

Fossil Fool Bulletin

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

Published by Eve Sinton fossil.fool.bulletin@gmail.com

FFB 1.8 • 22 JANUARY 2018

The great Pilliga gas con: scam a long time in the making

By DAVID PAULL

2018 will be an important year for the gas industry's future in Australia, as it seems we sit poised at an energy cross-roads.

Do we go ahead and accelerate our renewable energy transition or do we continue to assist a growing natural gas sector?

With calls for an extension of our onshore gas supply to alleviate our 'gas crisis' – a crisis actually created when our cheap domestic supply was usurped by private interests – all eyes have turned to the potential for a production gasfield in north-west NSW. This is so important to our national interest that even the Prime Minister, Mr Turnbull advocated a 'fast-track' of the Narrabri Project. What makes this strange is that 2018 will also be the 20th anniversary of gas exploration in the Pilliga forest and surrounds.

Perhaps he means fast-tracked in a similar way to what happened in Queensland over the last ten years.

An abuse of public interest

The spread of coal seam gas in this state has been revealed as a travesty and an abuse of the public interest in a Four Corners program a few years ago. Now the standing committee for the tribunal on human rights will be undertaking hearings in Australia on this matter in autumn this year. Or perhaps he means fast-tracked to avoid any closer scrutiny of the reality that there is no gas supply shortage in Australia and the public and hard-pressed commercial users have been victim of a scam, a scam which in fact has been a long time in the making.

While the development of the Queensland gasfields and processing plants at Gladstone has gone ahead at a fast pace since 2010, mainly thanks

to regulatory short-cuts and a failure of checks and balances at both the state and commonwealth levels, the development of the often-touted massive gas reserves in north-west NSW has gone ahead at a snail's pace.

Exploration in the Narrabri district first went ahead in the late 90s, with the American firm FirstSource Energy opening up a number of exploration wells in the Pilliga State Forest and on some private lands to the north in 1998. Following a large spill of produced water from one of their dams in the forest, the Petroleum Exploration Licence (PEL) was taken up by an Australian firm Eastern Star Gas (ESG) in the early 2000s. Despite the risk and obscurity of the project, ESG received some strong interest, including the ex-deputy PM, John Anderson who became a part owner.

Eastern Star stepped up the development of 'exploration' wells throughout the 2000s, including undertaking test fracking at a number of locations. This exploration was needed of course in order to legitimise claims of a massive gas field which had been repeated by many in government and from within gas industry, though was actually based on little on-ground or market evidence.

Questions over gasfield viability

It was obvious early on however that the 'Narrabri Project' had a lot of high-level support despite questions marks over the authenticity of the claims of it being a viable gasfield. And just like in Queensland, the strategy for NSW seems to have been to start the industry in state forests which would have less public impact and then move onto private land following gas field establishment. Indeed, the large number of active exploration licenses

Kingaroy coal confrontation erupts

An ugly confrontation occurred outside the boundary of a Moreton Resources' Kingaroy Coal Project site last week.

Local resident John Dalton was taking a photograph of the drilling operation from a nearby road when approached by a contractor who told him several times that his camera would be taken and smashed.

"It was a very tense and unexpected 20 minute standoff which only ended when the contractor demanded that I leave the public road area immediately or face further consequences" Mr Dalton said.

The aggressive response by the contractor resulted in a phone call to Kingaroy police to confirm peoples' rights to take photos from a public road.

Kingaroy Concerned Citizens Group (KCCG) vice president Damien O'Sullivan said the contractor's actions clashed with Moreton Resources' stated principles.

"It was almost as if Moreton Resources hadn't made the contractor aware of the community interest in this project or explained their community engagement principles to them. I am still struggling to understand how the company's well publicised aspirations to gain a social licence for this project was being advanced today," he said.

Mr O'Sullivan said that Moreton Resources is not renowned for effectively managing the concerns of all local landholders.

KCCG intends to continue to lawfully take photos and document the coal exploration activities, but have recommended to members that they always do so with a second member present in the event of further intimidation.

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The great pilliga gas con: start in the forest, move to farmland

• CONTINUED FROM P1

in north-western NSW would seem to indicate that this is the case there as well.

One of the industry's strongest promoters in the early years was another part owner of ESG, Dennis Morton, now a big player in overseas gas development, though when he appeared in 2001, was just a small player with a big dream – of supplying NSW with gas from the Pilliga forest.

Pilliga forest a big slice of pie

At this time, the Western Regional Assessment process was under way. Essentially a forest industry re-structure exercise, one of the expected outcomes was a transfer of significant areas of land from control of state forests to the national parks estate.

The Pilliga forest, covering some 500,000 ha was a big slice of this pie. At the stakeholder negotiations, many wondered about the omni-presence of Mr Morton in what was essentially a land transfer between government agencies.

But it became clear by the end that what Mr Morton was doing was making sure that gas interests were not being 'sterilized' (in his words).

This was achieved firstly, by lobbying for as little land as possible be transferred to national parks, and that which did get transferred, by ensuring that lands considered 'prospective' for gas were given the tenure of 'State Conservation Area'.

Of the 300,000 ha of land transferred to the national park estate in 2004, over 200,000 ha were designated as being this tenure type, a tenure managed by National Parks and Wildlife Service but which allows for gas and mining activities.

Only lands considered of little value to gas development were allowed to have fully protected national parks status under the ensuing act of parliament. It seems the veto of the gas industry was already all-powerful in 2001.

