, despite it facing a number of investigations over its practices at its Abbot Point coal terminal.

The legal action is just another hurdle for Adani as it looks to secure funding for the $6.7 billion first stage of the Carmichael mine.

Adani was fined $12,000 for breaching the conditions of a temporary water emissions licence during Cyclone Debbie last year which allegedly contaminated wetlands next to Abbot Point. The company is appealing the fine, with the matter likely to end up in the courts.

The company is already before the court challenging a separate ruling by the Queensland Environment Department for ongoing evaluation of water quality in the Caley Valley wetlands – a move that Adani said required “significant and expensive testing and monitoring to be carried out”.

Thirdly, Adani has been accused of tampering with water samples sent to the department in relation to the Cyclone Debbie incident, which could yet lead to further court action.


Revoking Adani mine licence a safe move for future Labor government, Shorten told

Josh Robertson, ABC, 28/02/2018

Adani would get no compensation and find it “virtually impossible” to overturn a future Labor government’s decision to scrap its mining licence, according to legal advice provided to Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten.

The ABC has obtained the advice, which reportedly prompted Mr Shorten to push for a shift in Labor policy to withdraw federal approval of Adani’s Carmichael mine proposal “if the evidence is as compelling as it appears now”.


Geoff Cousins reveals how Bill Shorten wavered on Adani mine

Katharine Murphy, The Guardian, 28/02/2018

The businessman and environmentalist Geoff Cousins ... said federal Labor leader Bill Shorten called him just before Christmas last year, looking for help in how Labor might strengthen its policy on the controversial Adani coalmine ...

The Labor leader then asked whether Cousins would accompany him to north Queensland to help him work through the options. Shorten asked if the visit could be kept out of the media, that it not be a “photo opportunity”.

“We had him many kilometres out to sea off Port Douglas ... [we] then flew over the Adani mine site ... landed nearby and we had a distinguished groundwater scientist with us who was able to show him some remarkable natural springs ...

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/28/shorten-is-selling-out-miners-to-get-green-votes/news-story/b82a5af3f469369e9d0a5374f646f26c

Shorten’s excellent $17,000 ‘coral and coal’ adventure

Joe Kelly, The Australian, 01/03/2018

Bill Shorten accepted a $17,000 private green-funded tour of the Great Barrier Reef and charter flight over the Adani coalmine, during which he pledged to environmentalists that a Labor government would seek to use federal laws to revoke the licence of the Indian mining giant.


Shorten’s betrayal of traditional Labor values

Dennis Shannahana, The Australian, 01/03/2018

Bill Shorten still can’t give a straight answer on his position on the development of the $16 billion Adani coal project in north Queensland.

After months of shifting positions, a personally guided tour of the Great Barrier Reef and the Carmichael basin, where it is claimed 10,000 jobs will be created in an area devastated by unemployment, and theCopyright (c) 2018 by Fossil Fool
Fossil Fool Bulletin 1:14 • 6 March 2018
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https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/28/shorten-is-selling-out-miners-to-get-green-votes/news-story/b82a5af3f469369e9d0a5374f646f26c
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with a clear policy.

Mr Cousins told *The Courier-Mail* he was “completely convinced” Mr Shorten wanted to revoke the coal mine’s environmental licence in government but is being opposed by some in his party.

He said the Opposition leader promised he would give him a “finite policy” by last weekend, “but he didn’t let me know, so I proceeded to make it a public issue”.

Townsville Mayor says anti-Adani protesters are threatening staff

Tony Raggatt, *Townsville Bulletin*, 01/03/2018

Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill has been forced to close another council meeting as an anti-Adani protester shouted abuse from the gallery.

Two police officers, who attended Tuesday’s meeting, intervened to ask the woman to leave after the meeting was adjourned and councillors, staff and other members of the public walked out of the chamber.

Cr Hill said people were sick and tired of the abuse.

“This is about them running an agenda in Melbourne and Sydney, it’s not about them really having a true debate,” Cr Hill said.
would get off the ground as it struggled to convince banks to lend to the high-profile project.

Mr Palmer’s Galilee Coal Project is listed as including four underground coal mines and two open-cut coal mines with a capacity of 40 million tonnes a year. Like other Galilee projects, it would require a 450-kilometre rail line to take the coal to ports on the Queensland coast.

