



# 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 2:15 • 22 MARCH 2019

## EDO finds new grounds to oppose Adani, while **Coalition** politicians fly to mine site

By Eve Sinton

*The Environmental Defenders Office (Queensland) has added a new ground to their Federal Court case over Adani's controversial North Galilee Water Scheme – the plan to pump 12 billion litres of fresh water a year to the Carmichael mine site.*

On behalf of the Australian Conservation Fund, the EDO will be arguing the Federal Government breached the law by failing to properly consider more than 1,000 valid public comments against the project.

If they are successful on this new ground, the Minister will need to go back to square one and properly consider every single one of those comments before making a new decision on the NGWS.

“Each one of those people has a right to a voice over Adani’s project. This case seeks to ensure those voices are heard,” said the EDO, urging people to donate to their Adani Fighting Fund.

### Coalition flies to Carmichael

Meanwhile, on March 20, Coalition Adani spruikers Matt Canavan, Michelle Landry and George Christensen jetted out to Adani’s mine site in a show of support. They are all holding up the promise of mining jobs to boost their chances at the upcoming Federal election.

Canavan said on his Facebook page that “Adani is ready to go and is sorting through thousands of job applications,” a statement that FFB’s editor pointed out, in a comment on the post, is



*Resources Minister, Senator Matt Canavan (Nationals) and MP for Capricornia, Michelle Landry (LNP) set for take-off to visit Adani's Carmichael Mine site on March 20. Senator Geoge Christensen (nationals) was also aboard.*

*Photo: Matt Canavan, Facebook*

untrue. Adani has encouraged people to lodge ‘expressions of interest’, and indeed has over 14,000 of them, but these are not applications for actual jobs. At best, the Carmichael Mine will employ less than 1,500 people – more likely, just a few hundred at any time.

Meanwhile, Canavan made statements in the media indicating the Federal Government had already decided to approve Adani’s groundwater management plan, raising serious legal questions about pre-judgement and biased decision making. (See *Courier-Mail* item on p6).

Lock the Gate Alliance spokesperson Carmel Flint said, “Minister Canavan is not the decision maker on the plan, and the Federal Government is supposed to apply an independent process, but the Minister visited the Adani site [on Wednesday] and said their management plan would be settled in a couple of weeks.

“For Minister Canavan to effectively announce in advance that Adani’s federal groundwater plan would be approved smacks of political interference and bias” she said.

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• **P2: Residents resist Dartbrook mine**

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• **P4: Objections roll in on Vickery mine plan**

## Coalition spruiks Adani

• Continued from p1

“The validity of any future decision on Adani’s groundwater management plan is now in serious doubt, and if it is approved it will fall under a serious legal cloud.

“We’re calling on the Federal Environment Minister, Melissa Price, to respond immediately and refer the plan to the Independent Expert Scientific Committee so the community can have some faith that it is not a complete stitch up.

### New research highlights water loss

“The fact is that the Minister Price’s own department released new research late last year which showed that there was likely to be much greater losses of groundwater due to mining in the Galilee Basin than predicted by Adani.

“With 58% of Queensland still in drought, and graziers across Central Queensland doing it tough, to ignore this new information and approve a plan without referral to the Independent Expert Scientific Committee would be an absolute disgrace.

“The move by Minister Canavan appears to be yet another ill-considered attempt to pressure the Queensland Government into approving the groundwater management plan despite the flaws it contains.

“Adani is also still engaged in legal battles with Traditional Owners, conservation groups, and is being prosecuted over its Caley Valley Wetlands spill in the wake of Cyclone Debbie in 2017” Flint said.

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## Residents resist Dartbrook mine

*The reopening of a notorious coal mine in the Upper Hunter Valley will put the wellbeing of local communities at risk and is an unacceptable incursion into productive farmland, according to Lock the Gate Alliance.*

LTGA is standing in solidarity with Friends of the Upper Hunter: families, farmers, business owners, and health experts, who have united in opposition to the reopening of the Dartbrook Coal mine.

The project, owned by Australian Pacific Coal, was recommended for approval by the NSW Department of Planning in February and is now before the Independent Planning Commission.

### Deaths, gas, fire in old mine

“Three deaths occurred at this mine before it was mothballed in 2006,” LTGA spokesperson Georgina Woods said.

“There were also ongoing issues with gas, spontaneous combustion and flooding.

“Air quality is worsening in the Hunter Valley due to the presence of multiple coal mines, and residents are suffering.

“The Hunter Valley has already lost considerable good quality farmland to coal mining. Upper Hunter Shire has so far remained relatively un-

scathed, but there are fears this proposal is the thin end of a fat wedge of coal mining pushing into the Shire.

“Our planning laws are frankly not up to the task and we call on all parties contesting this week’s NSW election to commit to making the strategic farmland of the region off-limits to coal mining once and for all.”

Ms Woods said the proposal, if approved, would allow Australian Pacific Coal to undertake new “board and pillar mining.”

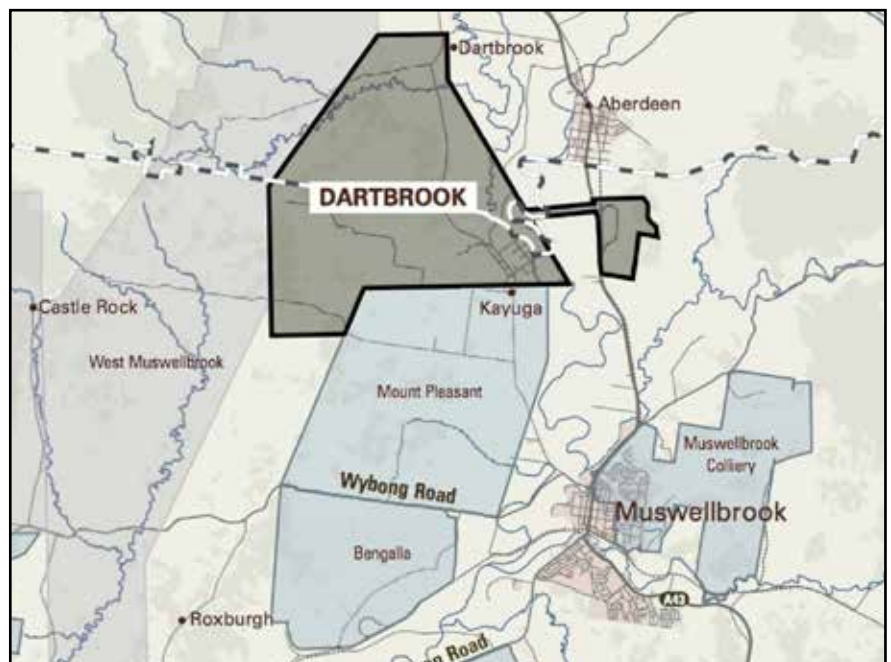
“The community sees this as a stalking horse for an open cut mine, which the company has previously said it wants. There’s nothing in the law that would prevent this site and the farmland that surrounds it from being open cut.” she said.