Claiming a shit-load of gas

Next step was to assure the public that the gas field under this messy bushland that supposedly no one cared for was a shit-load of gas.

In the ten years under management of ESG, claims of peta-joules upon peta-joules of gas were made repeatedly by Morton and Anderson, and are still

repeated after Santos bought the PEL in 2011 to this day.

Estimating gas flow however is not a straight-forward exercise, not as easy to estimate as coal itself because gas productivity depends much more on local geological conditions which are not easy to measure.

ESG did develop a series of pilot gas wells and fracking trials which were designed to assess gas performance. These results are of course 'commercially sensitive' and not available to the public but good anecdotal evidence suggests that the results were not great.

Firstly, of the 84 pilots and deep exploration wells put in place over 20 years, 28 are permanently sealed, 29 are not currently producing and only 24 are considered 'commercial'. The details of three are not publicly available, but appear to be sealed or abandoned wells.

Patchy well success rate

This patchy success rate would suggest that a gas field in this area could not support a high number of production wells or their life-span is very short.

Another indication that all is not well for the supposed importance of the gas reserve in the Narrabri area occurred in 2016 when stakeholders broke ranks and withdrew support for the Narrabri Gas Project in part due to questions over the resource.

The project was widely viewed as a white elephant, even Santos itself saw the Narrabri Project as unviable and de-valued it from being a core to a non-core asset in 2016 following a two-billion dollar write-down on the value of the project.

The Environmental Impact Statement for the production field of 850 wells, submitted early in 2017, did not shed much light on this issue either, other to say that testing was still being conducted and they had no idea where pilot wells should be located as none was provided in the EIS.

Politically also, this is a stinker for Santos, mainly due to problems of community opposition and seemingly high regulatory hurdles to come.

Despite the public intervention of the Prime Minister, the Commonwealth's Independent Expert Scientific Committee on the 'water trigger' raised serious questions.

Now with strong opposition from

Coonamble landowners to the suggestion of a new pipeline through their land to connect the field to the Moomba pipeline, the Narrabri Gas Field is starting to look again like the stranded asset it always was.

But more importantly, this story of the Narrabri gas field highlights the folly of government as it is currently configured.

Ill-conceived assumptions

Contrary to assertions made to the public, the evidence suggests that the Narrabri Gas Project and indeed the entire NSW Gas Plan is based on ill-conceived assumptions. Not only from an economic point of view, but from environmental and social ones.

While illegal approvals were given to the EISs in Queensland, it is doubtful the community in NSW will stand for such poor consideration of the consequences of industrial gas field development in water catchment and agriculturally productive areas. And despite the inability of successive NSW Governments to undertake strategic planning which gives due consideration to competing land uses, these are areas which the NSW Government has vowed to protect.

Despite the posturing of high profile players in the current gas debate, nothing can change the fact that the Narrabri gas field is a confidence trick, most likely an ill-conceived way to kick-start onshore gas development in NSW and its growth into more productive areas.

Not only are national park lands in the forest under threat from future development, but so are floodplains and agricultural areas, as evidenced in Queensland with the spread of the industry throughout the Darling Downs.

Communities to be the losers

To be induced to push or support an agenda without any hope of community support and with dubious outcomes, all at the expense of government due process and more than likely at expense of the well-being of the environment and the citizens themselves.

Are these the acts of a government only there for the beck and call of industry above all else?

The scam is unfolding and while some ex-deputy Prime Ministers have walked away with a full wallet, everyone else appears to be a loser.

CSG sickness story gets national exposure

Last week's story (FFB:1.7) about hospital admissions soaring on the Darling Downs as the CSG industry expanded was also published in the influential subscription news outlet Crikey.

I approached *Crikey* because it was very important for GERALYN McCARRON's research on health in the gasfields to be seen in the mainstream media.

From *Crikey* it was picked up by NewsCorp, who wrote their own coverage which appeared in *The Oz*, the *Courier Mail* and others (see page 8).

Industry peak body APPEA, which had ignored FFB's request for a response, eventually responded by putting out a media release attacking Dr McCARRON.

APPEA Queensland Director, Rhys Turner said GERALYN McCARRON is an activist rather than an impartial scientist.

"GERALYN McCARRON has long been

associated with Lock the Gate and is well known for regularly churning out pseudo-science supporting their political agenda," Mr Turner said.

"The article fails to produce any credible evidence for her claims. McCARRON is trying to frighten people and pressure governments to waste health research dollars on her political agenda."

APPEA's credibility falls down, however, in their failure to acknowledge Dr McCARRON's paper was published in a peer-reviewed science journal which is hardly likely to risk its reputation with 'pseudo-science'.

The Queensland government is maintaining a stony silence on the issue.

Fossil Fool Bulletin is proud to have broken this story to a wider audience.

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Wallarrah 2 'completely unacceptable'

The NSW government's approval of the Wallarah 2 Coal Project has been slammed by community groups, who say the decision shows that NSW mine approval laws are inadequate and need to be urgently overhauled.

The controversial project has been fought against by Wyong locals since 1996, and has been defeated twice by the local community. The project is subject to widespread opposition – including from the Member for Wyong, and the Central Coast Council – due to the risks it poses to the drinking water catchment for over 300,000 people.

Fighting for over 20 years

"Wallarrah 2 Coal Project is completely unacceptable and completely unwanted, and its approval is a slap in the face for local people who have been fighting it off for over 20 years", said Alan Hayes, campaign director for Wyong group Australian Coal Alliance.