GVK/Hancock Coal is planning two mines in the Galilee Basin, the $10.8 billion Alpha Coal project (30 million tonnes export capacity) and $6 billion Kevin’s Corner (has an export capacity of 30 million tonnes a year has been approved subject to conditions by state and federal government.

Greens call for Shorten to come clean on Adani policy

Joe Kelly, The Australian, 02/03/2018

The Greens have challenged Bill Shorten to clarify his position on Queensland’s Adani coalmine and confirm whether a Labor government would move to revoke the licence for the $16.5 billion project.

Seizing on revelations that the Opposition Leader privately assured environmentalist Geoff Cousins that Labor was on track to block the Adani mega-mine should Labor win government, instead insisting that blocking it would hurt foreign investment in Australia.

Mr Shorten declared the position on Friday amid internal wrangling over the divisive coal mine proposal, and concern from some quarters within the party that Labor is sacrificing its electoral chances in Queensland for city votes.

Bill Shorten accused of flip-flopping on Adani coal mine

Nicole Hasham, SMH, 02/03/2018

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has denied telling colleagues he wants to block the Adani mega-mine should Labor win government, instead insisting that blocking it would hurt foreign investment in Australia.

Mr Shorten declared the position on Friday amid internal wrangling over the divisive coal mine proposal, and concern from some quarters within the party that Labor is sacrificing its electoral chances in Queensland for city votes.

At a press conference she was was asked several questions about the Adani project but did not say the company’s name in any of her answers, instead referring broadly to the resources sector.

She would only say the government supported “resources industries that abide by their environmental conditions, we support resources industries that create jobs, but once again it needs to stack up independently financially”.

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Bill Shorten has repeatedly denied that he told colleagues he intended to ban the Adani coal mine, but dodged questions about whether he intended to revoke its licence if Labor wins the next election.

Shorten said Adani had become “ground zero for a whole lot of other arguments” and accused others of “dumbing down the debate about climate change and the future of mining to one mine project”.

Investors in Queensland more interested in renewables, says Premier

Trenton Akers, Courier-Mail, 02/03/2018

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk has failed to personally back the Adani coalmine, saying “money talks” and investors are more interested in renewable energy.

Speaking for the first time since arriving home from a trade mission in the US, Ms Palaszczuk said renewables were a hot topic overseas.

Ms Palaszczuk added that more investment in gas was required as authorities faced the prospect of transitioning from coal to renewables.
The businessman, who is as tough as they come, says Shorten also gave him a precise timetable for a public announcement [on killing off the Adani mine], before beginning to equivocate, noting internal opposition, then vanishing entirely last weekend.

To describe his public calling out of Shorten as a flip-flopper on Adani as bold doesn’t really do it justice. Nucelar is more like it.


I’ll not rip up Adani approval, says Bill Shorten

Sarah Elks & Ben Packham, The Australian, 03/03/2018

Bill Shorten says he will not “rip up” Adani’s federal environmental approvals if he wins government, as Queensland Labor Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk declined to restate her support for the huge mining project.


Batman voters don’t care about coal or Queensland jobs

John McCarthy, Courier-Mail, 03/03/2018

Labor is in thrall of Melbourne and the voters of the inner city seat of Batman have a message for Queensland: their climate change concerns are much more important than jobs and the economy.

Some Labor insiders have already given up on winning Batman and think


Editorial: Labor can’t keep on middle road on Adani mine

The Editor, Courier-Mail, 02/03/2018

Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has been squeezed in a pincer move of his own making. After tub-thumping in central Queensland a week ago about how he’d “spent his life” representing miners, Mr Shorten reportedly promised environmentalists during talks that he’d revoke Adani’s mining licence, if elected.

Perhaps more galling, however, was the ducking and weaving Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk performed yesterday when quizzed about the issue.

As the elected champion-in-chief of Queensland’s interests, Ms Palaszczuk has a responsibility to confront what is now a real threat to one of the biggest job-generating projects on the state’s horizon.


Opinion: Labor goes cold on coalmining future

Dennis Atkins, Courier-Mail, 28/02/2018

Labor is constructing a comprehensive policy on the much-touted Adani mine in the Galilee Basin ahead of its July national conference.

Reading between the lines of [Labor climate change spokesman] Butler’s speech, Labor is going to put as much distance as possible between its re-
COAL ROCKS ON


Rio Tinto faces $84bn shareholder revolt over membership of Minerals Council

Michael Slezak, The Guardian, 02/03/2018

The voice of Australia’s coal lobby is under renewed threat as the country’s second biggest miner, Rio Tinto, faces a shareholder revolt over its membership of lobby groups including the Minerals Council of Australia.