“Lock the Gate Alliance stands with the residents of Aberdeen and the Hunter Valley who want farmland to be off-limits to open cut coal mining.”

Friends of the Upper Hunter’s website (<http://www.nodartbrook.com>) says, “We acknowledge the economic contribution of mining but we’re taking action because we believe our region has already reached capacity in terms of the number of coal mines that it can safely support.”

The IPC will hold a public meeting about a modification for Dartbrook’s reopening on April 9.

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Map of the Dartbrook Mine. Source: Friends of the Upper Hunter

# Hunter Valley wine, horses threatened by coal

*A new report published by Hunter Wine Tourism Association and Lock the Gate Alliance reveals that 31% of the Hunter Valley's wine tourism critical industry cluster lands are covered by coal exploration licences.*

The Hunter's thoroughbred horse industry is also threatened by mining, with 16% of its critical lands subject to coal exploration.

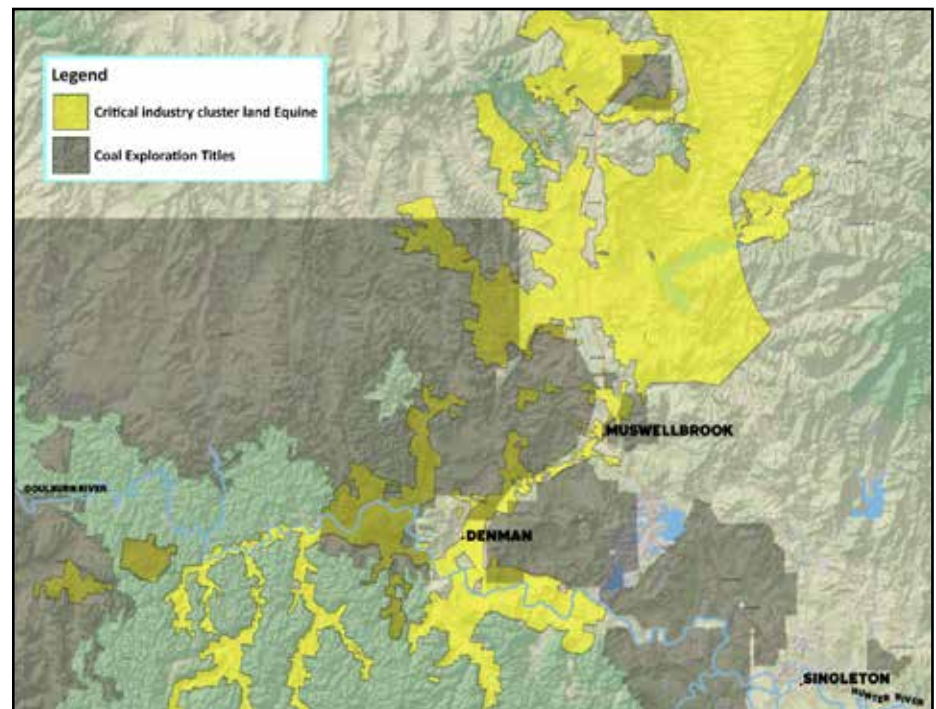
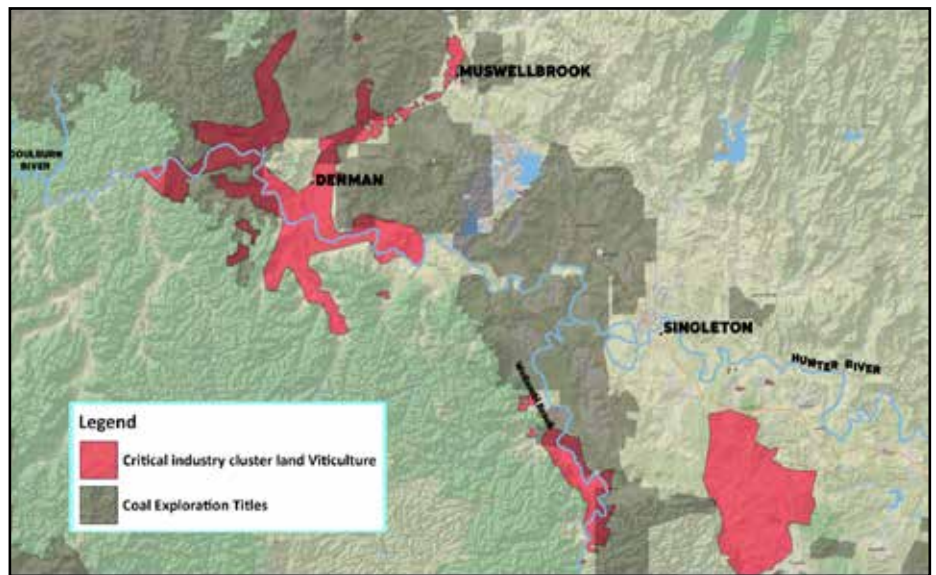
This leaves the wine and horse industries in an uncertain position as each exploration application is considered. Many of the licences are held by the NSW government itself, and could be cancelled at no cost to the mining industry.

## The report makes the following points:

- Revealed: 31% of critical industry land for Hunter wine industry affected by coal exploration
- New mapping has been undertaken to understand how large a threat the mining industry poses to the critical industry clusters and what effect existing these strategic farmlands from existing exploration and mining titles would have on the mining industry.
- 31% or 18,630 hectares of the land mapped as part of the critical industry cluster for the Hunter Valley wine industry are affected by coal exploration titles, including vineyards in the Broke-Fordwich and Upper Hunter areas.
- Of this, nearly three quarters – or 13,692 hectares – is three titles held by the NSW Government itself. One of these covers most of Pokolbin State Forest and the Wollombi Valley. Another affects over 10,000 hectares of Upper Hunter wine country and was renewed by the NSW Government as recently as August 2017.

- Saxonvale Coal, owned by the Bulga coal mine owner Glencore owns three exploration licences between the current Warkworth coal mine and the Yengo National Park. These licences affect Wollombi Brook and the Broke-Fordwich vineyards.

- Currently, there are 41,670 hectares of land mapped as being critical to the Hunter Valley thoroughbred industry affected by coal exploration titles or around 16% of the total area mapped as being critical for that industry. Of this area, 29,537 hectares, or 70% is in exploration titles held by the NSW



**Critical industry cluster lands threatened by coal: TOP - wine; BELOW - thoroughbreds.** Maps: Lock the Gate

government itself which could be extinguished with no effect on the mining industry.