"The state government is more interested in appeasing the coal industry than in the welfare of the Central Coast community. It's sickening," said Mr Hayes. "We will be exploring every option available to us to stop this project from going ahead, including court action," he said.

Lock The Gate spokesperson Steve Phillips said the decision "shows just

how desperately we need to fix the rules governing mine approvals in this state."

"This is a risky, unwanted coal mine that threatens the safe drinking water supply for hundreds of thousands of people. The mine has been knocked back by a previous state government for those very reasons. How is it possible that the mine is now approved? The system is broken."

"Local people need the certainty that once a coal mine has been knocked back, it will stay knocked back for good.

People can never rest easy

"It's grossly unfair that local people are never entitled to rest easy that a mine project has been defeated for good, that it might be approved again at any time. It's unfair that people cannot even take clean drinking water for granted."

"The Coalition came to power promising to end mining in sensitive drinking water catchments. They promised to stop this very coal mine – Wallarah 2 – but now they've given it the green light."

Alan Hayes said, "If Wallarah 2 believes that they have beaten us, they are mistaken. We will not go away."

The news this week

There was confusion as to who would end up owning the **Adani airstrip** to be paid for by **Townsville** and **Rockhampton** councils. **Wagners** have a contract (with Adani, not the councils) to put a FIFO landing strip hundreds of kilometres inland from the two councils, near the **Carmichael** mine site.

Townsville Council said it had to cough up for the strip or lose 900 jobs to Rockhampton.

It appears Adani is playing the councils off against one another, a game at which the Indian miner is adept.

Or should it be called **blackmail**?

The **Hunter Valley** was home to some unhappy people as the **Wallarrah 2** coal mine got a tick from the **Planning Assessment Commission** despite 20 years of opposition.

LNP politicians were in the firing line for approving **Wallarrah 2** even after a 2011 election stunt in which then premier **Barry O'Farrell** lined up with other pollies, wearing 'water not coal' t-shirts and promising to stop the mine – but later giving it the nod.

Hunter Valley miner **Yancoal** was criticised for failing to transfer conservation land at **The Drip** gorge back to the state government.

Meanwhile **Musswellbrook's** mayor was angry that **BHP** only got a paltry \$15,000 fine for yet another pollution incident.

The **Minerals Council of Australia** bowled people over with its blasé admission that donations to political parties are made to **access** ruling class luminaries.

Other political donors kept a straight face while telling a Senate committee their donations merely support the '**democratic process**'.

Finally, **Robert Gottlieb** of **The Oz** drew a long bow with the astounding suggestion that **Peter Dutton** be made Energy Minister for a day.

His strange line of reasoning was that, because Dutton had called out African gang crime, he would also expose some sort of energy crime gang.

An **ABC** report later showed that Dutton had got his African crime stats wrong. Try again, Robert!

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Adani protesters refute newspaper's 'paid activists' claim

Frontline Action on Coal (FLAC) has denied claims in the Townsville Bulletin that it is a "militant activist" group that pays its activists.

"Frontline Action on Coal upholds the principles of peaceful non-violence in all that we do," the group said.

"Our campaign is entirely grassroots led. No one is paid to take action. People participating in FLAC actions include locals, traditional owners, parents, grandparents, doctors, teachers, engineers, farmers, retail workers, students and more.

"We thank the *Townsville Bulletin* for their free publicity of our campaign by publishing the details of our property based in Bowen."

Byron Bay weighs in

The *Bulletin* has had a busy week covering ramped-up protest activity in the region, as a busload of protesters from the Byron Bay and Mullumbimby areas arrived.

"The *Bulletin* understands the protesters arrived in a 25-seat bus, filled to capacity.

"They were accompanied by protesters in other vehicles," the newspaper reported.

"The arrival of the Byron Bay protesters loosely coincides with a letter sent by Byron Bay Council to 600 shire councils around Australia in December urging them not to do business with firms and companies that supported Adani.

"The letter was signed by the council's acting general manager, Mark Arnold.

"Richmond Shire Mayor John Wharton said he was shocked to receive the letter from Byron Bay Council.

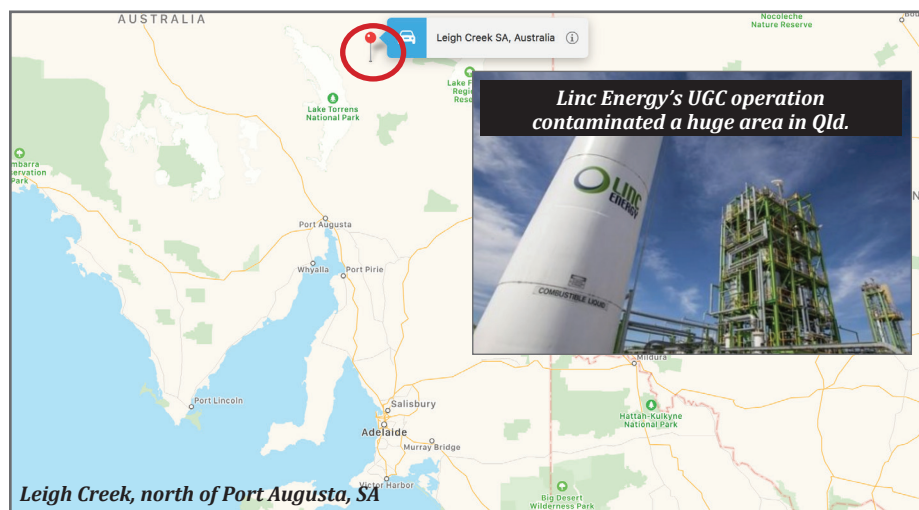
"The letter in part calls for: 'support for the national Stop Adani campaign's efforts to boycott businesses associated with the building of the Adani Carmichael Mine'"

Cr Wharton said he found it hard to believe a council would have the audacity to tell Queensland councils how to conduct their affairs.