Global investors worth $84bn have joined together to file a shareholder motion calling on Rio Tinto to rethink its membership of the MCA, NSW Minerals Council (NSWMC) and the Queensland Resources Council (QRC). It demands Rio Tinto reveal all membership fees paid since 2012, review the consistency of the MCA’s lobbying positions with those held by Rio Tinto, and disclose what it would take for Rio to quit its membership of the MCA.


Panel to study impact of coalmining on Sydney drinking water

Michael Slezak, The Guardian, 02/03/2018

Coalmining in Sydney’s drinking water catchment will be scrutinised by water experts, the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment has announced.

Environment groups, which have been warning for years of the impact of coalmining on drinking water, welcomed the move but called for a moratorium on any expansion of mining activity until the conclusion of the review.

The panel has been directed to consider recommendations from an audit conducted last year, which warned: “The cumulative, and possibly accelerated, impact of mining on flow regimes in the catchment is likely linked to the increased prevalence of the current longwall methods of underground mining.”


More than 99% of ‘disturbed’ mining land still needs repair

Owen Jacques, Chinchilla News, 03/03/2018

Mining has disturbed a whopping 220,000 hectares of Queensland land, yet just 550ha or 0.25 per cent has been properly rehabilitated.

Government data shows just 18,000ha, eight per cent, of the 220,000ha total has been “progressively rehabilitated”.

For scale, the proposed Adani mega-mine is expected to disturb 28,000ha that will need to be rehabilitated once the project stops production.

The cost of rehabilitating every hectare of land affected by mining in Queensland would top $8.7 billion, according to Treasury data.

Of the 15,000 mine sites left abandoned across the state, 3500 are on public land and 20 are considered a serious problem.

The toxic Mt Morgan Mine outside Rockhampton requires $3 million a year of taxpayer funds to keep it from poisoning rivers up to 40km away.
By cracking down on how it collects financial assurances, the government hopes to stop any future mine sites becoming toxic wastelands.

The government intends to pool all the mining cash to earn interest. Those extra funds would be used to rehabilitate abandoned sites.


Yancoal’s Hunter Valley Operations South mine has production limit lifted

Ian Kirkwood, Newcastle Herald, 03/03/2018

Yancoal’s Hunter Valley Operations South mine near Singleton has been granted a 25 per cent increase in production capacity, with the Independent Planning Commission allowing production to increase from 16 million tonnes a year to 20 million tonnes of run-of-mine or “raw” coal.

GAS, GAS, GAS


APLNG announces $3bn in spending this year, two shutdowns

Tegan Annette, Gladstone Observer, 28/02/2018

While touting a $3 billion activities spend this year, Australia Pacific LNG said it continued to struggle gaining support from people living in cities far from its Curtis Island export plant.

Speaking at a gas conference in Sydney yesterday, chief executive Warwick King said the company needed to focus on improving its social licence in major cities, or risk losing “favourable policies” for its gas business.

Mr King was not the only speaker to accuse the anti-gas communities of influencing State and Federal government decisions, with Queensland Resources Council chief Ian Macfarlane dubbing them as “anti-fracking witchcraft peddlers”.


CWA: Enough is enough no more CSG

Annette Turner, The Land, 28/02/2018

CWA policy on this matter is clear and unequivocal. After years of calling for moratoriums, increased regulation and better information, our members clearly told us at our conference last year that that enough was enough. The CWA of NSW supports a ban on unconventional gas exploration, extraction and production.

CWA of NSW recently weighed into some of the local matters in Coonamble. There were a series of land access and compliance issues in relation to an Authority to Survey the pipeline for the proposed Narrabri Gas Project. Our reply from the Minister came some two months after first writing, and in my opinion, really amounted to nothing more than a pat on the head. This isn’t going to cut it. Not for us, not for our members, and certainly not for the people and communities who may be directly impacted by such a project. It would seem that the lessons from past bungling on this matter have not been heeded at all.

Annette Turner is NSW CWA state president.


Fracking ban in the Northern Territory should stay, group of leading climate scientists says

Jane Bardon, ABC, 27/02/2018

Thirty-one of Australia’s leading climate scientists and doctors have written an open letter to the Northern Territory Government making a strong case that fracking should be banned.