- Four current mining leases include areas mapped as part of the equine critical industry cluster. The largest areas are in mining leases held by Muswellbrook Coal (224.8 hectares) and Dartbrook mine (153.7 hectares). Neither of these areas are currently being used for mining.

- KEPCO Australia has applied for a mining lease over equine critical industry cluster land in the Bylong Valley. If the mine is approved, it would

be the first time since the land was mapped that it is allowed to be directly open cut. Spur Hill has applied for a mining lease for an underground mine over a considerable area of equine critical industry cluster land near Denman.

- **The full report can be download here:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/pcpviiscz7b2444/cic-coal-feb-2019.pdf?dl=0>

- **See the full map here:**

<https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=a25eb8b6e41d47ce8cc3f5bac6a505e8&extent=148.8431,-33.3833,152.9877,-31.2316>

# Whitehaven fined as objections to its Vickery mine plans at Gunnedah roll in

*Environmentalists say Whitehaven Coal's repeated failure to comply with NSW law should be taken into account by the Independent Planning Commission in its consideration of the company's proposed Vickery coal mine following the company's conviction in the Land and Environment Court.*

The NSW Land and Environment Court has convicted and fined Whitehaven Coal Mining Limited \$38,500 after it pleaded guilty to breaching its environment protection licence for a blast at its Rocglen Mine near Gunnedah in August 2016, following successful prosecution by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

Whitehaven were also ordered to pay the EPA's legal costs and to publish notices of the result on its parent company website and in national, state and local newspapers.

The Court heard that during routine blasting operations at the Rocglen open-cut coal mine, a post-blast fume cloud made up of potentially harmful oxides of nitrogen gas, left the mine site and passed over neighbouring farmland. Fortunately, no people or livestock were harmed as a result of the fumes.

In Court, Whitehaven agreed that it had carried out its licensed activities in a less than competent manner. This included that it failed to use a type of explosive that would have minimised the risk of hazardous fume generation, it overloaded some blast holes with explosives and it breached its own blasting procedures.

The Court also heard that Whitehaven failed to notify neighbouring properties when the potentially hazardous fumes moved offsite.

## **\$38,500 fine 'less than a company lunch'**

Lock the Gate spokesperson Georgina Woods thanked the EPA for prosecuting the company but expressed disappointment at the size of the fine given the breach is the latest in a series of breaches, investigations and penalties at the companies coal mines.

"Whitehaven would spend more than this fine on a company lunch," she said.

"We are concerned that this court im-

*A scene at a Whitehaven coal mine. Photo: Whitehaven*



posed penalty is not sufficient to deter mining companies who are weighing up the cost of meeting environmental obligations against the risk of being caught disobeying them.

"This is part of a pattern of behaviour. The company has been fined on numerous occasions at four coal mines. It has received cautions and been the subject of countless community complaints, including other blast incidents.

"Whitehaven is seeking approval for a large new Vickery open cut coal mine and the Independent Planning Commission last month heard damning evidence from farming communities neighbouring the company's mines about its poor environmental and social record.

"There needs to be accountability and more serious consequences for these breaches if communities and the environment are to be protected. The commission is now assessing the Vickery proposal and must take Whitehaven's dismal track record into account."

## **IEEFA's objection to Vickery mine**

Meanwhile, IEEFA has lodged an objection to Whitehaven Coal's Vickery coal mine application, north of Gunnedah in New South Wales.

Currently being reviewed by the New South Wales Independent Planning Commission, the application is to expand Whitehaven Coal's already approved Vickery Coal Project proposal located on an old mine site that ceased production in 1998.

Tim Buckley, Director of Energy Finance Studies with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) firmly objects to the company's application.

"Building a huge new thermal coal mine simply makes no sense for Australia in 2019," says Mr Buckley.

"This application shows the outdated coal industry is being left behind as cheaper renewable energies increasingly become part of the mix and lenders shift away from coal, particularly more expensive imported coal."

Over 100 globally significant financial institutions including public and private banks, credit agencies and insurance groups have restricted coal financing including 40% of the top 40 global banks and 20 globally significant insurers. The majority of the institution's announcements are 'climate' policies reflecting an acceptance of climate science and a serious reorientation of business strategies.

Since the start of 2018 there have been 34 new or significantly improved announcements from global financial institutions restricting coal.

## **Vickery would flood declining market**

"While renewable energies are increasingly cheaper, global coal trade has peaked and Australia needs to avoid flooding the declining market profile over the coming decade with unnecessary new supply," says Mr Buckley.

"This week, the Reserve Bank of Australia's Deputy Governor stated climate change will be an 'abrupt and disorderly' blow to Australia's financial stability.

"Guy Debelle called for an orderly transition to a low carbon economy, which obviously doesn't include opening up new high emission coal mines like the one Whitehaven is hoping to have approved.

David Rowe reproduced with permission: <https://www.facebook.com/david.rowe.5070>



## Inside the news

News this week was, rightly, dominated by coverage of the dreadful **terrorist massacre** in Christchurch, NZ, which occurred just as **FFB** was published last Friday.

Your editor watched developments with dismay, having lived near the scene in the early 1970s.

In fossil land, words continue to fly over the **abrupt smack-down** of the WA EPA's attempt to require **carbon off-sets** from the state's gas producers (p8-9). "The procession of policy battles shows the real **power in Perth** lies not in the state's ageing Parliament House, but in the gleaming **St Georges Terrace towers** that the building faces," wrote Paul Garvey in *The Australian*.

Even mining magnate **Andrew Forrest** doesn't want **oil exploration** to proceed in the Great Australian Bight, making him an unlikely ally of the **Greenpeace** campaign against **Equinor's** plans (p10).

The **Murdoch rags** gave a platform, as usual, for fossil fans, with former resources minister and APPEA adviser, **Martin Ferguson**, raging in the *Daily Tele* at '**weak politicians**' (p10). He slammed them for "cowering from radio shock-jocks, the inner-urban elites, **environmental activists** and sea-changers and tree-changers on the northern coast," thus driving up gas and electricity prices.

*The Conversation* published a good story by Melisa Haswell and David Shearman describing how the **expanding gas industry** threatens our **climate, water and health** (p11). The writers have both previously spoken at length against the Santos plans for a Narrabri gasfield, and the invasion of the Darling Downs by gasco's.

The **New South Wales election** looks like a **cliff-hanger**, with the Coalition favoured by many commentators for a very narrow win.

**FFB** has refrained from aligning with any party, but supports the **Anyone But Nats** campaign.

Elizabeth Farrelly's article (p12) outlines the reasons why **rusted-on National voters** should **abandon** the fossil fuel fan party.