"We will be letting them know what they can do with their letter,"

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UGC rears ugly head in SA



A gas technology banned in Queensland for causing the biggest pollution event in that state's history has been moved forward by the Weatherill Government for South Australia.

Traditional owners have spoken out, and two SA environment groups are calling for an immediate ban on a trial proposed for Leigh Creek using the Underground Coal Gasification (UGC) process.

Leigh Creek is an old coal mining area. The project proponent is Leigh Creek Energy, headed by lawyer Justyn Peters.

Adnyamathanha elder Enice Marsh told the ABC the community wrote to the State Government just before Christmas to express its opposition but had received no response.

"We tried to write to them to ask for an independent survey on the land, to state the land of Leigh Creek and the coal fields are significant Aboriginal sites," she said.

"A lot of my people say it's their home, they're going to be faced with a huge, dangerous situation.

Time to let the land rest and recover

"The land has been used and abused for so long and it is now time to lay the land to rest and recover."

Craig Wilkins, Chief Executive of Conservation SA said, "It's hard to imagine a more irresponsible plan. Last year, Queensland made Underground Coal Gasification illegal after it contaminated hundreds of square kilometres of the Darling Downs with harmful gases.

"Despite the objections of energy experts, environmental groups, nearby

residents and traditional owners, the Weatherill Government has accepted for public consultation a potential trial at the old Leigh Creek mine site."

UGC (or in situ gasification) involves setting fire to underground coal to extract gas. In April 2016, the Queensland Government banned UGC after the worst contamination event in the state's history at the Linc Energy UGC plant at Hopeland.

Contamination and explosion

The Queensland ban follows similar experiences overseas, where UGC was found to have caused groundwater contamination in Wyoming and Colorado, and a methane explosion at a plant in Spain. The only remaining commercial UGC site in the world is in Uzbekistan.

"Allowing this dirty technology in our state is completely at odds with a Government that regularly flies to Paris and New York to trumpet their climate change credentials," said Wilderness Society SA Director Peter Owen.

"With our state's exciting and extensive opportunities in renewable energy we simply don't need this here.

"After Queensland has made it illegal in that state, how can Minister Koutsantonis think that it is appropriate in South Australia?" he asked.

The Leigh Creek Energy proposal is open for a statutory 30-day public consultation period that ends on 28 February 2018:

http://petroleum.statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/latest_updates/invitation_for_public_comment_-_seoir

More information about Leigh Creek Energy can be found here:

<http://www.asx.com.au/asxpdf/20180116/pdf/43qv9dhk-mm0f9j.pdf>

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In the news this week:

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 19,700 words of news for your convenience. Click on the [links](#) to view original articles. (\$) = subscription may be required

THE ADANI SAGA

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/opinion/escalation-of-hostilities-backfiring-on-anti-coal-protesters/news-story/6bc76c3ae959835524fdb4ca5f202e7>

Escalation of hostilities backfiring on anti-coal protesters

Townsville Bulletin, 15/01/2018

The public has reacted strongly in condemning the aggression of the protesters, with online comments on our reporting reflecting a clear feeling in the community that a line has been crossed. \$

<http://www.afr.com/business/wagners-not-scared-of-activists-if-30m-carmichael-airport-proceeds-20180112-h0h1dqu#ixzz54BxEPGQ7>

Wagners not scared of activists if \$30m Carmichael airport proceeds

Jenny Wiggins, Australian Financial Review, 14/01/2018

Newly-listed building materials group Wagners will not be “intimidated” by activists if it proceeds with constructing a \$30 million airport for fly-in, fly-out workers on Adani’s Carmichael coal mine, non-executive chairman Denis Wagner says.

The building materials company, which floated on the Australian Securities Exchange in December, would also like to participate in other construction works on the Carmichael mine site, Mr Wagner said.

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/townsville/more-guards-needed-for-adanis-abbot-point-coal-terminal/news-story/91d68229e5e197a133eb6b3e224d818b>

Adani’s Abbot Point coal terminal beefs up security as activists flood north

John Anderson, Townsville Bulletin, 17/01/2018

Security at Adani’s Abbot Point coal terminal north of Bowen has been beefed up after an incursion by activists last week.

Police said a busload of protesters from the Byron Bay and Mullumbimby areas arrived on Sunday afternoon.

The arrival of the Byron Bay protesters loosely coincides with a letter sent by Byron Bay Council to 600 shire councils around Australia in December urging them not to do business with firms and companies that supported Adani. \$



Protesters outside Adani’s Townsville office. Photo Frontline Action on Coal

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/security-checks-at-all-points-leading-into-the-port/news-story/b854d5fcb477693f06b03c975f8b638>

Swamp and sea protect Abbot Point terminal from activists

John Andersen, Townsville Bulletin, 17/01/2018

Coal protesters intent on chaining themselves to machinery at Abbot Point are not going to simply waltz down the road leading to the port to gain access.