Climate scientists have told the NT Government shale gasfields are too risky.

Photo: Finke River, West Macdonell Ranges, NT – Eve Sinton
Poisonous plume warning among dramas at Linc site

John Weekes, News Regional, 03/03/2018

A “clumsy” retreat and Uzbek advisers were blamed for failures at the contentious Linc Energy site.

“Desperate times call for desperate measures,” a scientist said, as concerns about a “contaminant plume” emerged at Chinchilla.

On Thursday, Brisbane District Court heard about Linc’s Generator 3 problems.

Former Linc gas operator Ray Cowie said a “plug in the hole” had formed.

Hydrogeologist Dr Gary Love emailed Mr Cowie in January 2009, warning of risks to the groundwater system.

Dr Love said a “very large contaminant plume” might move east and up into the overburden.

But Dr Love said “risks to the business” were high if Generator 3 failed “so desperate times call for desperate measures”.

Andrew Forrest, Japan Inc team up to ship LNG to NSW

Matthew Stevens, AFR, 25/02/2018

Billionaire Andrew Forrest and two powerful arms of Japan Inc have formed a joint venture that aims to disrupt gas and power markets on Australia’s east coast by importing liquid natural gas into NSW.

The Western Australian iron ore maverick has emerged as the senior owner of an ambitious joint venture called Australian Industrial Energy, which is being led by the executive who used to run Santos’ east coast gas business, James Baulderstone.

The venture, which plans to deliver gas by 2020, would ship LNG to a major port in NSW and into a market accusing existing suppliers of price gouging.

Success would see the consortium invest up to $300 million on securing, connecting and fuelling a floating re-gas terminal that would be capable of delivering up to 100 petajoules of gas.


Barnett champions $5bn gas pipeline from west

Paul Garvey, The Australian, 28/02/2018

A $5 billion transcontinental gas pipeline could get off the ground with little or no taxpayer funding if government is able to strike the right policy settings, according to former West Australian premier Colin Barnett.

Mr Barnett will also talk down the case for a liquefied natural gas import terminal on the east coast, describing the idea as one that would “fail the pub test”.


AGL pours cold water on Colin Barnett’s east-west pipeline push

Matt Chambers, The Australian, 28/02/2018

AGL Energy, which is studying a Victorian LNG import terminal, has cast more doubt on former West Australian Premier Colin Barnett’s push to pipe West Australian gas to the east coast, saying the economics do not appear to stack up.

AGL’s head of energy supply and origination, Phaedra Deckart, said AGL’s plans for a regasification terminal at Crib Point was expected to cost $250 million to $300m and that a 2018-19 final investment decision was still being targeted.

The Australia-US Strategic Partnership

The outback town of Coober Pedy’s council is concerned that the town’s water could become undrinkable if a plan to drill for commercial quantities of oil and gas goes ahead. Mining company Tri-Star has proposed to do a stimulation drill to determine if commercial resources are in the Arckaringa Basin, an underground water source in outback South Australia.

The basin sits below the much larger Great Artesian Basin, which is the only water source for Coober Pedy, population 2,000.

Coober Pedy water manager Colin Pitman is concerned about the potential impact the drilling could have on the water supply.


Matt Canavan ups pressure on states over ‘voodoo science’ gas policy

Matt Chambers, The Australian, 28/02/2018

Coalition unveil US gas alliance amid bid to spur Asian LNG demand

Matt Chambers, The Australian, 01/03/2018

Australia has struck a regional energy alliance with the US to spur development of more LNG import infrastructure in South Asia and Southeast Asia and boost demand for billions of dollars of Australian and US LNG exports.

The Australia-US Strategic Partnership on Energy in the Indo-Pacific was quietly signed during Malcolm Turnbull’s recent visit to the US with 40 Australian business leaders. But its economic goals were revealed by Federal Resources Minister Matt Canavan at a Sydney gas conference yesterday.


Doubts raised over potential of Queensland coal seam gas fields

Matt Chambers, The Australian, 01/03/2018

Gas buyers and sellers have cast doubt on the ability of Queensland’s vast coal seam gas fields to supply coming export and domestic demand in the wake of Origin Energy’s downgrade of reserves at its Ironbank coal seam gas project.

EnergyAustralia energy boss Mark Collette said the fields were becoming harder to produce from.