## Historic school strike 4 climate: 1.4 billion participated



"No one is too small to make a difference."  
Photo: Bill Doyle, Adelaide

*Around the world, 1.4 billion school kids and supporters went on strike for climate change action in an historic event last Friday, March 15.*

Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, 16, said the action proved "no one is too small to make a difference".

Kids from 128 countries participated in the call for leadership and effective action to prevent a climate catastrophe. Around 150,000 joined the strike in Australia, despite condemnation from the usual fossil fools.

The kids want: • Stop the Adani coal mine in central Queensland • No new coal or gas projects • 100 % renewables by 2030.

Perfectly reasonable actions to help preserve a liveable planet for future generations. **FFB** hopes the politicians got the message.

**FFB**

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 Published by Eve Sinton  
 PO Box 555, Mullumbimby,  
 NSW 2482, Australia  
 Fossil Fool Bulletin  
 [fossil.fool.bulletin@gmail.com](mailto:fossil.fool.bulletin@gmail.com)  
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# In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 20,600 words of news for your convenience. [Click on the links](#) to view original articles. (Subscriptions may be required)

## THE ADANI SAGA

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/queensland-government/adani-faces-fresh-legal-hurdles-as-greenies-expand-case-against-water-pipeline/news-story/3b596c246a4d373584e7186a038e3647>

### Adani faces fresh legal hurdles as greenies expand case against water pipeline

Daryl Passmore, *Sunday Mail (Qld)*, 17/03/2019

Environmentalists have launched a new front in their relentless campaign to try to block the Adani mine project.

The Environmental Defenders Office Queensland has added another ground to its existing court action challenging the Federal Government's approval of the resources company's proposed pipeline.

The move has been slammed by the Queensland Resources Council as yet another "trick" in blatant delaying tactics.

EDO Qld is appealing for donations for a fighting fund to "turbocharge our legal work around the Carmichael megamine".

The group last year lodged a Federal Court challenge seeking a judicial review of the decision to allow assessment of Adani's North Galilee Water Scheme to proceed without the "water trigger" being applied to examine the potential impact on water resources.

On Friday, EDO Qld's lawyers added an extra ground to that action, arguing that the federal Environment Minister failed to properly consider more than 1000 public comments in submissions on the pipeline.

It could add months to the process of reaching a final decision on whether the Carmichael mine in central Queensland, which will create up to 3800 jobs when operational, is allowed to go ahead. ...

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/queensland-government/adani-mine-state-government-under-pressure-oas-final-federal-hurdle-falls/news-story/e03bae7873fe0451baee0d023501cbb1>

### Adani mine: State Government under pressure as final federal hurdle falls

Steven Scott, *Courier-Mail*, 21/03/2019

Adani's Carmichael coal mine is set to clear its last federal hurdle within weeks, leaving the State Government



Adani Australia head honcho Lucas Dow (right) in the ABC Tropical North studio, talking about the Carmichael coal mine. Photo: Adani Facebook

the only impediment to the project going ahead.

The approval, which is based on modelling of the impact on groundwater done by the CSIRO and Geoscience Australia, will be ticked off by the Federal Government at the same time.

The move means the Liberal National Party will head into the federal election arguing it has done all it can to start the mine, which promises to deliver 1500 direct jobs for central Queensland.

But it will raise pressure on the State Government to set out a timeline for three major approvals needed before the mine can proceed. ...

Resources Minister Matt Canavan said there had been an "open and frank dialogue" between Adani and the federal Environment Department over the expected impact on groundwater of the mine in the Galilee Basin and the approval would be "settled within weeks". ...

Senator Canavan visited the Adani mine site, along with MPs Michelle Landry and George Christensen, who are using the mine's claims it will fuel a jobs boom to help them hold on to their marginal seats.

Dozens of workers are already present on the mine site, which has a dirt runway, a 250-bed accommodation camp, gym and mess hall. ...

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/queensland-government/silence-on-adani-mine-despite-report-of-imminent-green-light/news-story/b0abaeeb-12561fbd291b72f314e2202>

### Silence on Adani mine despite report of imminent green light

Steven Scott & Domanii Cameron, *Courier-Mail*, 22/03/2019

Scott Morrison has avoided directly endorsing Adani's proposed coal mine despite revelations his Government is about to give the green light to the final federal approval. ...

Mr Morrison has never uttered the name "Adani" in an interview but said last November "the Carmichael mine has always had our support".

The PM's reluctance comes as the Coalition tries to stem a loss of votes in Victoria, NSW and southern Queensland over climate change.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has mentioned "Adani" by name but has been vague about whether he would support it if Labor is elected. But Queensland's Environment Minister Leanne Enoch said: "The Department

of Environment and Science can't progress its assessment of Adani's groundwater report until the Federal Government gives the CSIRO report to them. It hasn't."

## COAL ROCKS ON

[https://www.theage.com.au/business/the-economy/coal-exporters-forced-to-divert-ships-as-china-port-delays-intensify-20190319-p5151k.html?promote\\_channel=edmail&mbnr=MjA0MDE5MzE&eid=email:nnn-130mn658-ret\\_news1-member-eng:nnn-04%2F11%2F2013-business\\_news\\_am-dom-business-ann-age-u&campaign\\_code=131BU020&etbid=29170383&list\\_name=2033\\_age\\_busnews\\_am&in-stance=2019-03-19--19-25--UTC](https://www.theage.com.au/business/the-economy/coal-exporters-forced-to-divert-ships-as-china-port-delays-intensify-20190319-p5151k.html?promote_channel=edmail&mbnr=MjA0MDE5MzE&eid=email:nnn-130mn658-ret_news1-member-eng:nnn-04%2F11%2F2013-business_news_am-dom-business-ann-age-u&campaign_code=131BU020&etbid=29170383&list_name=2033_age_busnews_am&in-stance=2019-03-19--19-25--UTC)

### Coal exporters forced to divert ships as China port delays intensify

*Darren Gray & Cole Latimer, The Age, 19/03/2019*

Ships carrying Australian coal originally bound for China have been either diverted or offered to buyers in other countries, as the coal delays at Chinese ports intensifies.

Sources said the re-routing of lucrative shipments had increased recently due to the time it is taking for Australian coal to be unloaded and clear customs in China. Indian buyers have been offered some of the coal. ...

There are concerns in Australia that the delays are, in part, politically motivated and a reaction to the federal government banning telco firm Huawei from building the 5G network and accusations of Beijing spying on political parties.

Questions are also being asked in Australia about reports that customs officials at the port of Fangcheng in southern China are conducting "radio-active tests" of Australian coal. ...

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-19/coal-export-fears-resurface-as-restrictions-hit-more-china-ports/10915818>

### Australian coal prices cop a 'belting' as Chinese import restrictions spread

*Stephen Letts, ABC, 20/03/2019*

Australian thermal coal exports to China are under increasing pressure, with indications import restrictions are spreading to other key ports.