If you want to get into Abbot Point undetected, it is via swamp, sea or scrub. \$

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/nq-senator-calls-on-feds-to-bypass-veto-over-adani/news-story/9485379227f3a06081dcb9090d1f3c9>

Senator calls on Federal Government to bypass state veto on \$1 billion Adani loan

Tony Raggatt, Townsville Bulletin, 17/01/2018

The Federal Government should amend the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act to bypass the Labor State Government’s veto of a loan to Adani, Townsville-based LNP Senator Ian Macdonald says.

But Resources and Northern Australia Minister Matt Canavan says the Government has no plans to do so, saying

any legal changes would likely “bog things down in the Senate”. \$

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jan/17/queensland-councils-say-they-wont-own-adani-airport-despite-paying-34m>

Queensland councils say they won’t own Adani airport despite paying \$34m

Michael McGowan, The Guardian, 18/01/2018

Two Queensland councils that together contributed \$34m to an airport serving Adani’s coalmine have contradicted previous statements and now say they do not own the site or have any say in how the facility is built.

A spokesman for Townsville council told the Guardian that both the land and airport would be owned by Adani and the two councils would operate it “for the life of the mine via an exclusive long-term lease”.

“Council has nothing to do with the procurement process, that is entirely a contractual matter between Wagners and Adani,” the spokesman said.

The agreement between the two councils and Adani remains hidden, so other questions about the terms of the deal also remain hidden.

For example, asked whether under the agreement Adani could still fly workers in and out of other airports

such as Brisbane, the Townsville council spokesman said there were “conditions in place to make sure the Fifo jobs, and positions in Adani’s headquarters, go to people living in Townsville”.

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/activists-shut-down-adanis-abbot-point-coal-terminal/news-story/d690d518d8931ab399db09d213284908>

Activists shut down Adani’s Abbot Point coal terminal

Andrew Backhouse, Townsville Bulletin, 18/01/2018

Protesters have boasted about shutting down one of North Queensland’s key export hubs for hours in a move that could cost the economy millions of dollars. \$

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/anti-adani-campaigners-deface-australian-1-coins/news-story/8b465dba92d6aecd94b84ef8dbba3c1>

Anti-Adani campaigners deface Australian \$1 coins

Rachel Riley, Townsville Bulletin, 18/01/2018

Anti-Adani campaigners have put a new price on their campaign, slapping protest stickers on \$1 coins in Bowen.

Bowen Chamber of Commerce president Bruce Hedditch said he had not seen the coins at his Larrikin Hotel but said the tactics were a new low.

“It’s so sad they are allowed to degenerate into this terrorist type of activity,” he said.

It is an offence under the Crimes (Currency) Act 1981 (Cth) to deface or destroy Australian currency.

The penalty for defacing coins, or selling or possessing money that has been defaced, is \$5000 or imprisonment for two years for an individual (or both), and \$10,000 for a body corporate. \$

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jan/18/queensland-accused-of-breaking-no-public-funds-for-adani-promise>

Queensland accused of breaking ‘no public funds for Adani’ promise

Amy Remeikis, The Guardian, 18/01/2018

The former Queensland state-owned freight rail business Aurizon is the latest target of anti-Adani activists, after the Palaszczuk Labor government refused to rule out vetoing the company’s taxpayer-funded loan to build the Galilee basin rail line.

Opponents of the mine have accused the state government of attempting to break its promise of “no public funds for Adani” through a “backdoor” by continuing to consider Aurizon’s appli-

cation for federal government funds to build the central Queensland rail line.

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/adani-slams-actions-of-activists-at-abbot-point-coal-terminal/news-story/1072007007c61c33a586e2c50c9ff62>

Adani slams actions of activists at Abbot Point coal terminal

John McCarthy, The Courier-Mail, 19/01/2018

Mining company Adani says the lives of its staff were threatened by activists who yesterday chained themselves to equipment at the Abbot Point coal terminal for six hours.

It was the second time in a week that members of the group Frontline Action Against Coal had locked themselves on to loading equipment. \$

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/furious-how-en-local-in-viral-spray-at-adani-activists-involved-in-north-queensland-protest/news-story/5c82017cd99f1c82032fc403340b9ec6>

Furious Bowen local in viral spray at Adani activists involved in North Queensland protest

Andrew Backhouse, Townsville Bulletin, 19/01/2018

Adani protesters were left “shaking” after a confrontation with a Bowen local who accused them of “holding up normal people” in a profanity-laden exchange that has gone viral.

The incident is a stark example of the simmering anger between North Queensland locals and the mostly southern anti-coal protesters from the Stop Adani movement who have caused chaos on the transport network. \$

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/five-protesters-lock-themselves-to-a-conveyor/news-story/c9457c0225b1dbc2bb43bab4c79d59d8>

Five protesters lock themselves to a conveyor

John Andersen, Townsville Bulletin, 19/01/2018

In the latest incident, five protesters entered the port and shut down operations for five hours after pressing a stop button and locking themselves to conveyor legs. \$

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-20/adani-finance-agency-talks-suggest-door-not-shut-taxpayer-funds/9344886>

Adani: Finance agency talks suggest door not shut on taxpayer funding

Josh Robertson, ABC, 20/01/2018

Trade Minister Steven Ciobo has quietly explored the option of taxpayer support for Adani’s embattled coal project through Australia’s export finance agency.

The Export Finance and Investment Corporation (EFIC) has confirmed it held “exploratory” talks on Adani with the office of Mr Ciobo, who last year ordered the agency to resume financing local mining projects after banks shied away from the coal sector.