Exxon-led LNG plant remains shuttered following Papua New Guinea earthquake

Matt Chambers, The Australian, 01/03/2018

The big PNG LNG plant in which Oil Search and Santos have non-operating stakes remains closed after Monday’s 7.5 magnitude earthquake, with staff still being evacuated from gas processing plants in the Highlands region.


Oil, gas drilling plan raises concerns for outback Coober Pedy’s underground water supply

Gary-Jon Lysaght, ABC, 02/03/2018

Australian Industrial Energy rules out deals with AGL and other suppliers

Matt Chambers, The Australian, 02/03/2018

Australian Industrial Energy — a consortium backed by billionaire Andrew Forrest that hopes to build a $250 million LNG import facility at Newcastle or Port Kembla — says it will not strike supply deals with incumbents like AGL Energy as it tries to contract 30 per cent of NSW gas demand to underpin its construction.

But for the project to go ahead as planned next year, the nation’s biggest industrial users will need to accept that gas prices of $9 to $12 a gigajoule, triple traditional prices, are here to stay and agree to pay that for five to seven years from 2020.


Forrest-backed LNG import project aims to contract 30pc of NSW gas demand

Matt Chambers, The Australian, 02/03/2018

AIE chief, and former Santos executive, James Baulderstone today made his first public presentation on the plans, which are backed by Mr Forrest’s Squadron Energy, Japanese

trading house Marubeni and the JERA LNG-buying partnership.

“We want to be a new entrant, there’s no point in my mind in having more gas going to the same people who control the market now,” Mr Baulderstone said after a presentation to the Australian Domestic Gas Outlook conference in Sydney, when asked if the joint venture was in talks with AGL. $ 

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/feb/03/three-gas-companies-planned-to-stop-exporting-

Gas policy ‘absurd’ without cap on exports, Tim Pallas says

Pia Akerman, The Australian, 01/03/2018

Vic Treasurer Tim Pallas has accused the federal government of an “absurd and irresponsible” failure on energy policy by refusing to enact a cap on gas exports, saying the needs of Australian businesses must be met first. $ 

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/feb/03/three-gas-companies-planned-to-stop-exporting-

ACCC asks LNG operators to make public shared maintenance information

Prashant Mehra, AAP/The Australian, 02/03/2018

The competition watchdog has asked operators of six liquefied natural gas facilities in Western Australia and the Northern Territory to publicly disclose maintenance schedule information that they share with each other.

The ACCC today allowed the four companies involved — Chevron, INPEX, Shell and Woodside — to co-ordinate maintenance activities, but imposed the public disclosure condition. $ 


ExxonMobil’s PNG LNG restart uncertain as pipeline escapes quake damage

Angela Macdonald-Smith, AFR, 02/03/2018

ExxonMobil has reported that the 700km pipeline at its $US19 billion liquefied natural gas project in Papua New Guinea appears to have escaped unscathed from the massive earthquake that rocked the PNG Highlands region early Monday but the timing of a restart of production is uncertain.

Electricity and water supplies were cut to camps for workers on the oil and gas fields in the Highlands and are still to be restored. More than 500 workers are thought to have been evacuated to Port Moresby. PNG LNG involves gas fields in the Highlands, an LNG liquefaction plant near Port Moresby and the long pipeline between them, which crosses major faults but which has been built to withstand earthquakes.

FOSSIL POLITICS


Biggest polluters get clear path to hike emissions under plan

Nicole Hasham, SMH, 27/02/2018

Australia’s biggest polluting companies would more easily jack up their greenhouse gas emissions under a Turnbull government proposal that critics say undermines multi-billion dollar efforts to tackle climate change.

The proposed change was prompted by feedback from businesses, including the petroleum industry, which said emissions rules did not adequately allow their businesses to grow.


Greens Mehreen Faruqi back farmers in ‘David vs Goliath’ fight against mining and gas

Jamieson Murphy, Northern Daily Leader, 01/03/2018

NSW Greens politician Mehreen Faruqi is “constantly in awe” at the grassroots resilience against the giant mining corporations “that seek to trample all over communities and the environment”. 

As the party’s environmental spokesperson, she visited the Liverpool Plains to meet with the farmers fighting against the proposed Shenhua coal mine.

Dr Faruqi also met with anti-coal seam gas groups, who took her to the proposed coal seam gas site in the Pilliga forest, near Narrabri.

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