Key points: Thermal coal shipments may take up to three months to clear customs at some Chinese ports; Australian thermal coal prices are being belted compared to competitors such as Indonesia; Iron ore prices are surging on safety concerns and mine shutdowns in Brazil. ...

<https://www.theage.com.au/world/asia/fears-the-united-states-could-displace-australian-coal-in-china-20190321-p516cq.html>

### Fears the United States could displace Australian coal in China

*Kirsty Needham, The Age, 21/03/2019*

Australian officials are increasingly concerned that trade negotiations between China and the United States will lead to a special deal between the two countries that displaces Australia's exports, including coal, to its biggest market.

China is likely to significantly increase imports of American coal from West Virginia, Donald Trump's electoral heartland, if it strikes a trade deal next month. Mr Trump made an election pledge to revitalise the coal industry in that state. ...

<https://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/5962850/wongawilli-coal-mine-shut-down-due-to-serious-safety-issues/>

### Wongawilli coal mine shut down due to 'serious safety issues'

*Andrew Pearson, Illawarra Mercury, 19/03/2019*

The state's chief mine inspector has stopped work at Wollongong Coal's Wongawilli mine amid a major investigation into what the NSW Resources Regulator says are "significant safety issues".

The stop work order comes after the mining compliance regulator slapped the mine's operators with four separate prohibition notices last week.

NSW Resources Regulator inspectors visited the mine on March 13, to assess

the adequacy of risk controls in place following a series of reported roof falls.

"While at the mine, inspectors also identified several safety issues with the mine's conveyor system; mine travel roads and production methods, which resulted in a total of three [prohibition] notices being issued," a regulator spokesman said.

"The mine reported another roof fall on the night of March 13. After a review of the fall, a further [prohibition] notice was placed on the mine." ...

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/rich-listers-get-boost-from-former-rio-tinto-coal-mine-bought-for-1-20190320-p515tp.html>

### Rich listers get boost from former Rio Tinto coal mine bought for \$1

*Cole Latimer, SMH, 20/03/2019*

A coal mine Rio Tinto sold for \$1 is paying big dividends for some of Australia's largest investors including rich listers John Singleton, Alex Waislitz and former Leighton Holdings chief Wal King.

The trio are shareholders in a junior coal miner TerraCom which bought the Rio mine, Blair Athol, in Queensland for \$1 in 2016 four years after it had closed. The company has been bringing the Bowen Basin mine back to life and Mr Singleton's Bonython Coal last year underwrote TerraCom's \$15 million capital raising.

On Wednesday, the miner increased Blair Athol's coal reserves to 23.5 million tonnes, taking its expected



Terracom Resources' \$1 Blair Athol coal mine. Photo: Terracom

operational life to eight years – a big turnaround for a mine that only reopened for business in 2017. ...

As part of the \$1 deal, Rio Tinto paid \$80 million into a trust fund, managed by the Queensland government, for required rehabilitation works.

After TerraCom changed its plans for the site, it reduced the bond needed, allowing the Queensland Department of Environment and Science to hand back \$5 million in 'surplus' funds.

Yet one Australian coal miner said the \$80 million payment by Rio Tinto would only turn out to be a fraction of the rehabilitation spending needed, and TerraCom could expect to wear heavy environmental costs ahead. ...

<https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/5965615/whitehaven-hit-with-38500-fine-for-toxic-blast-fume-cloud/>

### **Whitehaven Coal hit with \$38,500 fine for toxic blast fume cloud**

*Jamieson Murphy, Northern Daily Leader, 20/03/2019*

Whitehaven Coal has been whacked with a \$38,500 fine after a post-blast fume cloud of toxic gas left the mine site and passed over a neighbouring farmland.

The NSW Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) took the 2016 incident, which happened at the Rocglen open-cut mine, to the NSW Land and Environment Court, where the company plead guilty to breaching its environment protection licence.

Fortunately, no people or livestock were harmed as a result of the fume cloud, which was made up of harmful oxides of nitrogen gas.

Along with the fine, Whitehaven was also ordered to pay the EPA's legal costs and to publish notices of the result on its parent company website and in national, state and local newspapers. ...

<https://www.ntnews.com.au/news/national/unauthorised-operations-alleged-at-new-acland-coal-mine/news-story/6831a486a9600fb9ff68772364c0e8b92c-spt-1553146139j7809a962b8f1f37bf49c60ea29473b55>

### **Unauthorised operations alleged at New Acland Coal Mine**

*Domanii Cameron, Courier-Mail, 21/03/2019*

The Environment and Science Department is investigating allegations of unauthorised operations and noise at the New Acland Coal Mine.

A department spokesman said an investigation had started at the Darling Downs mine, owned by New Hope,

after reports were received from the community.

However a spokesman for the coal miner said it "strongly disagrees" with any suggestion that any operations were unauthorised, and said the company was working closely with the department. ...

<https://www.theland.com.au/story/5966282/block-out-coal-exploration-licences-on-wine-country/>

### **Maps disclose coal exploration on Hunter equine and wine areas**

*John Ellicott, The Land, 21/03/2019*

Almost a third of prime Hunter wine country is covered by coal exploration licences, new mapping shows.

Tourist and agriculture groups are calling for the licences, some of which are held by the NSW Government, to be revoked.

The mapping and analysis given to The Land found "notably, a subsidiary of multinational commodity giant Glencore, which last month announced it would cap coal production at current levels, owns three exploration licences that cover Wollombi Brook and the Broke-Fordwich vineyards".

There are also multiple exploration licences on major thoroughbred breeding operations in the Hunter.

The mapping and analysis released by the Hunter Wine Tourism Association and Lock the Gate Alliance revealed "almost 30 per cent of the Hunter Valley's wine tourism critical industry cluster lands are covered by coal exploration licences".

The NSW Government itself holds the titles for almost three quarters of those licences, with mining companies holding the remaining titles. ...

## **MINING MAYHEM**

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-19/baal-gammon-mine-leaking-contaminated-water/10914440>

### **Toxic mine water contaminating creek system in far north Queensland, State Government says**

*Alexandra Blucher & Mark Willacy, ABC, 19/03/2019*

A mothballed mine in far north Queensland is leaching toxic water from a new 'seepage' point into neighbouring waterways, according to the State Government.

It said the new leak was coming from a massive disused pit full of contaminated water at the Baal Gammon copper

mine that sits next to a creek near the township of Watsonville, south west of Cairns.

Testing by the environment department found heavy metals including arsenic and cadmium in the seep water that was discovered after heavy rain hit the area in late January.

Locals are being warned not to use the water downstream in Jamie Creek for drinking or cooking. ...