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/townsville-bob-katter-questions-adani-funding/news-story/b59814227344b19e79559ada931839a4>

Bob Katter questions Adani funding

Kelsie Iorio, Townsville Bulletin, 20/01/2018

Federal MP Bob Katter has demanded an explanation from the Townsville City Council for their funding contribution to Adani, questioning the contribution from ratepayers.

Mr Katter said he will send a letter to Townsville City Council questioning why “one of the wealthiest people on earth” requires an additional \$18.5 million from local ratepayers.

“I did not believe the news item when I heard it, that rate payers of Townsville were going to be building an airport 200 to 300km away for a foreign corporation,” Mr Katter said. \$

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/townsville-council-responds-to-adani-airstrip-row/news-story/96b4fe76569b05a5e5ac9f24996fcb9>

Townsville council responds to Adani airstrip row

Kelsie Iorio, Townsville Bulletin, 22/01/2018

Townsville City Council says the North would have lost 900 FIFO jobs to Rockhampton had it not agreed to co-fund Indian miner Adani’s Galilee Basin airstrip.

A council spokesman said the council acted to ensure up to 900 jobs came to the city.

“Townsville would have lost those jobs to Rockhampton if council didn’t commit to investing in the Galilee Basin airstrip,” the spokesman said. \$

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/police-issue-dire-warning-risk-of-death-to-adani-protesters/news-story/c50991a57adb35a1ac8da4238e1bb23>

Police issue dire warning risk of death to Adani protesters

Chris McMahon, Townsville Bulletin, 22/01/2018

The events of the past week or so have police worried that it will only be a matter of time before someone is seriously injured or killed during a protest, or as a result of a protest.

Superintendent Bruce McNab, who has the task of overseeing police action in the area, said an abusive outburst by

one anti-Adani protester has police worried about the type of people they could be dealing with. \$

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/tempers-flare-in-bush-over-illegal-protests/news-story/e09e8fd5e7e3a9ba744f1512e607377d>

Tempers flare in bush over 'illegal' protests

John Andersen, Townsville Bulletin, 22/01/2018

At Collinsville and at Bowen on the coast, local people hoping to secure jobs wait patiently for the Adani tide to turn in their favour.

Day by day their patience is being tested by protesters opposed to the mine and to coal mining in general.

Whether they realise it or not, Australia is two countries, two universes. There is the northern part and the southern part, the cities and the bush.

The two have different cultures, different lifestyles and different ways of doing things.

The protesters have stepped out of the world they know and into one they know nothing about. Down at Bowen now, they don't know it, but they are holding a lit match to a drum of fuel. \$

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/adani-activists-suspected-of-revenge-attack-against-bowen-business-in-north-queensland/news-story/a423961lead-343b905e32994682ea70f9>

Adani activists suspected of revenge attack against Bowen business in North Queensland

Andrew Backhouse, Townsville Bulletin, 22/01/2018

A Bowen businesswoman is blaming damage done to her shopfront on anti-coal protesters.

She believes her shop, where she displays signs of support for Adani and its Carmichael mine, is a target.

"Someone apparently doesn't like my views on Adani," she said.

She believes the vandal punched the window with their fist. \$

COAL ROCKS

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-17/wallarah-mine-approved-central-coast-nsw/9337326>

Wallarah coal mine approved despite widespread fears for water supply

Mary-Louise Vince, ABC, 17/01/2018

A highly contentious underground coal mine on the New South Wales Central Coast has been given the go-ahead, despite the State Government's election "guarantee" against coal mining in the region.



Community outrage as Central Coast coal mine given greenlight

Community groups have slammed the NSW government's approval of the Wallarah 2 coal mine on the state's Central Coast.

SMH.COM.AU

In the SMH photo above: Premier Barry O'Farrell in 2011 with (from left) Chris Holstein (Member for Gosford), Darren Webber (Member for Wyong), Barry O'Farrell (Premier), Alan Hayes (Australian Coal Alliance), Chris Spence (Member for The Entrance) & Chris Hartcher (Member for Terrigal & Minister for Energy) wearing shirts protesting the mine. His government later approved the project.

The majority South Korean-owned Wallarah 2 Coal Project near Wyong was approved by the Planning and Assessment Commission this week after more than a decade of widespread community opposition.

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/community-outrage-as-central-coast-coal-mine-given-greenlight-20180117-p4yykn.html>

Community outrage as Central Coast coal mine given greenlight

Cole Latimer, Sydney Morning Herald, 17/01/2018

The \$800 million thermal coal mine has stalled a number of times [since 2006], including when negotiations broke down between its owner, Korean government-owned Kores, and the local Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council over a \$300 million land agreement for rail access.

The miner overcame this issue by using an overland conveyor system, rather than a rail system, to transport the coal, bypassing the need to negotiate with local indigenous groups.

The commission acknowledged the potential impact the mine may have on the Central Coast's drinking water catchment, assessing them as "small and acceptable" to the region.

Former NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell famously stated that a Coalition government would never approve the mine due to its reported impacts

on the region's drinking water, and was even photographed wearing t-shirts protesting the mine. However, his government soon approved the project, and faced claims they misled parliament and breached the code of conduct over meetings with lobbyists for the mine.