## **OIL & GAS LEAKS**

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-16/epa-carbon-emissions-backflip-raises-questions-independence/10903980>

### **EPA's carbon emissions backflip after Premier's intervention raises questions of independence**

*Jacob Kagi, ABC, 16/03/2019*

After days of anger over a decision that big businesses warned would jeopardise tens of billions of dollars of resources projects, the boss of WA's environmental watchdog was firmly sticking with his new policy.

"We stand by our guidelines," Environmental Protection Authority [EPA] chairman Tom Hatton told the ABC on Tuesday. ...

But Dr Hatton admitted defeat just two days after that firm defence of his board's decision, which had recommended major projects be required to entirely offset their carbon emissions. ...

To understand how such an emphatic 180-degree turn took place in 48 hours, it pays to look at what is known to have occurred in between.

Oil and gas giants, already fuming, stepped up their fight significantly.

Full-page advertisements were plastered across Perth's daily newspaper, as big business splashed the cash in an effort to convince the public that the EPA's decision would inflict an enormous economic blow on WA.

They took their public relations effort up a notch, with top executives warning across a range of interviews that devastating impacts loomed ...

The fight was taken directly to State Parliament, with top brass from Woodside, Shell, Chevron and Santos called in for crisis talks with the Premier, during which they stressed what they saw as enormous risk and uncertainty had stemmed from the EPA's decision.

Just four hours later, the EPA's policy was no more – replaced by an indefinite period of "consultation". ...



The EPA is supposed to be at arm's length from the Government, describing itself as "independent" and "not subject to direction".

But the fact it had reversed course on such a prominent policy after Mr McGowan's intervention had critics questioning how true that actually was. ...

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/epa-backflip-shows-where-true-power-lies/news-story/1bd5856e7a6eb8247a639ba39c8c9cac>

### **EPA backflip shows where true power lies**

*Paul Garvey, The Australian, 16/03/2019*

As Tom Hatton, chairman of Western Australia's Environmental Protection Authority, nurses his bruises this weekend after his embarrassing backflip on carbon offsets, he can take solace from the fact he is far from the only public figure to have taken on the resources sector and lost.

Hatton joins a long list including treasurers, premiers and prime ministers who have all learned the hard way about the power and influence that the major miners and oil and gas producers can exert. ...

The procession of policy battles shows the real power in Perth lies not in the state's ageing Parliament House, but in the gleaming St Georges Terrace towers that the building faces. ...

The Scarborough and Browse LNG projects at the centre of last week's EPA storm are worth \$US11 billion (\$15.6bn) and \$US20.5bn respectively, will create about 5000 new jobs and should generate billions of dollars in taxes and royalties for decades to come. ...

While Hatton licks his wounds, the oil and gas sector will be reflecting on the swift success of its latest lobbying campaign. The risk, however, is that there is an unknown price to pay for the win in the future.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/20/lng-redux>

### **WA's rejection of carbon neutral guidelines leaves LNG emissions booming**

*Adam Morton, The Guardian, 20/03/2019*

A Western Australian government decision to reject guidelines requiring major liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects to be carbon neutral leaves Australia without a state or federal policy to address its biggest source of growth in heat-trapping emissions.

The most recent federal government emissions report says the booming northern WA LNG industry is the main driver of an 0.9% increase in national emissions in the year to September, continuing a trend in place since 2015. LNG exports to Asian markets jumped 19.7% over those 12 months.

Authorities had hoped the rise in LNG emissions would be slowed by a carbon capture and storage project at the country's largest natural gas development, Chevron's Gorgon operation in the Pilbara, coming online early this year.

Gorgon was approved on the condition it would capture fugitive emissions from an underwater gas field and inject them into a reservoir beneath Barrow Island and, late last year, Chevron said it expected the long-delayed storage project would be running by March. But it now says ongoing technical difficulties have pushed back the expected starting date until later this year. ...

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/shell-calls-for-national-carbon-offset-rules/news-story/dbeaf29e64f50838072c39749efd2c622c-spt-1553035926jdee28ff82acce02a8593fe79edebe52>

### **Shell calls for national carbon offset rules**

*Perry Williams, The Australian, 18/03/2019*

Energy giant Shell has broken ranks with the industry by calling for controversial carbon offset rules floated by Western Australia to be implemented on a nationwide level, while also flag-

ging plans for a major acquisition as it weighs up an entry into Australia's electricity market.

WA caved to growing pressure from the oil and gas industry last week by pulling rules which would have required all major industrial projects in the state to fully offset their entire greenhouse gas emissions.

While the regulatory push by the state's Environmental Protection Authority triggered immediate warnings that billions of dollars of major projects could be at risk, Shell said the EPA was right to kick-start the conversation. ...

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-16/greenpeace-calls-out-regulator-for-plans-to-speak-at-bight-event/10906856>

### **Greenpeace questions oil and gas regulator ahead of Great Australian Bight oil exploration event**

*ABC, 16/03/2019*

Greenpeace has questioned the independence of the national offshore oil and gas regulator, amid revelations the authority will speak at a Parliamentary dinner in favour of oil exploration in the Great Australian Bight. ...

Equinor and oil industry peak body APPEA will speak at the dinner, as will the head of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA), Stuart Smith.

Greenpeace Australia Pacific chief executive David Ritter has sent a letter



*Seals are at risk from plans to drill for oil in the Great Australian Bight. Photo: Michaela Skovranova, Greenpeace*

to NOPSEMA, concerned that the independent regulator's "public perception" may be put at risk by speaking at the event. He said the event "seemed to be designed to promote drilling in the Great Australian Bight" and it was not be appropriate for a representative from the regulator to attend. ...

According to a report commissioned by Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, Equinor's plans to drill in the Bight could bring up to 1,500 jobs to South Australia over the next 40 years.

<https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/sunday-mail-yougov-galaxy-poll-finds-majority-of-south-australians-oppose-oil-drilling-in-great-australian-bight/news-story/f2a22d90d1ac69bd184da228bd830a65>

### **Sunday Mail YouGov Galaxy poll finds majority of South Australians oppose oil drilling in Great Australian Bight**

*Paul Starick & Rebecca Digirolamo, The Advertiser, 17/03/2019*

A majority of South Australians oppose plans for deepwater drilling for oil in the Great Australian Bight, a Sunday Mailpoll finds.

Almost 60 per cent of 844 respondents to the YouGov Galaxy poll were opposed to the proposal by Norwegian firm Equinor.

A quarter were in favour and 16 per cent uncommitted.

Labor supporters were more strongly opposed than Liberals, however 48 per cent of the latter also were not in favour.

Exploration plans have generated significant protest. ...

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/andrew-forrest-joins-green-groups-to-oppose-norways-plan-for-bight-oil-drill/news-story/a48e798a6b6b2a347ae01ca33ac0fdfd>

### **Andrew Forrest joins green groups to oppose Norway's plan for Bight oil drill**

*Perry Williams, The Australian, 22/03/2019*

Mining billionaire Andrew Forrest has implored Norway's government to abandon planned oil drilling in the Great Australian Bight, warning he is prepared to launch a massive campaign to safeguard the ecologically sensitive area.

Mr Forrest – who built his fortune mining iron ore in Western Australia's Pilbara – has joined a host of green groups including the Wilderness Society in opposing plans by the Norwegian government-controlled Equinor to conduct oil exploration in the Bight by the end of 2020. ...

The entrepreneur's family charity Minderoo Foundation recently started the Flourishing Oceans initiative and says drilling for oil in the Bight presents "an unacceptable risk to an irreplaceable ecosystem". ...

<https://www.echo.net.au/2019/03/northwest-farmers-need-help/>

### **Northwest farmers need help to win CSG battle**

*Eve Jeffery, Echonet Daily, 19/03/2019*

In a David and Goliath battle, Northwest NSW farmers are begging for help to save Australia's food bowl from the CSG juggernaut.

Many farmers have added their name to this letter [by farmer Margaret Fleck], that asks for supporters to lobby the National Party against the Narrabri gas project, saying that 'only the National Party so far refuses to act' ...

Ms Fleck says that as we approach the NSW election, Country Labor, Greens, Independent and SFF have all pledged to stop the Narrabri gas project.

'Only the National Party so far refuses to act.' ...

<https://www.ntnews.com.au/news/national/experts-say-nsw-must-dig-deep-to-help-fix-our-power-bill-crisis/news-story/26cef7d066d9e352ac59f2eabb9eb7e7c-spt=15530357771315147fba4e6063ee7ce17d1e36aec>

### **Experts say NSW must dig deep to help fix our power bill crisis**

*Edward Boyd, Daily Telegraph, 18/03/2019*

There is a plentiful energy source available in NSW that could help slash electricity bills for households across the state – but both major parties refuse to give it the green light.

Experts say if coal seam gas (CSG) mining is harnessed to unlock the untapped potential of NSW, wholesale gas prices could be slashed from about \$10 per gigajoule to \$5 ...

NSW imports about 96 per cent of its gas but independent advisory firm EnergyQuest says there is enough gas in the ground in the state to supply everyone. ...

Credit Suisse analyst Saul Kavonic said NSW is facing a gas crisis, with cheap legacy gas sources running out, tightening supply and pushing up prices.

"The Narrabri project can help bring on more supply and would likely result in some lower cost gas made available to manufacturers to support manufacturing jobs," he said.

"But further new gas supply develop-

ments would be needed ... in order to structurally lower gas prices across NSW for all users." ...

[https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/were-paying-too-much-for-gas-because-of-weak-politicians/news-story/d44ea2594b3ec4f418b8a62f341a8f9c67fb-clid=IwAR2vPbv86QHW\\_1Xce374VK0gRvAQ91lt5Yvc3uCyHBA\\_LAjlu1yrtqIGck](https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/were-paying-too-much-for-gas-because-of-weak-politicians/news-story/d44ea2594b3ec4f418b8a62f341a8f9c67fb-clid=IwAR2vPbv86QHW_1Xce374VK0gRvAQ91lt5Yvc3uCyHBA_LAjlu1yrtqIGck)

### **We're paying too much for gas because of weak politicians**

*Martin Ferguson, Daily Telegraph, 19/03/2019*

New South Wales relies heavily on a sustainable, affordable supply of natural gas.

More than 1.3 million homes in the state use gas for cooking and heating.

Thousands of small businesses, from commercial laundries to bakeries, cannot open their doors without gas.

And in the manufacturing sector, gas underpins around 250,000 jobs.

You'd think the state's politicians would spend some time trying to get their gas policies right but instead they have ducked for cover, cowering from radio shock-jocks, the inner-urban elites, environmental activists and sea-changers and tree-changers on the northern coast.

From Barry O'Farrell's weak-kneed dithering as Premier to current Opposition Leader Michael Daley's populist promise to kill off a much-needed multi-billion dollar gas project, NSW's political leaders have failed to grasp the importance of gas supply to their constituents. ...

• *Former Federal Resources Minister Martin Ferguson is an adviser to the board of the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association.*

[https://www.afr.com/business/energy/gas/nsw-labor-doubts-santos-local-supply-pledge-for-narrabri-gas-20190319-h1cicz7fbclid=IwAR1zy2FfNXFz0VZdLMEh079TTP47DbVa6N6Tnsjwg-aCSkgKZaA\\_HBTLo](https://www.afr.com/business/energy/gas/nsw-labor-doubts-santos-local-supply-pledge-for-narrabri-gas-20190319-h1cicz7fbclid=IwAR1zy2FfNXFz0VZdLMEh079TTP47DbVa6N6Tnsjwg-aCSkgKZaA_HBTLo)

### **NSW Labor junks Santos gas vow**

*Angela Macdonald-Smith, AFR, 21/03/2019*

NSW Labor says it does not believe assurances from Santos that all gas from its proposed Narrabri gas project would be sold to local industry, rather than exported, doubling down on its pre-election declaration that the \$3 billion development is 'dead'.

Defying the Australian Workers Union support for the project to reduce NSW's 98 per cent reliance on imported gas, the State opposition's resources spokesman Adam Searle said Santos' support for a gas pipeline that would link the Narrabri field into the existing pipeline system signalled the gas

would likely be exported through the Queensland liquefied natural gas operations, whatever the company says. ...

But Mr Searle signalled Labor has no confidence in the gas producers' commitments on domestic supplies, pointing to the historical claims by Santos's GLNG export venture in Queensland that its export project wouldn't eat into gas available for local users.

"The fact that the market has so badly behaved and the decisions made by the gas companies have been so terrible there is no guarantee that increased supply will meet local demand because of this offshoring phenomenon," he said.

Explaining Mr Daley's promise to block the project, Mr Searle said it can't go ahead anyway because fully implementing NSW Chief Scientist Mary O'Kane's recommendations on coal seam gas would take too long.

Mr Searle maintained NSW Labor is committed to implementing the NSW chief scientist's 2014 recommendations for the CSG industry, but that doing that would take "some time". He said the absence of commercial insurance products to protect farmers and landowners from potential damage to land and water resources meant that no regulatory approvals for CSG projects could be granted. ...