<http://www.theherald.com.au/story/5173841/wallarah-2-coal-mine-approved-despite-risk-to-central-coast-water-supply/>

The NSW Planning Assessment Commission says Wallarah 2's risks can be managed

Joanne McCarthy, Newcastle Herald, 17/01/2018

The NSW Planning Assessment Commission has approved Wallarah 2 coal mine despite conceding the risk of serious and irreversible damage to the Central Coast's water supply is real.

The approval, which includes a future proposal for Kores to discharge 300 megalitres of treated mine water into the Central Coast's water supply in the event of water loss from the catchment due to underground mining, was slammed by community and environmental groups.

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<http://www.theherald.com.au/story/5170777/the-2000-sale-of-the-century-and-the-fight-to-turn-back-the-clock/?cs=305>

The Drip' gorge was loved by Brett Whiteley, sold to a coal miner and defended by a community

Joanne McCarthy, Newcastle Herald, 17/01/2018

A Chinese-backed mining company that paid \$3.4 billion in 2017 for two of the Hunter's biggest coal mines is almost one year late on a plan to transfer land around an iconic Upper Hunter gorge back to state ownership.

Yancoal paid \$2084 for The Drip gorge and 700 hectares of Crown land between Denman and Mudgee in 2010, in a secret lease conversion sale with a history that includes two corrupt NSW Labor Government ministers.

Now community and environment groups have revived a "Save the Drip" campaign after Yancoal failed to meet a March, 2017 deed of agreement condition to transfer land around The Drip back to the NSW Government for a State Conservation Area.

<http://www.theherald.com.au/story/5172857/bhps-15000-dust-pollution-fine-shows-laws-dont-protect-communities/>

Muswellbrook mayor slams latest pollution fine linked to Mount Arthur coal mine

Joanne McCarthy, Newcastle Herald, 18/01/2018

Muswellbrook mayor Martin Rush has called on the NSW Government to put BHP Billiton's right to operate the Mount Arthur coal mine on the line after slamming the company's latest \$15,000 fine for environmental pollution.

"Despite everything the state government says, the truth of the matter is that the government's laws do not protect communities. When a fine of \$15,000 applies for a breach of a condition designed to protect human health, the only penalty that will make BHP Billiton sit up and listen is a withdrawal of the right to mine."

GAS, GAS, GAS

<https://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/news/checks-on-air-quality-at-curtis-island-yet-to-cease/3310183/>

Gas flaring: Curtis Island air quality under the microscope

Tegan Annette, Gladstone Observer, 15/01/2018

Air quality samples taken during QGC's first major maintenance shutdown are being laboratory analysed by the

Australian Government's environment and science body.

A department spokesperson said the monitoring program included samples taken during the shutdown and normal operating conditions.

The spokesperson said it would have a "better understanding" of any impacts on air quality when laboratory results are received and analysed in coming months.

For real time air quality results visit ehp.qld.gov.au/gladstone

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/csg-emissions-may-be-behind-hospital-spike/news-story/1d3b8156076b1b141e346945d412bda>

CSG emissions may be behind hospital spike

Tracey Ferrier, The Australian, 16/01/2018

Pollutants from Queensland's coal seam gas industry may explain a significant spike in hospital admissions on the gas-rich Darling Downs, a new study suggests.

Author and Australian GP Geryllyn McCarron says her research does not conclusively prove CSG emissions put more people in hospital, but describes her findings as a "red flag" that must trigger urgent new studies on human health near CSG hubs. \$

Note: same AAP story also appeared in News.com, The Courier Mail and SBS.

<https://thewest.com.au/news/health/csg-emissions-may-be-behind-hospital-spike-ng-s-1819665>

Coal seam gas industry hits out at study

The West Australian, 18/01/2018

The gas industry has hit back at a report suggesting pollutants from Queensland's coal seam gas industry could explain an increase in hospital admissions, describing it as lacking credibility and pushing a political agenda.

The Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association has slammed the study, which was published in the International Journal of Environmental Studies.

<http://medicalrepublic.com.au/gps-gas-study-raises-industry-hackles/12548>

GP's gas study raises industry hackles

Julie Lambert, Medical Republic, 18/01/2018

A Brisbane GP has come under attack after drawing a link between rising hospital admissions for acute respiratory and circulatory disease and the escalation of coal-seam gas (CSG) mining in Queensland's Darling Downs.

<https://www.ruralweekly.com.au/news/farmers-plea-to-santos-dont-destroy-our-water-source/3313123/?ref%3Dhs=hootsuite>

Farmers' plea to Santos: 'Don't destroy our water source'

Candyce Braithwaite, Rural Weekly, 18/01/2018

When Santos announced its Narrabri Gas Project in northwest New South Wales in the Pilliga State Forest near [David] Chatwick's home, he decided to look into the industry.

He booked himself a seat on the Santos tour of the Pilliga, but Mr Chatwick said it didn't take long for him to discover "a lot didn't add up".

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/victorian-gas-probe-identifies-13-underground-fields/news-story/0664d99817c1be112505f17b60cc52e8>

Victorian gas probe 'identifies 13 underground fields'

Pia Akerman, The Australian, 18/01/2018

The first report of a major study into Victoria's much disputed gas resources has identified 13 underground fields for potential gas storage to further safeguard the state's supply, as well as at least seven months' gas supply in a single area deemed the most likely for conventional development.