<http://www.alicespringsnews.com.au/2019/03/19/massive-gas-reserves-close-to-being-tapped/>

### Massive gas reserves close to being tapped

*Erwin Chlander, Alice Springs News, 19/03/2019*

As Parliament debated gas legislation today Alister Trier (at left), Chief Executive of Department of Primary Industry and Resources, was addressing some 250 mining personnel at the AGES conference in Alice Springs, the biggest in six years.

He was talking about the estimated gas reserves in the Beetaloo Basin, between Tennant Creek and Katherine. ...

The onshore gas Mr Trier was talking about is "right next-door to a pipeline". ...

The word fracking did not pass his lips. It is "hydraulic fracturing" that is now entering the phase of "preparing for exploration," according to the conference program. ...



**Expanding gas mining, such as this Darling Downs well, is a threat to climate, water and health.** Photo: Eve Sinton

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/companies/png-delays-signing-off-on-lng-expansion-plan-with-global-energy-majors-and-oil-search/news-story/ffc4bde68bd-d362568e32bcab781e38f>

### PNG nears LNG expansion sign-off with global energy majors and Oil Search

*Perry Williams, The Australian, 21/03/2019*

Oil Search says it is close to reaching a gas agreement with Papua New Guinea's government, a key milestone needed to kickstart a planned \$US13 billion (\$18.4bn) expansion that's set to double LNG volumes from the South Pacific nation.

The accord underpinning Papua LNG – a joint venture between energy giants Total, ExxonMobil and Oil Search (OSH) – will be signed in early April.

The agreement will finalise the equity split between the state and joint venture companies along with the amount of gas hived off for the domestic market and the level of national employment content involved in the project. ...

Agreeing terms with the PNG government is the next major hurdle for the Total-led Papua LNG venture followed by the finalisation of terms for an enlarged PNG LNG plant fed by development of the P'nyang gas field in the country. Two LNG trains with capacity of 5.4 million tonnes will be supplied through Papua LNG with a further 2.7m tonnes train to come from the PNG LNG venture, roughly doubling the country's output from 8.5m tonnes a year to 17m tonnes. ...

[https://theconversation.com/expanding-gas-mining-threatens-our-climate-water-and-health-113047?fbclid=IwAR2L-hknfLSoQw8z2uYp3RZPryqYKFEAuU9d5\\_Q-svzLHU15qg-jYmroBXTF](https://theconversation.com/expanding-gas-mining-threatens-our-climate-water-and-health-113047?fbclid=IwAR2L-hknfLSoQw8z2uYp3RZPryqYKFEAuU9d5_Q-svzLHU15qg-jYmroBXTF)

### Expanding gas mining threatens our climate, water and health

*Melisa Haswell & David Shearman, The Conversation, 21/03/2019*

Australia, like its competitors Qatar, Canada and the United States, aspires to become the world's largest exporter of gas, arguing this helps importing nations reduce their greenhouse emissions by replacing coal.

Yes, burning gas emits less carbon dioxide than burning coal. Yet the "fugitive emissions" – the methane that escapes, often unmeasured, during production, distribution and combustion of gas – is a much more potent short-term greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

A special report issued by the World Health Organisation after the 2018 Katowice climate summit urged governments to take "specific commitments to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants" such as methane, so as to boost the chances of staying with the Paris Agreement's ambitious 1.5C global warming limit.

Current gas expansion plans in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland, where another 2,500 coal seam gas wells have been approved, reveal little impetus to deliver on this. Harvesting all of WA's gas reserves would emit about 4.4 times

**News this week ... from previous page**

more carbon dioxide equivalent than Australia's total domestic energy-related emissions budget.

There are not only global, but also significant local and regional risks to health and well-being associated with unconventional gas mining. ...

Since our previous reviews ... more than 1,400 further peer-reviewed articles have been published, helping to clarify how expanding unconventional gas production across Australia risks our health, well-being, climate, water and food security. ...

• **Melisa Haswell** - Professor of Health, Safety and Environment, School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland University of Technology

• **David Shearman** - Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of Adelaide

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/20/judge-halts-drilling-climate-change-trump-administration>

**US judge halts hundreds of drilling projects in groundbreaking climate change ruling**

*Cassidy Randall, The Guardian, 21/03/2019*

In the first significant check on the Trump administration's "energy-first" agenda, a US judge has temporarily halted hundreds of drilling projects for failing to take climate change into account.

Drilling had been stalled on more than 300,000 acres of public land in Wyoming after it was ruled the Trump administration violated environmental laws by failing to consider greenhouse gas emissions. The federal judge has ordered the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which manages US public lands and issues leases to the energy industry, to redo its analysis.

The decision stems from an environmental lawsuit. WildEarth Guardians, Physicians for Social Responsibility,

and the Western Environmental Law Center sued the BLM in 2016 for failing to calculate and limit the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from future oil and gas projects. ...

**FOSSIL POLITICS**

<https://www.smb.com.au/national/betrayal-what-s-driving-loyal-rural-voters-away-from-their-party-20190314-p5144d.html>

**Betrayal: what's driving loyal rural voters away from their party**

*Elizabeth Farrelly, SMH, 16/03/2019*

The National Party website mentions climate change just once. It comes under "Defending Our Local Way of Life for Future Generations" – which you might think would include protecting land, air, water. But no. The Nats want only "to meet the challenges of a changing climate in a sensible way that ... doesn't throw out our way of life, local jobs and industries". And there you have it, in a sentence, the whole reason for the existence and success of the movement known as AnyoneBut-Nats. Betrayal.

Slowly but surely, the countryside is changing. In dismay people mutter; "We've voted National for four generations and here I'm going to vote (Green/Labor/Shooters/Independent). I have no choice." ...

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/mar/20/labor-to-tell-business-it-wont-let-energy-policy-be-held-hostage>

**Labor to tell business it won't let energy policy be held 'hostage'**

*Katharine Murphy, The Guardian, 20/03/2019*

Labor will use an energy summit convened by small business to declare it will not "be hostage to repeal politics" if it wins the coming federal election, warning it will press ahead with emissions reduction in the electricity sector even if the Liberal party won't



*FFB's election advice for this weekend in NSW: Put the National Mining Party last.*

reconcile itself to the national energy guarantee.

Pat Conroy, the shadow assistant minister for climate and energy, will tell Wednesday's summit Labor wants bipartisan agreement post-election, and will pursue the national energy guarantee developed by Malcolm Turnbull and Josh Frydenberg – a policy that remains popular with a number of stakeholders, including business groups, despite being dumped by Scott Morrison.

But Conroy will also use Wednesday's outing to put business on notice, telling them an incoming Labor government will not delay policy action endlessly in a fruitless quest for bipartisanship. ...



A struggle against the imposition by force of a CSG industry.

**Download free from:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/sbtwhwoyqfqrqsy/Gasfield%20Free%20NSW%20Northern%20Rivers%20PDF.pdf?dl=0>

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