The \$42.5 million investigation headed by Victorian lead scientist Amanda Caples has raised further questions about the Andrews government's claim that there are no proved or probable onshore gas reserves, with Dr Caples saying there are large gaps in available geological data. \$

<http://www.news.com.au/national/breaking-news/consultation-for-sa-gas-trial-to-go-ahead/news-story/7b-cf4331f7026bbf2d86da260cb7b3af.iaf4r>

Consultation for SA gas trial to go ahead

News.com, 16/01/2018

A gas technology blamed for polluting hundreds of square kilometres of Queensland farmland is one step closer to going ahead in South Australia. The state government has signed off on public consultation for a trial of Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) at the site of an old mine at Leigh Creek.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-17/underground-coal-gasification-leigh-creek-proposal/9334288>

Underground coal gasification plan for outback Leigh Creek faces opposition

Sowabih Hanife, ABC, 17/01/2018

A conservation lobby group is angered that the South Australian Government is pushing ahead with an underground coal gasification project earmarked

for outback Leigh Creek, saying the process has proved hazardous.

Conservation SA chief executive Craig Wilkins said it involved dirty technology and had led to groundwater contamination in Wyoming and Colorado, and a methane explosion in Spain.

An Indigenous community in the Leigh Creek region said it feared areas with great cultural significance could be damaged.

Adnyamathanha elder Enice Marsh said the community wrote to the State Government just before Christmas to express its opposition but had received no response.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/consultation-for-sa-gas-trial-to-go-ahead>

Consultation for SA gas trial to go ahead

SBS, 17/01/2018

The state government has signed off on public consultation for a trial of Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) at the site of an old mine at Leigh Creek.

The process involves setting fire to underground coal seams in order to extract gas.

In South Australia, the trial would involve a UCG demonstration operating at the site of a coal deposit at Leigh Creek for two to three months to confirm the performance of the process.

FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://www.australianmining.com.au/news/mca-pushes-new-coal-ads-nuclear-ban-lift-despite-bhp-pullout-warnings/>

MCA pushes new coal ads, nuclear ban lift despite BHP pullout warnings

Ewan Hosie, Australian Mining, 16/01/2018

The Minerals Council of Australia is to go ahead with advertisements expressing the benefits of coal despite warnings from prominent member BHP that they could pull out of the organisation (or at the very least review their membership) by the end of 2018 if it continues to do so.

MCA executive director of coal Greg Evans confirmed on January 9 that the ads would be paid for by a 2006 fund for the development of HELE (high energy, low emissions) coal.

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/business/mining-expert-tells-industry-to-fight-back-against-cashed-up-protest-groups/news-story/38e05d09ee6f1e58e84183f2aa6d93d1>

Mining expert tells industry to fight back against cashed-up protest groups

John McCarthy, The Courier-Mail, 16/01/2018

A leading figure in the Queensland mining industry has used a wave of new jobs within the activist movement as a rallying call for the sector to band together and fight.

McCullough Robertson law firm strategic adviser Michael Roche, former chief of the Queensland Resources Council, said the activist groups were cashed up.

It follows reports in The Courier Mail that the leading activist groups have a combined income of about \$100 million.

Those groups are now pledging to target any company that joins Adani in the Galilee Basin. \$

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/17/minerals-council-says-it-makes-political-donations-to-gain-access-to-mps>

Minerals Council says it makes political donations to gain access to MPs

Paul Karp, The Guardian, 17/01/2018

The Minerals Council of Australia has conceded it makes political donations and pays to attend fundraisers to gain access to members of parliament in a submission to a Senate inquiry.

The frank admission – which reflects a commonly held belief about the role of money in politics – sticks out because major corporations and lobby groups by and large said they made donations to support democracy.

“The MCA makes the political contributions detailed above because they provide additional opportunities for the MCA to meet with members of parliament,” it said. “The MCA uses these opportunities to update members of parliament about conditions in the Australian minerals industry and the policy priorities of the MCA.”

Di Natale said: “Our democracy is broken when a major mining lobby group feels comfortable publicly saying they pay for access to the old parties without fear of any consequences.”

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/we-pay-for-access-minerals-councils-admission-on-political-donations-20180116-h0jgpf.html>

'We pay for access': Minerals Council's admission on political donations

Fergus Hunter, Sydney Morning Herald, 17/01/2018

The mining lobby group's submission to a Senate committee examining the role of donations in Australia's political system contrasts with the explanations given by other lobby groups and businesses, which said their donations were intended to support democratic processes.

The Minerals Council, which played a critical role in high-profile campaigns against the former Labor government's mining and carbon taxes, has recently clashed with its largest member company, BHP, over the lobby group's advocacy for coal.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/opinion/robert-gottliebse/make-peter-dutton-energy-minister-for-a-day/news-story/305962f8e2e440c49ba88826938b8139>

Make Peter Dutton Energy Minister for a day

Robert Gottliebse The Australian, 17/01/2018

There is a simple way to put eastern Australia on the track to much lower gas and power prices: appoint Peter Dutton as energy minister for a day. \$

NT frack inquiry error spotted

In a letter to the *NT News*, The Australia Institute's (TAI) research director, Rod Campbell, says there has been an 'egregious misrepresentation' of fracking economics in a government inquiry.

Fracking Inquiry Chair Justice Rachel Pepper claimed in a radio interview that fracking "had the capacity to create 32,000 jobs".

TAI says this is over-stated by a factor of 60 on the best case scenario. He suggests the report commissioned by the inquiry had not been read, or the magnitude of possible gas industry employment was completely misunderstood.

The draft report also exaggerates job impacts, misrepresenting "job years" as full time jobs.

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